

The Untold Stories of Women Soccer Referees

The Untold Stories of Women Soccer Referees

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### **Abstract**

In Canada, women's soccer has continuously grown and developed, however women continue to be under represented in non-playing roles – particularly as referees (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a; Ontario Soccer Association, 2012). Of the 20,507 soccer referees in Canada, only 24% are women (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a). Moreover, 54% of Canadian soccer referees are registered in Ontario (Ontario Soccer Association, 2012), of which only 9.5% are women (Ontario Soccer Association, 2013). This study explores the experiences of women who continue to referee despite their under-representation within the refereeing domain, in an effort to identify the benefits and challenges of being a woman soccer referee in Ontario. I employed a feminist lens to guide the development and design of the research agenda, alongside Michel Foucault's concept of the subject. The results of this exploration uncovered that the woman soccer referee subject comes to recognize and understand herself and her role as a referee through the discourse of ability and the discourse of the outsider. These discourses emerged from the ways in which the subject constructed becoming a referee, being a referee (benefits and challenges), continuing to referee, and being a woman soccer referee. Resultantly, the woman soccer referee is primarily motivated to continue to referee by her competence to perform according to the ideals and practices of "the referee" that she learns through both education and experience. However, as woman she is an outsider within the soccer community and comes to internalize her subordination and normalize sexism within the refereeing domain and soccer community at large in order to be accepted and respected within her position as "the referee". Using the results of analysis I also make recommendations for increasing the number of women that choose to continue, as well as boost the notoriety of women soccer referees within the refereeing domain.

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**This is personal...**

Before I formally begin my thesis I wish to introduce myself, as the research study that I will outline in the next pages is about me, and for me, as much as it is for the 4,741 Canadian women with whom I share an occupation. I am a daughter, a sister, an immigrant, a student, an athlete, and of supreme importance to this research study, I am a soccer referee. I began my journey in soccer at age 10 playing in a house league in Brampton, Ontario. I continued to play for 8 years thereafter for a total of 3 different organizations, within 3 different competitive leagues across southwestern Ontario, as well as the Super Y league in the United States. I first became a soccer referee at 14 and ceased refereeing the following year. I did not enjoy refereeing; I felt intense pressure being a referee, I did not want to mess up, I did not want the parents or the coach to shout at me, and overall I was not confident and comfortable with my role on the field. At 19 years old, away from home, and in the second year of my undergrad I returned to refereeing and now enjoy it more than ever! I often wondered what made refereeing more enjoyable for me the second time around and I have come to numerous conclusions. At 19, I needed a flexible part-time job that could provide me extra income; after 8 years of competitive soccer, I no longer played and wanted to maintain my connection to the sport, and the field of play; I was older – I had more self-confidence, and understood that parents and coaches did not despise me, as a person– it was the uniform, the referee; but most importantly, it was because I wanted to be a referee. When I was 14 my parents registered my older sister and myself in a youth referee course. It was my parents who decided that I was to become a soccer referee, not me. At 19 and living away from home, I did my research to find a soccer club in my area, I registered for their entry level referee course, I paid my registration fee, and I became a referee – I decided that I wanted to be a referee.

Four years later I continue to referee for these very reasons, however, I noticed that it is not the same for other women and girls who become referees. Like myself at 14, some girls are not confident as referees, or suffer verbal abuse at the hands of parents and coaches and decide to discontinue refereeing or they do not referee as many games as they could. This prompted me to become involved with the Ontario Soccer Association's (OSA), Women in Soccer Empowering Referees (WISER) committee in 2013. Aware of many of the issues facing women soccer referees that lead women to discontinue refereeing, as highlighted by research and personal experiences, we strived to provide women soccer referees in Ontario the tools and resources to help them develop and achieve their goals as referees. However, as a referee entering my 5<sup>th</sup> season, and a student immersed in the sociological study of sport, rather than the issues facing women soccer referees that lead women to discontinue refereeing, I am interested in learning from the women that continue to referee year after year and how their experiences can inspire me, and other women to continue to referee. As I mentioned earlier, this research is about me – a woman soccer referee entering her 5<sup>th</sup> season – and for me – a woman contemplating developing as a soccer referee. I see and live the need for this research and its applications.

*April 14, 2014*

*Two weeks prior to my thesis proposal*

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Interviewer: What advice would you give to women who wish to become referees?  
Refhre: You can do it, you can do it  
Interviewer: You think they don't believe that?  
Refhre: I strongly believe that they don't believe that

## **The State of Soccer in Canada**

Soccer has consistently grown and developed in Canada since 1992 (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a; Ifedi, 2008). According to Canadian Heritage's latest research report on sport participation in Canada, *Sport Participation 2010*, "among the top ten sports [played in Canada], soccer is the only sport that showed an increase (0.8%) in the overall participation rate (based on the Canadian population – sport participants or not) between 2005 and 2010" (p. 30). With over 850,000 registered players it is now one of the most popular team sports in Canada (Canada Soccer Association, 2014; 2015a). Additionally, it is the most popular team sport amongst girls and boys ages 5-14, representing 30% and 40% of all registered soccer players nationwide (Clark, 2008; Canadian Soccer Association, 2015a). It is the third most played sport among adults ages 15 and over, and with women and girls comprising 41% of all registered soccer players, it is most frequently played by and one of the most popular sports amongst women and girls (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Canadian Soccer Association, 2015a). Alongside participating, Canadian spectators are keen in their support of the Canadian national team programs. The Canadian men's national soccer team recorded their "strongest ever home support" boasting a 38% increase in home game attendance for their 2012 season (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a, p. 17). Likewise, the women's national team, consistently ranked amongst the top 10 women's soccer teams in the world (FIFA, 2013b; 2016), drew record breaking crowds for the 2012 Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) Women's Olympic Qualifiers and were at the center of "the most-watched Canadian event of the [2012 London Olympic] Games" in their semi-final against USA (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a, p.19). Canadians are excited to become involved in amateur soccer and the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) has worked hard to satisfy

Canadian's growing passion and enthusiasm for the game. Canada hosted CONCACAF and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) tournaments in 1998, 2002, 2007, and 2012 (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a; 2013b) with great success. Most recently Canada hosted the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup – which broke the record for the “largest group-stage attendance in the history of the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup without the host nation team playing” (Canadian Soccer Association, 2014a, p. 18) – and the 2015 Women's World Cup, FIFA's first coast to coast competition across five time zones which attracted record number of spectators for the FIFA Women's World Cup (Canadian Soccer Association, 2015a). Notably, Canada has hosted more international women's soccer tournaments than men's tournaments. Hosting such events has increased the popularity of women's soccer in Canada (FIFA, 2012), gained Canadian women's soccer global recognition, and prompted the CSA to develop legacy programs and integrate the development and promotion of women's soccer within their strategic plan and organizational objectives (Canadian Soccer Association, 2014b). The overwhelming participation of Canadians in soccer, as well as Canada's ability to host multiple international soccer tournaments are testaments to the growth and development of soccer in Canada, the growing popularity of soccer amongst Canadians, and potential growth in popularity of women's soccer.

### **Presenting a Unique Population**

Despite the position of soccer within the Canadian sport institution, there are results within *Sport Participation 2010* that complicate the development and popularity of women's soccer in Canada and the climate in which Canada hosted the 2014 and 2015 FIFA women's tournaments. According to *Sport Participation 2010*: (i) the gender gap in sport has increased in favor of men, (ii) of the 981 000 adults that participate in sport, only 27.83% are women, (iii) the

percentage of the population involved in amateur sport as officials – individuals that oversee sporting contests and enforces the rules – has decreased from 1992 to 2010, however, (iv) there is an increased involvement of women as officials in amateur sport (Canadian Heritage, 2013). Women’s active participation in sport is decreasing, however “long dominated by men, officiating in amateur sport has seen an increase in the involvement of women over the years. In 1992, men outnumbered women 5 to 1 in these activities but by 2010 the ratio had improved to 3 to 1” (Canadian Heritage, 2013, p. 52). Though women’s active participation is decreasing, are women now seeking to occupy new roles in sport? At the intersection of the growth and development of women’s soccer, the increase of women officials, and an overall decrease in the percentage of the population involved in amateur officiating, is a unique population – the woman soccer referee.

Despite the increase in women officiating, women soccer referees continue to be under-represented – this is a global, national, and provincial phenomenon. Women soccer referees account for 10% of the registered soccer referees globally with almost 80,000 of them across 177 of FIFA’s member associations. The majority of these referees are within the USA and Canada, home to 28% and 21% of the world’s women soccer referees, respectively (FIFA, 2014). With approximately 20,000 total registered referees Canada has the 9<sup>th</sup> largest referee population across FIFA’s member associations, and of this population 23% are women (Canadian Soccer Association, 2012; FIFA, 2016). Moreover, in 2011, 54% of Canadian soccer referees were registered in Ontario (Ontario Soccer Association, 2012), of which only 9.5% are women (Ontario Soccer Association, 2013). Amongst the other provinces and territories that have reported the demographics of their referee population (Appendix A), Ontario has the greatest number of registered referees and the second greatest number of women soccer referees,

however, this representation is not equitable. When compared to Alberta, British Columbia, Québec, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, PEI, and Saskatchewan, Ontario has the greatest total number of referees – men and women combined – however, we have the lowest representation of women soccer referees. Specifically, Québec has 6827 registered referees – 3890 less than Ontario – however women soccer referees comprise 28% of the total referees registered in Québec –19% more than the women soccer referees in Ontario.

Though under-represented, the female soccer referee talent in Canada is strong and has impressively represented Canada on the world stage. In 2013, 6 of the 10 Canadian referees appointed to the FIFA List of Referees and Assistant Referees were women and have since represented Canada at FIFA and CONCACAF women's and men's, youth and adult championship competitions (Canadian Soccer Association, 2012; 2013; 2015). Amongst them, the all Canadian crew that officiated the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup championship match – a first in any international football championship – led by Carol-Anne Chénard who made history as “the first woman to officiate a championship match in two editions of the same competition”, as she also officiated the championship match of the 2010 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup (Canadian Soccer Association, 2015b, p. 9). In recent years the CSA has been dedicated to developing, educating, and providing greater opportunities for women soccer referees (Canadian Soccer Association, 2014a; 2014b), and since hosting the 2014 and 2015 Women's World Cup championship events, has made it their goal to “invest in technical leadership by supporting...players, coaches and officials at all levels of the sport” (Canadian Soccer Association, 2014b, p. 1). Within *Strategic plan 2014-2018: Leading a soccer nation*, the CSA wrote,

Our sport needs more than just strong players and coaches: we must fully develop our officials and administrators who support the game. It is important to continually invest in the people who make the game happen. (p. 4)

Thus, this is a prime opportunity to address women soccer referees in Canada and inspire, motivate, and develop Canada's women soccer referees as we have witnessed the success of our elite Canadian women soccer referees at a time when the nation was intently watching the field of play.

With the continued growth of women's soccer in Canada, it is important that we integrate women into all levels of the sport. We cannot allow women's sport – and sports in general – to further develop into another exclusionary site for women. Current knowledge on women in sport recognizes that women face numerous barriers within the sport institution that lead to women's lack of participation and development within sport and contribute to the overall under-representation of women within the sport institution (Hall, 1996; 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012). However, we know very little about women in soccer who continue to participate and develop their skills despite the many barriers that sportswomen face. Though I am able to loosely illustrate the under-representation of women soccer referees with the data provided above, I recognize that this is not enough. There needs to be greater and more detailed statistical information concerning women soccer referees – and soccer referees in general – in order to properly identify and study socio-cultural trends concerning soccer referees on a global, national, and provincial level.

The FIFA Women's Football Survey (2014) provides information regarding the number of women soccer referees across 177 of FIFA's member associations worldwide, however, it does not provide further details as the level of competition, level of development, or ages of the

women that participated in the survey. Researchers like myself who use this information do not get a comprehensive understanding of the position of women soccer referees because the survey does not provide detailed demographic data. Between 2010 and 2014 the CSA only published data regarding the demographics of soccer referees within their 2012 and 2013 annual reports. Likewise, provincial associations are inconsistent in providing similar information; where some associations publish information regarding their total number of referees as well as breakdowns by gender and levels of certification (see: BC Soccer, 2016; Soccer Nova Scotia, 2016; Fédération de Soccer du Québec), others publish only their total number of referees (see: Ontario Soccer Association, 2012; 2016; Saskatchewan Soccer Association, 2016) or do not publish any statistical data concerning referees. These inconsistencies in reporting make it difficult to establish a comprehensive understanding of the representation of women soccer referees across Canada to better tackle the under-representation of women soccer referees nationwide.

Amongst the national governing bodies for the top 10 practiced sports listed in *Sport Participation 2010* (Canadian Heritage) it is not common practice to publish the demographics of officials within the Annual Report. Over the past 6 years Golf Canada provided the total number of rules and handicap certified officials (2014) and national certified Level 4 rules officials (2015); Volleyball Canada (2013; 2014; 2015) reported the total number of indoor beach and volleyball referees; and Swimming Canada (2014; 2015) provided statistics regarding the total number of officials at each level of certification within each province and territory. Unlike the aforementioned organizations, Hockey Canada (2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) publishes detailed demographic data regarding their officials within each Annual Report included in a table that outlines the number of male and female officials at each level of certification within each of their member associations across Canada. This is the most

comprehensive data concerning referees and can help the organization to better understand the state of officiating within their organization, and address issues such as retention, attrition, and the development of their sport officials. Conversely, inconsistencies in reporting the demographics of officials among other sport organizations make it difficult to establish a comprehensive understanding of the state of officiating across Canada, and for researchers like myself to continue to gain a broader understanding of sport officials' participation.

### **The Study**

With the continued growth of women's soccer in Canada, the CSA's proficiency at hosting international women's soccer tournaments, and the growing number of Canadian women becoming amateur sport officials, it is an opportune time to explore how to tackle the issue of under-representation amongst women soccer referees. The aim of this study is to understand current women soccer referees' experiences in an effort to identify the benefits and challenges of being a woman soccer referee in Ontario. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews I explored the dominant and alternative discourses reproduced in the narratives of 15 women soccer referees in order to uncover the socio-cultural factors that motivate women to continue refereeing when others chose to quit or do not consider becoming referees. This exploration employed a feminist lens to guide the development and design of the research agenda, alongside Michel Foucault's concept of subjectivity to answer the guiding research question: how do women make sense of their experiences as referees? This research contributes to the current body of research on women's participation in non-traditional, non-playing roles in sport. Furthermore, it also contributes to the limited body of research on sport officials, broadens the scope with which soccer referees are studied, and gives a voice to an often neglected participant. The results of the analysis can be used to motivate and attract more young women

within the ranks of sport officials and develop strategies to retain women soccer referees within Ontario.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspective**

This exploration of the narratives of women soccer referees was conducted through a feminist lens. Feminist theorizing of sport exists to explain and generate knowledge about “gender relations within our patriarchal society and how they are evidenced by, played out in, and reproduced through sport and other body practices” (Birell, 2000, p. 61) by analyzing the systems and structures within the sport institution that lead to, and perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of women in sport (Scraton & Flintoff, 2002). An analysis informed by Michel Foucault’s concepts of power, discourse, and the subject served as the theoretical framework to explore how women make sense of their experiences as referees.

This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. (Foucault, 1982, p. 781)

## **Power**

A Foucauldian analysis of sport is concerned with the power relations within the social order that target and shape an individual’s actions, attitudes, and beliefs through different practices, forms of knowledge, and sets of norms (Smith Maguire, 2002). It does not focus on power as one main institution that controls greater society. Rather, power is a “multiplicity of force relations” within society (p. 70), influencing all members of society. It is a positive relationship between, and within, individuals and institutions (Smart, 2002; Smith Maguire, 2002), not an exercise of violence or domination. It occurs at all levels of the social order, and its study reveals the particular histories, techniques, and tactics of power (Smart, 2002) and how as individuals, we constitute ourselves as subjects within society (Mills, 1997). However, these elements of power are revealed when we begin the study power from the basic levels of the

social order (Smart, 2002). This bottom-up approach to the study of the social order aligns with feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theorists believe that individuals at the bottom of the social order can provide a critical eye with which to view society in order to reveal the structures and mechanisms that are used to maintain unequal power relations within the social order (Harding, 1993; 2004). Such a view of society permits the study of how power functions in order to develop an understanding of power within our daily lived experiences.

In her discussion of Foucault, Smith Maguire (2002) outlines three key components that underlie power and the understanding of power as a positive and relational concept. Firstly, in a power relationship, an individual's actions, behaviors, and attitudes are influenced by the actions of another – whether an individual or institution. Power is not exercised directly upon the body in ways that cause physical harm; if there is bodily harm it is a relation of violence, not a relation of power. Furthermore, within a power relationship, there must always be room for an individual to resist power or choose an alternate form of power to which to conform; this is the second component. Power exists between free subjects; individuals who are able to choose, and are not forced to comply with systems of power. Once the ability to resist power is removed power relations are once more, relations of violence. Thus relationships such as slave labor are not relationships of power, but relationships of violence. Smith Maguire's (2002) final component of power is that power is exercised and resisted in ways that are historically specific to modern, non-coercive societies. Initially, I found this third component rather confusing, especially in relation to the previous components of power. However, after much research and inquiry I have come to the conclusion that Smith Maguire's main message is that "power is productive". In her explanation of this third component of power Smith Maguire states that "power centers on the productive capacities of the individual" (p. 297), thus power works through the affirmation of

individuals and their mastery of skills in order to influence their actions so they can be productive members within society. Individuals are enticed through non-coercive means such as providing knowledge on how to become productive in order to influence their behaviors, attitudes, and decisions (Smith Maguire, 2002). Thus, power is a non-violent, non-repressive relationship in which individuals are not forced to alter their actions and behaviors but influenced to do so for the perceived benefits to themselves as well as that of the party exercising power.

### **Knowledge**

The non-coercive means through which power is exercised centers around knowledge. Mills (2003) states that “it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (p. 69). Thus power and knowledge have a reciprocal relationship in understanding and maintaining the social order. Power is exercised over individuals by providing them with forms of knowledge that will affect their attitudes, behaviors, and actions within a given context. Furthermore, Mills (2003) ascertains that knowledge works in the interests of particular individuals or institutions. It is produced and maintained in society through the circulation of particular social practices defined by certain discourses. For example, a soccer player who does not like to warm up and stretch before games may be reminded by a coach or trainer of consequences such as cramping, sore muscles, and a risk of injury in order to get the player to do a proper pre-game warm-up. As an instructor and advisor to the athlete the coach/trainer is regarded as having legitimate knowledge on the proper pre-game warm-up and the athlete is likely to heed her advice and regard it as truth. This knowledge and other knowledge on the proper practices of “the athlete” are used by the coach/trainer to shape, control, and discipline the soccer player to proper sporting practices and behaviors in order to create/develop a skilled athlete (Shogan, 1999). Thus, where imbalances of

power exist, there will be the production and use of knowledge; and in producing knowledge for others, one is making a claim for power and establishing themselves as a legitimate speaker of knowledge (Mills, 2003; Shogan, 1999).

### **Discourse**

The term “discourse” is not one to be taken lightly. Depending on one’s area of study, theoretical perspective, aim, and purpose of study the term discourse may take on a variety of meanings (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Foucault (1972) himself did not rest on one working definition of discourse, rather he commented:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word “discourse”, I believe I have, in fact added to its meaning: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable [*sic*] group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. (p. 80)

Many authors attempt to define and outline discourse (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Elder-vass, 2011; McHoul & Grace, 1993), however, Mills (1997), in *Discourse: The new critical idiom*, enhanced my understanding of discourse as it pertains to this study. Firstly, discourses are contextual. They are dependent on the social context in which they are enacted, the social practices that enact them, and the influencing institutions. They have “meaning, force, and effect” (p.13) within a given social context. They are “organized around practices of exclusion” (p. 12) – they define who or what actions, attitudes, and beliefs are outside societal norms. They do not exist in isolation – they exist in relation or opposition to other discourses of similar force or effect. Resultantly, all discourses are reconstructions of discursive fragments deriving from a myriad of related discourses (McGee, 1990). Lastly, discourses are neither static, nor constant; they are the “site of constant contestation of meaning” (p. 16). Thus, in navigating “discourse” I

recognize that discourses are – written and unwritten – bodies of knowledge that illustrate the relations between forms of knowledge, disciplinary practices, and forms of social control that uphold them (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Within the context of this study, I define discourses as: the ideas and statements used to define societal norms, and the attitudes, behaviors, and actions that do, or do not, comply with these norms. They dictate the ways in which we understand and navigate our daily experiences as well as the how we view and understand ourselves within society (Elder-vass, 2011; Mills, 2003; Smith Maguire, 2002).

### **The Subject**

“Discourse transmits, produces, and reinforces power, or, conversely, it can oppose and subvert power by undermining and exposing it” (Mahrouse, 2005, p.29). Within society there are dominant discourses that define our norms and alternative discourses that either challenge dominant discourses, or are complicit with them (Mills, 1997). They exist to both uphold and destabilize societal norms, and we are constituted as “subjects” through these discourses. Foucault (1982) explains that as free subjects, we are *subject to* a discourse by “control and dependence” which effects our actions, behaviors, and beliefs; and *subject of* discourse when it is tied to “...our own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (p. 781) and defines who we are and our discursive practices. Thus, discourses producing femininity construct what it is to be “woman”, and as women, we are *subject to* these discourses. However, as I understand many of the discourses that construct what it is to be “woman” and I make a conscious effort to alter my actions in order to conform to these discourses, I am also a *subject of* the “woman” discourse.

Furthermore, a discourse often produces multiple subject positions. Markula and Pringle (2006) highlight that within the context of sport, discursive practices of exercise, training, and competition “...create normalized athletes and champions, but can also produce a multitude of

subject positions such as: losers, benchwarmers, social players, tomboys, queers, sports drop-outs, cheats, the lackadaisical, unfit, unskilled, disabled, injured and, of course, ill-disciplined” (p. 102), thus generating a multitude of positions and additional discourses we are “subjects of” or “subject to”. It is through self-awareness that we are able to commit the practices that allow us to choose a desired discourse (Markula, 2003), navigate our social surroundings, and ultimately construct our identities. Markula (2003) wrote, “the critically self-aware individual constantly questions what is seemingly “natural” and inevitable in one’s identity and as a result, creates an identity of one’s own” (p. 102). Thus, by navigating discourses we are making sense of our experiences, positioning ourselves within surrounding discourses, and constructing our identities.

Mahrouse (2005) writes that when looking at discourses the researcher’s aim should be to “examine how the “subject” is constituted through discourses, and in turn how those discourses (re)produce power” (p.29). I aim to explore how current women soccer referees situate themselves, as subjects, within the discourses defining women soccer referees. Are women soccer referees aware of the discourses they are subject to? Do they resist or comply with these discourses? What discursive practices constitute these discourses? I aim to explore the discourses that women soccer referees are aware of and the alternate discourses they may chose.

By employing a Foucauldian analysis to define the framework of this study, I recognize that some women soccer referees reproduce dominant discourses. On the other hand, other women referees may be socially aware subjects within the sport institution that consciously choose to comply or resist a given discourse governing their positions as women soccer referees. Such a theoretical perspective/framework explores how women make sense of their experiences as soccer referees in an effort to encourage women to become soccer referees, motivate current women soccer referees by highlighting their accomplishments, and gain recognition for women

soccer referees. Sport sociology recognizes that women excel in sport despite the number of barriers they may face in the sport institution (Johnstone & Millar, 2012). Through this study we can come to understand how current women soccer referees endure the current social climate within the sport institution.

### **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

## Women and Sport

Women and girls make up 50.4% of Canada's population, however, they continue to be under-represented in sport "as participants, athletes, coaches, officials, leaders, or administrators" (Johnstone & Millar, 2012, p. 1-2; Statistics Canada). Sport sociology is a prime discipline to explore the issue of women's under-representation in sport, because the field recognizes that sport is a microcosm of society that reflects, facilitates, and reinforces our socio-cultural values (Delany & Madigan, 2009). It takes into consideration our behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes, and answers questions regarding why the trends we see in sport exist. Furthermore, the feminist analysis within sport sociology draws attention to women's lived experiences (Markula, 2005), explores the gender inequalities which lead to the subordination of women in sport, and the socio-cultural elements that constitute gender (Meân, 2001).

The position of women in sport has long been disputed terrain (Messner, 2007). From outright exclusion to conditional inclusion, women have continuously challenged the institution of sport only to be continuously left in a subordinate position. Sportswomen faced exclusion from the Ancient Olympic Games to exclusion from the debut of the Modern Olympic Games, limited variety of sport practices, social stigmatization (Ferez, 2012), gender verification testing (Ritchie, 2003), limited media coverage (Harris & Clayton, 2002), trivialization in the sport media (Bernstein, 2002), and sexualizing of their sporting attire (van Ingen & Kovacs, 2012) among other obstacles, and still we continue to struggle for a respected position within the sport institution. Likewise, women in non-playing roles also face discriminatory practices. Lavoie (2009) and Ferez (2012) recognized that women who do gain inclusion – in any capacity – into sport organizations rarely gain leadership positions. Women in sport organizations are streamlined into "helping" or "servicing" roles rather than important positions such as head

coaches, board members, and higher-level officials. Such exclusionary practices have been accredited to sex-role socialization (Fasting, 1987), the presence of sex-typed sports (Meân, 2001), and sex role stereotyping (Sibson, 2010) within the sport institution. Sibson (2010) ascertains that such practices occur

because the cultural assumption is that women are better at supporting roles (essentially associated with their primary child-care and domestic labor positions within the home), and that men have better managerial, leadership, and decision-making skills, then roles are most often ascribed on this basis. (p. 382)

Women face these issues worldwide despite government intervention, “women friendly” societies, or the growing demand for women’s sport. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century women have greater access to positions of greater influence; however due to barriers such as the glass ceiling women continue to maintain a subordinate position (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009) within sport. The glass ceiling is a longstanding and well-debated limit to the advancement of women within organizations based on attitudinal and organizational biases (Ryan, Barreto, & Schmitt, 2009). Ryan, Barreto, and Schmitt (2009) highlight that such biases also lead to constructs such as: the glass wall – the marginalizing of women toward “feminine” lines of work; the glass slipper – reduced aspirations amongst women; and the glass cliff – the insecurity, instability, and uncertainty which accompanies a woman’s position of power. Sartore and Cunningham (2007) ascertain that such beliefs and biases inhibit women within sport and harbour the “unconscious formation and manifestation of self-limiting behaviors [*sic*]” (p. 245-246) amongst women in sport. Likewise Norman (2010; 2013) sites these very reasons amongst homologous reproduction – discriminatory hiring practices, agency barriers – lack of interest, and lower self-efficacy as explanations for the under-representation of women in coaching. The longstanding issue of

discrimination against women in sport is intertwined within our history and culture and is deeply rooted within our society as issues of gender equity and inequality (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989).

Women are regarded as subordinate to the masculine power – machismo – that defines sport due to the physicality, aggression, competitive nature of sport that are synonymous with masculinity (Meân, 2001). Mistakenly, machismo is not solely responsible for the subordination of women in sport, rather the fault lies within the patriarchal society (Johnson, 2005) that stands as the socio-cultural context of sport. Johnson (2005) dictates that a society is deemed patriarchal if it is (i) male-dominated (ii) male-identified and (iii) male centered. In a male dominated society, positions of power and authority are reserved for and occupied by men. Lips (2000) notes that women struggle to gain positions of power and those who do are marginalized or seen as the token woman. This is accounted to the corporate “male model” of success in which organizations seek strength, determination, and hard work in candidates within their ranks, however these are also the characteristics that are associated with masculinity (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Lips, 2000). Furthermore Lips (2000), Caudwell (2011), and Fasting (1987) argue that men’s access to positions of power is often regarded as “natural order”, though it is a patriarchal measure used to maintain the status quo and keep women “in-line”. The male-identified aspect of our society speaks to what we believe is good, desirable, preferable, and normal in regards to masculinity; it is the reason we may use masculine pronouns in general speech (Johnson, 2005). Such speech is accredited to the symbolic superiority of “manliness” within society that keeps men in the foreground and women lost and unmentioned in the background (Johnson, 2005). Lastly, the salience and celebration of the male athlete within society contributes to Johnson’s final criteria of a patriarchal society: male-centered. This is visible at all levels of society – home, school, the office, etc. – as the achievements and performance of male athletes gain

greater support and viewership than women's sport (Mercier & Werthner, 2002). We live and play in a patriarchal society that has taken women and the marginalized position of women in sport for granted. Resultantly, women are consistently forced into the background to accommodate men, thus allowing patriarchy to define elements of what is "manly" and what is "womanly" – masculinity and femininity (Kane, 1995).

Women are under-represented in sport because the pillars of patriarchal society have ensured that women, and the characteristics of "femininity", fall outside of the realm of what is favourable in sport. Those of us who dare to gain inclusion within the sport institution are considered "others"; we face discrimination and marginalization, and often struggle to find others like us – women – developing and excelling in sport. Ultimately, discriminatory practices against women in sport have not only presented obstacles for women to overcome in order to gain inclusion into the sport institution, but have also resulted in the under-representation of women within the institution of sport (Fasting, 1987; Messner, 2007).

### **Women and Soccer**

The socio-cultural study of women in soccer is neither new nor burgeoning. Harris (2001) argues that "soccer is the most important team game for women with some thirty million players registered world wide" (p. 23), however the study of the many women participating in soccer is limited and narrow in scope (Cox & Thompson, 2000; Harris, 2001). Existing studies on women in soccer have focused on players (Kristiansen, Broch, & Pedersen, 2014; Meân, 2001), coaches (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011; Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012), administrators (Lavoi, 2009; Welford, 2011), and fans (Jones, 2008) centered on gender relations at intersections of identity (Grundlingh, 2010), sexuality (Meân & Kassing, 2008), race, and ethnicity (Caudwell, 2011; Ratna, 2011). Though these studies may celebrate women's

developments and achievements, they also document and reveal the continued struggles of women in soccer (Caudwell, 2011). Furthermore, the relative lack of literature on women in soccer, compared to the multitude of studies on men's soccer (Forbes, Flemming, & Edwards, 2014) highlight and uphold women's struggle to be accepted as legitimate soccer participants (Caudwell, 2011; Welford, 2011).

The continuous neglect of women in soccer is in part reflexive of the socio-cultural and historical status of soccer within the countries from which the current studies arise. During my search for relevant and related literature it became apparent that the majority of existing literature on women in sport originated in the UK, Europe, and Australia. These studies recognize soccer as their national sport, essential to their national identity, a site of enculturation, and tell a story in which soccer is woven into the history and development of their respective nations (Harris, 2001; Knoppers & Anthoniosen, 2003; Meân, 2001; 2010; Meân & Kassing, 2008). They also recognize soccer as a male preserve and a prominent site for the production and the performance of the male identity (Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Welford, 2011). They assert that soccer simultaneously promotes and (re)produces masculinity and nationalism – both of which would be devalued by the participation of women in soccer. Thus masculinity and nationalism contribute to the devaluation of women's soccer (Knoppers & Anthoniosen, 2003).

Consequently, these studies tell stories of harassment, abuse, discrimination (Caudwell, 2011) and women contesting hegemony within soccer in order to gain inclusion (Caudwell, 2011; Cox & Thompson, 2000). The role of women in soccer has long been a point of contention in these nations as women struggle against exclusion and hegemonic masculinity to be accepted as legitimate participants in what is viewed as a masculine practice (Caudwell, 2011; Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Harris, 2001). However scholars are confident that women in soccer have and

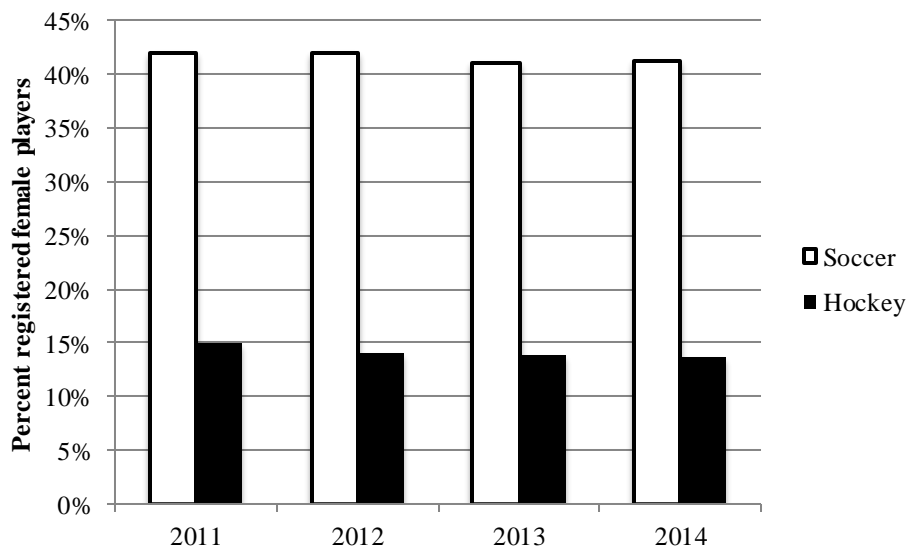
will continue to make strides toward greater equity and equality within soccer. Hong (2003) asserts that soccer

is not exactly the kind of context you would expect for a movement for gender equality, but by a strange turn of events, soccer (association football), the traditional bastion of masculinity and the symbol of men's prestige and privilege, has become something of a significant talisman for women's egalitarian progress in sport. (p. 268)

Contrastingly, in their 2003 study of the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) league, Meân and Kassing (2008) wrote, "soccer does not have a strong history as a male sport in the U.S. despite its strong relationship to masculinity elsewhere in the world (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994). So there is no established standard of male soccer against which women could be position in direct comparison..." (p. 130). Unlike soccer in the UK, the pair established that there are limited forms of hegemonic masculinity, femininity, and sexuality which women must contest to be accepted as legitimate participants in soccer because of the lack of male prowess in soccer in the U.S. (Meân & Kassing, 2008). I wish to extend this very characterization to soccer in Canada. Historians and sociologists alike have established that ice hockey has been tightly woven into Canadian history, was imperative to the Canadian identity, and that ice hockey remains recognized as Canada's national sport (Holman, 2009; Robidoux, 2002) – not soccer. However, despite hockey's historic relevance and symbolic significance to Canadian nationalism today soccer is the most popular sport amongst Canadian youth; it is gaining ground despite the fact that ice hockey remains important in the symbolism of Canadian nationalism. Both sports – ice hockey and soccer – fall within the top ten most popular sports amongst both Canadian youth ages 5-14 and adults 15 and over, therefore I shall use the comparison of hockey

and soccer to illustrate that Canadian soccer is far more feminized than popular soccer culture dictates.

In 2003 Hong reported, “In Canada, a country known as a hockey nation, far more Canadian girls, ages 5-14 now play soccer (28%) than ice hockey (6%)” (p. 28) and in recent years it has gained tremendous popularity amongst boys (Clark, 2008). According to *Sport Participation, 2010* of all active Canadian females, ages 15 and over, 0.72% play hockey and 1.92% play soccer, and of all active Canadian males 8.2% play hockey and 5.10% play soccer (Heritage Canada, 2013). Within their respective associations, soccer has a greater percentage of registered female soccer players than hockey has registered female hockey players as illustrated in Figure 3.1.



*Figure 3.1.* Percentage Canadian female soccer and hockey players, ages 15 and over, registered with the Canadian Soccer Association and Hockey Canada as reported within their Annual Reports from 2011-2014.

Moreover, the success of the Canadian Women’s National Soccer Team has far surpassed that of the Canadian Men’s National Team (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a; 2013b), and though Canadian men’s teams are represented in the North American Soccer League (NASL) and Major

League Soccer (MLS) they do not have the same notoriety and popularity as professional men's hockey in Canada or the men's professional soccer leagues throughout Europe. Thus there are limited hegemonic forms within Canadian professional soccer with which women in Canada can be compared – illustrating that Canadian soccer is far more feminized than popular soccer culture dictates. Resultantly, the dominant narrative concerning women in soccer reflects neither the current status of soccer in Canada, nor the position and experiences of Canadian women in soccer. It is imperative that we study soccer within the Canadian context to better inform and aid the development of women's soccer and women in soccer in Canada. We need more research on women's soccer and women in soccer so that we gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of soccer in Canadian society.

### **Soccer Referees**

Currently, literature specific to soccer referees is limited within sport sociology. Predominantly, research concerning soccer referees focuses on the physical demands and motor skills of referees and assistant referees (Krustrup, Mohr, MacDonald, & Bangsbo, 2004; Krustrup, Helsen, Randers, Christensen, MacDonald, Rebelo, & Bangsbo, 2009; Mrković, Talović, Jelešković, Alić, & Bajramović, 2009; Reilly & Gregson, 2006) and decision-making and interpretations of the offside rule during a match (Boyko, Boyko, & Boyko, 2007; Catteuw, Helsen, Gilis, & Wagemans, 2009; de Morais, 2012; Mallo, Frutos, Juárez, & Navarro, 2012). Alternative research projects explored stress management amongst referees (Gencay, 2009), how referees profile athletes according to race (Wagner-Egger, Gygax, Ribordy, 2012) and gender (Meân, 2001), career longevity (Petracovschi, Mureşan, & Voicu, 2011), violence, abuse (Praschinger, Pomikal, & Stieger, 2011) and game management (Colwell, 2000) often under the overarching theme of referee retention. Research regarding women soccer referees also focuses

on the physiological elements of refereeing (Tscholl, O'Riordan, Fuller, Dvorak, Gutzwiller & Junge, 2007; Tscholl, O'Riordan, Fuller, Dvorak, & Junge, 2007). Additionally, the greater percentage of research regarding soccer referees is generated in the UK, with studies also coming from institutions in Europe, Australia, and the US. To my knowledge there is no socio-cultural research addressing women soccer referees, and particularly women soccer referees in Canada. Sport officials are overlooked in sport research, as they are not viewed as a central component of the sport institution.

### **Sport Officials**

In this section I turn to the wider body of research regarding sport officials to help situate my study amongst existing research as well as to establish the importance and potential contributions of my research study. A sport official is an individual that oversees a sporting contest and administers and enforces the rules; it encompasses referees, umpires and judges (Cunningham, Simmons, Mascarenhas, & Redhead, 2014), of all positions, across a myriad of sports such as basketball, baseball, swimming, and athletics. For example a given soccer match may have a referee, two assistant referees, and a fourth official (FIFA, 2013a), and a baseball game may be overseen by one or more umpires (MLB, 2013); all can be classified as sport officials.

Sport officials are a crucial part of sport at all levels of competition (Balch & Scott, 2007). They have the responsibility of ensuring fair play, enforcing the rules of the game, ensuring the game functions smoothly, and ensuring the safety of all participants (Ackery, Tator, & Snider, 2012). Quoting the work of Glegg and Thompson (1993), Balch and Scott (2007) emphasize, "the official is the essential third dimension of an athletic contest, with the players and coaches consisting of the first and second dimensions, respectively" (p. 4). Though officials

are an important dimension in competition, they have gained little notoriety within the sport institution. Livingston and Forbes (2016) highlight that “their job should be viewed as equally critical to that of their coaching counterparts in providing structured opportunities for participation within sport. However, officials are often marginalized, and particularly so at the grass roots (or entry) level, where they have been described as the most often forgotten component of the sport system” (p. 342). Moreover, officials have been given very little attention within the study of sport (Kellett & Warner, 2011). Currently research regarding athletes, participants, and coaches overshadow research regarding sport officials (Balch & Scott, 2007). Forbes and Livingston assert that sports officials are “understudied” (2016; p. 343) and that existing research on sport officials is “limited in scope” and “sorely neglected” (2013; p. 295). The pair also highlight that “there is a relative dearth of investigations of entry level officials, female officials, and officiating in what might be considered non-mainstream, amateur sport. As such we have a very limited understanding of the experiences of officials who are younger, female, entering at the grass roots level, or contributing to less popular sports” (p.344).

Existing research on sport officials have originated from the experiences of officials in sports such as ice hockey, rugby, basketball, volleyball, baseball, Australian Rules football, soccer, and other team sports, typically focusing on “male adult-aged elite-level officials working within the realm of highly commercialized mainstream professional and college team sports” (p. 343). A small majority of these studies focused on the overarching theme of “retention” – Why do referees discontinue refereeing? How can organizations prevent sport officials from discontinuing? Why do sport officials like officiating? Why do individuals choose to become sport officials? Currently, retention is salient within research on sport officials as researchers, as well as sport organizations, worldwide recognize that despite the development of

various sports, referees are leaving the sport and sport organizations face difficulties in recruiting new officials; this poses an issue for sport development (Kellett & Warner, 2011). Livingston and Forbes (2016) found that since the emergence of studies regarding the psychological aspects of sports officiating in the “mid-to-late 1980s and early 1900s” many researchers continue “to examine sundry aspects of the affective (e.g. stress, burnout, and coping behaviors), cognitive (e.g. decision making and perceptual processes) and psychomotor stressors (e.g. fitness requirements, injuries)” through the overarching theme of “stress” (p. 343).

In their review of existing literature on sport officials Balch and Scott (2007) observe that there is a great proportion of research on sport officials that focus on stress and burnout. Specifically, they refer to the work of Taylor, Daniel, Leith and Burke (1990) – who investigated perceived stress, psychological burnout, and paths to turnover intention – and Goldsmith and Williams (1992) – who investigated perceived stressors for sport officials. Overall, researchers ascertained that there are four stress factors that emerge in the study of sport officials: fear of failure/performance concerns, fear of physical harm, interpersonal conflict, and time pressure. Though these studies focused on psychological factors, these results are important points from which to start off thought for sociological research on sports officials. They help to understand the current experiences of officials, the psychological consequences of their social relations, and question the social structures that contribute to or uphold them. Balch and Scott’s (2007) own investigation explored the personality characteristics of sport officials, implying that there is an underlying similarity amongst all officials; however such a study is problematic within the scope of my research. My research holds firm that all individuals are not the same, despite their occupation of similar social situations; we define our identity according to our experiences, attitudes, culture, and worldview (McLaren, 2002). Research identifying common personality

traits amongst sport officials essentializes what it takes to be a sport official and allows room for criticism that one is an official because of innate characteristics.

The fear of harm or abuse – as identified above – is a dominant factor that contributes to the retention of sport officials – outside of the discourse of stress amongst referees. Notably, research on Canadian ice hockey referees identified that the fear of harm and abuse affects the retention of young and inexperienced referees, more than experienced referees (Forbes & Livingston, 2013). According to Forbes and Livingston (2013) inexperienced referees cite verbal abuse and the fear of verbal abuse as reasons not to continue their participation as referees. Moreover, they suggest that experienced officials – who cited career or family commitments for discontinuing participation as referees – develop coping mechanism to address the stresses of being an official. Though referees can learn to cope with abuse, Ackery, Tator, and Snider (2012) state that an official's fear of abuse affects the on ice safety of participants because the referee becomes preoccupied with elements external to the game.

Kellett and Warner (2011) and Forbes and Livingston (2013) take a unique approach to the study of retention amongst sport officials. In their study of Australian Rules football umpires (referees), Kellette and Warner (2011) ascertain that a sense of community is an essential component in retaining umpires. They operate from Kellett and Shilbury's (2007) premise that the social worlds created by umpires is paramount to their retention in the sport. Forbes and Livingston (2013), however, investigated the retention of Canadian ice hockey referees using the theory of perceived organizational support because they found that despite an official's level of experience, organizational support was a factor in referee retention. Unlike the approaches of the afore mentioned researchers, Kellett and Shilbury (2007) and Forbes and Livingston (2013) approached the issue of retention through the systems of support for sport officials. Ultimately,

both studies concluded with one common factor that affected the retention of sport officials: the lack of administrative consideration of referees when making decisions that affect them (Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Kellett & Warner, 2011). Thus amongst stress and abuse, organizational support is one of the main factors contributing to the low retention of sport officials. Other factors included inequity; competition; [lack of] common interests amongst officials, no sense of community amongst officials; access to opportunities for advancement; appropriate remuneration; opportunities for formal skills development; and appreciation of their efforts. These factors also led to ice hockey referees discontinuing their roles as officials. It is important to note that despite the sport or geographic location of officials, these factors affect officials across a myriad of sports (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Canadian Heritage, 2013; Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Kellett & Shilbury, 2007; Kellett & Warner, 2011; Titlebaum, Haberlin & Titlebaum, 2009). Though their game time experiences and rules of play may be different, the factors that contribute to whether or not an individual continues to be a sport official are similar. The issues that they face are not sport specific; they are engrained within the sport institution.

As a soccer referee I find the marginal view of sport officials within the sport institution unfortunate. I believe that sport officials contribute to the growth and development of sports for youth and adults alike and that there are factors other than retention and stress that effect sport officials. *According to the Canadian Sport for Life – Long Term Athlete Development 2.0*, Canadian Sport for Life – Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) was integrated into *Canadian Sport Policy* in 2012. This framework established key outcomes of physical literacy, sport excellence, and keeping Canadians active for life, and has since been adopted by federally supported National Sports Organizations (NSO) throughout Canada. Cuskelly and Hoye (2013) ascertain that sport officials are imperative to sport development policies such as LTAD. They

highlight that in order for sports to grow and develop, so must the number of sport officials to meet the growing number of participants. As well, in order to develop the quality of play as well as the quality and skill of participants then the officials must also develop. Sport officials guarantee the quality of the sport, as they are central to the sport experiences for all those involved including players, coaches, and spectators. Sport officials play a larger role in sport development and the sport institution at large than what is reflected by current sport research. I would speculate that if sport officials were studied, recognized, and regarded in the same light as coaches and administrators they would be better represented and considered in sport policy, management, and development. Referees are an essential, unmediated arbitrator of active play and deserved to be recognized as such.

## **Chapter 4: Research Method**

## Sample and Recruitment

Soccer has flourished in Ontario making it a prime location to study women soccer referees. When compared to all provinces and territories, Ontario has the highest percentage of total registered soccer players (41.79%) and youth and senior female soccer players (41.97%) registered in Canada (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a), and the highest percentage of soccer referees (54%) registered in Canada (Ontario Soccer Association, 2013). As well, Toronto, Ottawa, and Hamilton, Ontario were amongst the host cities for the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, and 2015 PanAm Games Soccer respectively.

This study included English-speaking women, ages 21-54, ranging from recreational to competitive soccer referees. Referees were selected for the study if they had one or more years experience refereeing in Ontario and have refereed at least one Under 13 (U13) boys and girls soccer game, at either the recreational or competitive levels, during their career. In order to properly study how women continue to referee in the climate of the current soccer culture it is imperative that the women included in the study were active, returning referees. Thus had to be refereeing for more than one year. Additionally, all referees were registered with the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), the provincial body in charge of the certification and regulation of referees in Ontario, at the time of the study. Due to access and limited financial resources for travel, the study focused primarily, on referees in Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa. Prior to recruitment, ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (Appendix B).

The women for this study were recruited regardless of socio-economic factors such as sexuality, race, class, etc. in order to uncover if these factors would naturally appear in their narratives and affect their experiences as referees. Typically, age is not an accurate indicator of a

referee's years of experience or grading level. For example, at the time of recruitment I, the researcher, was a 23 year old District 8 referee with 5 years of experience, however there are referees with over 20 years of experience that are a District 7 and 45 year old referees, with 2 years of experience, that are a District 5. Consequently, age was not used as a selection criterion. Furthermore, level of certification was not a selection criterion for this study because the under-representation of women soccer referees occurs at all levels of refereeing, not simply for elite or recreational referees.

Referees were recruited for this study using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling utilizes existing and convenient social networks in order to recruit the "hidden populations" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 6) that would otherwise have not been easily accessible. I first reached out to the 6 women that I was acquainted with from our work on the WISER Committee and 2 referees that I worked with in the past – women soccer referees that I do not interact with outside refereeing. Even though I am personally acquainted with these women there was no concern for coercion because I have never been in a position of authority with regards to these women and am not emotionally close to them. They were invited by email to voluntarily participate in the study and at the same time I encouraged them to forward the email to fellow female referees that they are acquainted with, whether they personally decided to participate in the study or not. From this initial recruitment attempt I was able to secure 8 women to participate in my study. Further recruitment was required so the email invitation was posted in a private Facebook group composed of women soccer referees across Ontario entitled: WISER – Women in Soccer Empowering Referees, moderated by the members of the OSA's WISER Committee. From this post, referees were able to contact me by email to volunteer for the study, unfortunately many of the referees that were interested, though in Ontario, were too far away for

me to access them (ex: Bolton, Guelph, Thunder Bay). As I was also an active referee at the time that I was trying to recruit women for the study I was able to meet and introduce myself to women soccer referees that I met at the 2014 Cataraqui Clippers Soccer Club Ambassador Cup Girl's Tournament in Kingston, ON, the 2014 Ontario Women's Soccer League (OWSL) Championships in Georgetown, ON, and at my league games, some of which I was able to referee with, and recruit them for my study. After three months I recruited 15 women ages 21-53, 4 refereeing at the Recreational level of competition, 9 at the Intermediate level of competition, and 2 at the Elite level of competition (Table 4.1). Each woman is identified with a pseudonym of her choosing in order to respect and protect her anonymity and I did not reference the district in which she referees or her direct neighborhood as for some of these women, due to the low number of soccer referees at the higher levels of competitions, these details can be very revealing.

Table 4.1

*Summary of the 15 Participants Included in the Study*

Name	Age	Level of Competition	Years of Experience
Alexandria	38	Elite	22
BB	21	Intermediate	3
Brianna	26	Elite	14
Brooke	28	Intermediate	6
Kathy	41	Intermediate	18
Kayla	25	Recreational	2
Mallory	44	Recreational	2
Muhtikulus	52	Intermediate	9
Musia	51	Intermediate	6
Océanne	21	Recreational	8
Patricia	25	Intermediate	9
Refhre	53	Intermediate	20
Sarah	33	Intermediate	5
Sarai	31	Intermediate	2
Vera	54	Recreational	7

To further protect and respect the anonymity of each of my participants and ease the readers understanding of each referees level of certification I created “Levels of Competition” to better describe the level of play at which each referee’s certification qualifies them to referee. The corresponding OSA grading level for each Level of Competition can be found in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Level of Competition and Corresponding OSA Grading Levels*

OSA Referee Grading Levels	Levels of Competition	Number of Referees
District 1-5	Recreational	4
District 6-7	Intermediate	9
District 8		
Regional 9-10	Elite	2
National 11		
FIFA 12		

*Note.* OSA referee Grading Levels and Levels of Competition are from the “OSA Grading Protocol

**Data Collection**

Data collection was completed in the summer/spring of 2014, starting in June and ending in October. This time period was chosen because referee registration closed on March 31, 2014, thus the status of returning referees were final. Additionally, the month of April marked the start of the outdoor season during which most referees are active and have a greater availability of games. Data collection ended in October when the outdoor season came to a close and I was able to schedule the last set of participant interviews.

Each referee was observed during a soccer game of their choosing and subsequently scheduled for an individual semi-structured, in-depth interview. During the observation of the referee, I focused on the discursive practices of refereeing. This included how the referee interacted with the coaches, players, and parents; the referee’s presence during the game; the referee’s self-presentation (uniform, posture, etc.) and any discursive practices that the referee may engage in, that may or may not arise during the interview (Appendix C). I wanted to see if

they had an on field persona that differed from the way they interacted with me during the interview or the ways in which they spoke of themselves as referees, and I wanted to notice any similarities and/or differences that were common amongst the referees within the study. During observation I took field notes to properly retain the important components of watching the referee. The referee was aware of my presence at her game and the components that would be of importance to me. Observation lasted the duration of the referee's time at the soccer field for their game. This included their actions upon arrival at the field, during the game, and when they left the field at the end of the game.

It was important to observe each participant in conjunction to an interview, in order to note the discursive practices that accompany being a woman soccer referee. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) ascertain that our ways of talking are produced, received, and interpreted through discursive practices. Additionally, the pair state, though discourse constitutes our social world, discourses are constituted by social practices. Thus, discursive practices are important social practices that contribute to the construction of our social worlds, identities, and relations. It is through discursive practices that we can see how a referee has come to engage in the talk that occurs during the interview. Furthermore, in order to analyze an individual's subject position within a discourse, we must first make observations regarding the discursive practices that define these discourses (Markula & Pringle, 2006) in order to understand how they make meaning of their experiences.

The date, time, and location of the interview was chosen by the referee and often occurred within an hour or two weeks of the game observation date. Due to scheduling conflicts this did not always occur and some referees were interviewed more than two weeks following their game observation date. Due to scheduling conflicts Vera's interview was conducted over

Skype, however all other referee interviews were conducted in person at the referee's home, a local restaurant, and a private study room at the University of Ottawa. Each interview, approximately 90 minutes in length, focused on the game during which they were observed, and 4 key areas of their experience as referees: (1) how and why they began to referee, (2) why they continue to referee, (3) the issues they face as referees as well as the benefits of being a referee, and (4) their gendered experiences as a woman soccer referee (Appendix E). All interviews were recorded using an electronic recording device and transcribed verbatim for data analysis. Once the interviews were transcribed they were sent back to each referee for fact checking and to ensure that they were comfortable with the details of each transcript.

### **Analytical Approach**

This study used an analytical approach that focused on the critical discourse analysis of the verbal texts from the semi-structured interviews. Critical discourse analysis is the combination of discourse analysis and critical linguistics (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). The constituents of the approach are harmonious because like discourse, language is contextual and is influenced by, and influences, our attitudes, behaviors, and actions (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Critical discourse analysis aims to understand how we reproduce and interpret discourses in texts, both written and verbal (Meân & Kassing, 2008). It maintains that language is indicative of our subject positions and our use of language is indicative of the active role of discourse in constructing our social worlds (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Additionally, critical discourse analysis maintains that unscripted, unmediated, unedited talk is reflexive of how we make sense of ourselves within a given social context. Thus texts must originate from their original context or as close as possible to the original context (Barker

& Galasiński, 2001). Meân and Kassing (2008) ascertain that “many researchers consider interviewing such a familiar format and context that it comprises a comparatively “natural site of talk” (p. 131). Furthermore, when the interview properly employs an “unstructured, open-ended” approach, it bears closer resemblance to a conversation allowing for more natural talk to occur (p. 132).

**Researcher/referee: My position as an insider.** This analytical approach further complicated the role and work of the researcher within the study as presented in “This is Personal...” Burns, Fenwick, Schmied and Sheehan (2012) highlight that achieving an enhanced understanding and holistic account of a group’s attitudes and behaviors “requires the researcher to maintain a presence “within” the social world they wish to observe” (p. 53) – which can often be challenging for researchers that are unfamiliar with the participants and setting at the center of their study. As a woman, my “shared subordinate structural position” with my study participants positively influenced the interviewing process and put me in a position to construe what comes from the participants, and because of our shared experience(s) I was well organised in approaching an exploration of women’s lived experiences (Kim, 2012, p. 264). Moreover, as a soccer referee I was privileged to be an “insider” amongst my study participants as my presence was already established within the refereeing domain as a female soccer referee with over 5 years of experience. By virtue of my insider status, I was well positioned to access and explore the ways in which women soccer referees make sense of their experiences due to my familiarity with the soccer/refereeing language, culture, and experiences, and the common meaning(s) of the discourses used within the domain (Kim, 2012). Furthermore, our shared experiences provided me with a common ground with which to build rapport with each participant, positively influence their attitude towards me as a researcher, and better open the channels of conversation

for more “natural” uninhibited talk beyond our shared position as women within the social structure (Yakushko, Badiie, Mallory & Wang, 2011).

As an insider I had greater access to the referee domain, the woman soccer referee population, and I could easily build rapport with my participants, however, as a researcher I had to explore their experiences and analyze their texts with an outsider lens (Burns et. al, 2012). I had to toe the line between being understanding of and sympathetic to the issues faced by women soccer referees, but be careful not to over simplify or misconstrue their experiences and alter the stories that they wanted to tell; I had to remain true to the stories and experiences of each woman within my study without heavily asserting my own biases or making assumptions about their experiences beyond what they related to me. This situation can often result in role confusion, over-identification with the participants and ultimately the loss of analytical perspective for the researcher that is not mindful of her insider status (Kim 2012; Burns et. al, 2012; Yakushko et. al, 2011).

Contrastingly, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) present “the space between” as a challenge to the dichotomy of the insider or outsider researcher. The pair highlights that

holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group.

Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference. It seems paradoxical, then, that we would endorse binary alternatives that unduly narrow the range of understanding and experience. (p. 60)

Furthermore,

as qualitative researchers we are not separate from the study, with limited contact with our participants. Instead, we are firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it. The stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not

lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals with us as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting. We cannot retreat to a distant “researcher” role. Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood. Within this circle of impact is the space between. The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords. (p. 61)

Ultimately I had to remain mindful of my position and the aim and potential contribution(s) of my study throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that my actions, analytical interpretations, and relationships with my participants did not negatively impact my study rather than aim to be wholly objective. Barker and Galasiński (2001) highlight that critical discourse analysis is interpretative. Thus the researcher is not objective; my attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions are unavoidably woven into the analysis of the texts. However, this does not pose a direct threat to the credibility of the study, as the pair also highlight that critical discourse analysis maintains the assumption that, like discourse, the analysis of discourses are not static, there is no true interpretation; analyses are ever-changing and subject to change.

### **“Doing” Discourse Analysis**

Following the transcription and fact checking of each interview, data analysis was conducted in three phases: (1) coding, (2) discursive constructions, and (3) discursive mapping – in order to organize, analyze, and make sense of the texts. Each phase was adopted from various researchers and sources in place of a defined methodological approach. Coyle (2007) presents this approach to discourse analysis for first timers seeking a systematic methodological approach

to discourse analysis. In the following subsections I will explain and outline each of my three phases of discourse analysis.

**Phase 1: Coding.** Borrowed from Potter and Wetherell (1995), coding is a way of making the data collected throughout the participant observation and interview processes more manageable by focusing on the relevant materials. This phase involved manually coding each interview transcript using a coding template of my design (Appendix D). The coding template was organized according to the 3 subcategories in the interview guide: “The Experience” – which focuses on why they became a referee, why they continue to referee, and their experiences as a referee thus far; “Referee” – which focuses on their time and performance on the field; and “Woman Referee” – which focuses on their gendered experiences as referees, and the 58 questions included within each of the 3 sections in the interview guide, as well as a section reserved for texts that did not directly answer one of the 58 questions (“EXTRA”). Excerpts from the transcript were then organized into the coding template according to their ability to answer each of the 58 questions. This process was then completed for each of the 15 interviews resulting in 15 coding sets. This process allowed me to closely examine and compare each referee’s answers to a particular question.

It is important to note that during Coding, not all 58 questions were answered for each of the 15 interviews. In an effort to generate natural talk the interview was conducted as a conversation between the researcher and the participant, rather than a series of questions and answers (Meân & Kassing, 2008). Subsequently, questions were omitted during the interview if they did not apply to a given participant, questions arose that were not on the interview guide, if we were unable to address a specific topic or question due to the progression of the interview, or due to time constraints. Each interview was approximately 90 minutes in duration, and to ensure

that all questions were answered would result in a lengthy and exhaustive interview.

Additionally, some answers addressed more than one question, thus the subsequent question could be skipped during the interview. I did not view this as a point of contention during analysis because I am aware that the referees within my study have varying grading levels, experience, are affected by different socio-cultural factors, and that the subjects addressed in the interview were those pertinent to their experiences as referees and all referees did not have the same experiences.

The resultant texts were analyzed to uncover the discourses that both regulate the participant's statements, and are drawn upon as they make sense of their experiences, their positions, and the positions of others within their social context (Markula & Pringle, 2006). This analysis took place in phases 2 and onward.

**Phase 2: Discursive constructions.** In this phase of the analytic process I chose to adopt Willig's (2001) first stage of Foucauldian discourse analysis. In this stage Willig instructs that we determine how discursive objects are constructed in each interview. In order to do so we must: a) define the discursive objects which apply to the study b) highlight each referee's reference to the discursive objects and c) identify the ways in which each object is defined, described, and associated with, by each referee. I chose to adapt this approach by using the key areas of the referee's experience that I defined earlier in the study as the discursive objects. The key areas of experience are: (1) becoming a referee, (2) being a referee (benefits and challenges), (3) continuing to referee, and (4) being a woman referee. I then created a "Constructs Template" that was organized into 4 sections using the 4 key areas of experience. Excerpts from each coding set that made reference to one of the 4 key areas of experience were put into its respective section and then categorized according to how the excerpt was constructed – defined, described,

and associated with. This process resulted in a wide array of discursive constructions that included: athleticism, doubt, enjoyment, community support, validation, mothering, role models, elitism, and many others.

**Phase 3: Discursive mapping.** As I identified the ways in which the key areas of experience were constructed in the texts it became apparent that there were strong relationships between many of the constructs. I noticed that the same excerpt could be applied to more than one area of experience, the same construction could be applied to multiple excerpts, and many constructs were closely related and interconnected. Initially, I found these relationships confusing as I found it difficult to clearly differentiate one construction from another. However, as I analyzed more texts I became intrigued by these relationships and wanted to explore the interconnectivity amongst the various discursive constructions. At this time I revisited the notion that discourses do not occur in isolation, rather they are derived from other discourses (McGee, 1990; Mills, 1997). I required an analytic process that would allow me to both further synthesize my data and explore the multiple relations between the resulting constructs. This led me to the process of discursive mapping borrowed from Jackson II's (1999) analysis of group interviews with white students at historically Black colleges in the United States.

Using the process outlined by Jackson II (1999) I first wrote out the myriad of discursive constructions that resulted from phase 2 on a sheet of paper and grouped together the constructs that were similar, closely related and connected. This process resulted in 10 groups of constructs that I then named according to an overarching theme that pertained to all the constructs within it – these became my discursive fields (Appendix F). I put all the excerpts that applied to each discursive field into a document, resulting in 10 documents – 1 for each discursive field. Jackson II (1999) used discursive territories to classify the resulting groups of statements, however, I

found the concept of a discursive field more fitting. Borrowed from Weedon (2004), discursive fields are “made up of competing discourses that produce different subject positions and forms of identity” (p. 17) – which I felt better described my groupings, as Jackson II (1999) did not provide a definition of what is a discursive territory.

Each discursive field highlighted how women constructed their experiences as referees as well as the discursive fragments, discursive practices, and subject positions that pertain to their experiences. According to these fields women construct their experiences as referees according to: (1) ability, (2) knowledge/experience, (3) rewards, (4) commitment, (5) being discounted, (6) abuse, (7) being alien, (8) helping, (9) support, and (10) a relationship to the game – each an area to be further constructed and explored through analysis (Jackson II, 1999).

### **Intentions vs. Reality**

Overall, the recruitment process was both exciting and disheartening. I began the recruiting process with the utmost confidence and thought I would be able to recruit 20 women for this study as I know quite a few women soccer referees, I am a part of Facebook group filled with women soccer referees across Ontario, and I know women who have intensive networks of women soccer referees. However, when it came time for recruitment, these avenues provided me with little to no recruits. I was not able to successfully recruit referees through the Facebook group, as I was unable to reach many of the women that were interested because they were in Burlington, Guelph, or Thunder Bay. Women that were in the group and living in Ottawa were not interested in taking part in my study. As for the women that I know have networks of women soccer referees, some of them hesitated to reach out to their friends on my behalf; some of the women whose contact information I received from other referees expressing interest on their behalf did not respond to my emails or telephone messages; and some contacts who did respond

to me later changed their mind to say that they would be “too busy” or are no longer interested. Ultimately my lack of resources (money and transportation) hindered my ability to recruit women outside of Toronto and the Ottawa area, and the obstacles I encounter in recruiting hindered my ability to recruit as wide an array of women soccer referees as I hoped.

Moreover given the opportunity to do another study like this I would definitely try harder to recruit referees between the ages of 18-20. I think this younger woman soccer referee is a voice that I am missing throughout my study and am curious to know how she navigates the domain of refereeing. I spoke to younger soccer referees throughout the recruitment process and many of them were not interested. I think they thought it would be a lot of work for them, or they were too shy, and as it was the summer, some of them were leaving for summer break vacations before they began university in the fall. I think I was overly optimistic going into recruitment because I know of the importance of doing this study and the possibility for the information that I would be able to uncover. I thought that women soccer referees would jump at the opportunity to participate and was disappointed when they did not. Throughout the recruiting process I contacted more than 30 women soccer referees and in the end I was able to secure 15.

I must say that I am not disappointed with the cohort of women soccer referees included within my study since they have a wide range of ages and years of experience. Many of the referees, though they are now intermediate, once refereed at the Elite level of competition and had a greater perspective on their role and identity as a referee and were able to share a myriad of experiences that impacted them during their time as soccer referees. I was able to contrast these perspectives and experiences to that of the younger and less experienced referees and establish a greater understanding of the experiences of the woman soccer referee.

The participant observation portion of the data collection proved to be more difficult than I anticipated. Throughout this study I believed that my position as a referee would not have a considerable affect on my position as a researcher, however, during this phase of the research I believe it did. I found it difficult to differentiate between watching the game as a spectator/referee and observing the referee as a researcher, and be truly critical of the referee and the game time participants (players, coaches, spectators). Following initial observations of her punctuality, game attire, if she introduced herself to the coach with or without a handshake, the observation process went forth slowly. I did not record interactions between the players and the referee I thought were “normal” and not noteworthy because, as a referee, they were regular occurrences, however, in hindsight it would be worth noting these occurrences to see if they occurred for all referees and what that meant for the power relations that she encountered during her experiences as well as her subjectification as a woman soccer referee. Instead I focused on harassment, abuse, rude comments from spectators and coaches, and wished that I had the foresight to make links between the referees’ modes of operation and her level of competition, cues as to the power balances and imbalances between the referee and game time participants, and whether or not there was visibly a point during the game that you could tell that game time participants began to have faith in her ability to referee, or if it did not happen at all – if she had to prove that she could referee. These are all topics that I explore in the articles in chapters 5 and 6 where data from the observation of the participants could have enriched the data used in each article.

My position as a woman soccer referee provided me the benefits of insider status as I anticipated. It gave me access to participants for my study, helped me to build rapport with my participants, and understand and gain a better appreciation for the issues that they presented, and

the language that they used when speaking about their refereeing experience. I was aware of the referee leaders that they named within their stories, the key locations that they mentioned, the teams that they spoke of, and the other referees that were featured in their stories. I was aware of the refereeing culture in which they had to interact with other referees and referee leaders and the soccer culture in which they had to relate with game time participants – I knew that “only referees understand referees” and that “all coaches think they can referee”. As a fellow referee I understood the basis for such comments and shared these feeling. It allowed for our interviews to flow more like a conversation between myself and the referee rather than that of a researcher asking a predetermined set of questions to a study participant. This made for an enjoyable data collection process because they told me funny and embarrassing stories of when they began and mistakes they made, and when I felt like they were holding back during the interview I told them some of my own stories to make them more comfortable and for them to see me as a fellow referee to invite further confidences.

My insider status provided me with the context for their stories and an unspoken understanding of how they felt within the moments that they relayed to me. This unspoken understanding between us was great in the context of two referees speaking of their experiences, however, in the context of a researcher (me) interviewing a referee (study participant) it proved to be problematic. The referees assumed that I knew how they felt, received similar advice, had similar experiences, and understood the meaning behind their phrases without having to explain themselves further. They said thing like “you know what I mean” or “you’ve been there, you know what its like” or “being a female referee is tough enough as it is, you know that...” and as a fellow official, often times I did know what they meant and I moved on to the next question or topic of conversation without asking them to explain themselves. I recognized this issue during

the transcription of my first two interviews. Though I was aware of the benefits and drawbacks of being an insider before I began data collection, I later realized that it would prove to be more difficult to “remain mindful of my position and the aim and potential contribution(s) of my study throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that my insider status does not negatively impact my study” – as I stated in *Researcher/referee: My position as an insider*. At this point I had to re-evaluate the ways in which I conducted my interviews and make a concerted effort to not make any assumption about the referee and ask her to explain herself when she made an assumption about what I knew about the refereeing experience. I could see that this was frustrating for some referees because I was interrupting their story to ask them about something they knew that I was already aware of. However, I had to do this to ensure that I had a thorough understanding of how they felt and the experiences that they had rather than how I think they felt and my interpretation of their experiences.

My insider status also meant that some of my participants had expectations of me that were beyond the scope and/or realm of my research. They wanted to be a part of my study so that they could tell me about specific experiences and encounters that they had with fellow referees and community leaders rather than the array of experiences that I wanted to know about; report their personal grievances and/or likes and dislikes to community leaders; or purposely disrupt dominant discourses by letting me know that they are unlike other referees – they don’t pay attention to gender in refereeing, they only referee for the money, and anyone who says they referee just for the love of it is lying. For these encounters I had to once more explain the aim and purpose of my research reason and that I was not affiliated with any regional or provincial association or an advocate within the refereeing domain. At these junctures I did not feel like I disappointed or mislead any of my participants because my intentions were made clear when I

explained my study to them when I recruited them and in recruitment email (Appendix G) I sent them before scheduling the observation of their game and interview. However, when I interviewed Vera I felt upset because she told me of a particular situation at an event in which she felt ostracized by fellow female soccer referees and I was present at that event and I did not realize that this was happening. I felt like, at that time, I was in a position to say something to help her and ensure that she did not feel like fellow women soccer referees were being rude or mean to her and I did nothing – I didn't even recognize that it was happening. Within other interviews I was able to relate to other referees because we had similar experiences and I could see my experiences within their own, however, this time I saw myself within Vera's experience and it made me view myself and the other referees she spoke of in a different light, a negative light, and that made me feel ashamed. I believe that was my most difficult interview.

One definite limitation of the research is that it is not intersectional. I hoped that the socio-cultural factors such as race, sexuality, class, etc. would naturally color the women's narrative during their interviews however they did not, and I did not plan on asking these questions in my interview guide. I feared that this made my research data lack intersectionality, however, if these factors did not naturally occur in their narrative then they might not be as large a part of their experiences as I thought. I also had to change the order of many questions in the interview guide and skip over some questions because they did not apply to each referee. For example, the least experienced referees did not have any future aspirations for refereeing as they were just getting used to their role as an official, they did not have a network of referees with whom they could discuss the game, or had notable experiences of referee abuse and/or sexual discrimination. Moreover, my research questions required each referee to be reflexive and think about their refereeing careers in ways that they may not have before. For example, many of these

referees said they never really gave much thought to why they chose to continue to referee each year and so they found it difficult to answer questions such as “why do you continue to referee?” or “what differentiates refereeing from other activities that you do?” or in the case that they participated in more than one sport activity or in more than one role in soccer, “why they wouldn’t stop refereeing in favor of the other?”. In asking these questions I wanted to unearth the referee’s motivation to continue to referee despite her under-representation, however, many referees, did not have an answer.

## **Results and Analysis**

The following chapters provide the analysis of the texts resulting from the 15 semi-structured interviews that I conducted with women soccer referees who continue to officiate at the recreational to elite levels of the game within Ontario. Chapters 5 and 6 are research articles, each of which explores one of the dominant discourses employed by the women within my study to make sense of their experiences as soccer referees. Within each article I utilized as many direct quotations as possible because I wanted to remain true to their stories and their experiences as they told it to me – I wanted to tell their stories as accurately as possible and give prominence to their voices – the voices of women soccer referees.

*Chapter 5: “I’d like to think I’m a good referee”*: *Exploring the subjectification of women soccer referees in Ontario through the discourse of ability* asserts that the woman soccer referee subject comes to recognize and understand herself and her role as a referee through the discourse of ability as it is salient throughout her development as a referee. Resultantly, her skills, talent, and competence to perform according to the dominant ideals and practices of “the referee” – which stem from her relationships with referee community leaders, game time participants, and fellow officials – motivate her to continue to referee. Within this article I used

Foucault's concept of the subject as well as Butler's interpretations of the subject, and poststructuralist and psychoanalytic readings of Foucauldian theory.

*Chapter 6: "Because there are so few of us": Exploring the effects of under-representation on the experiences of women soccer referees in Ontario, Canada through the discourse of the outsider* focuses on the ways in which the woman soccer referee subject constructs her gendered experiences. Referencing Elias and Scotson's (2008) Theory of Established-outsider relations, I illustrate that the woman soccer referee is an outsider within the soccer community and comes to internalize her subordination and normalize sexism within the soccer community in order to be accepted and respected within her position as "the referee". Following the analysis I make recommendations for how women soccer referees should contest and/or challenge their outsider status within the referee domain and soccer community at large.

*Chapter 7: Conclusion* is the final chapter of the study. It provides further insights on women soccer referees and recommendations on how to address the under-representation of women soccer referees in Ontario.

**Chapter 5: “I’d like to think I’m a good referee”: Exploring the subjectification of women soccer referees in Ontario through the discourse of ability**

Prepared for submission to *Soccer & Society*

Maximum 8000 words

Patriarchal control no longer supports the outright exclusion of women as a mechanism to preserve male dominance within and/or through sport; however, women continuously strive to gain inclusion on terms defined by masculinity (Caudwell, 2011; Ferez, 2011). Sport exists as a site for the (re)production of masculinity, consequently, the predominant discourses that shape our sporting experiences exalt masculinity whilst rendering femininity subordinate to masculinity, and contradictory to the norms and ideals of sporting excellence and expertise (Fielding-Loyd & Meân, 2008). The discourses that shape the dominant ideals and practices of excellence and expertise within sport are dependent on the toughness, aggression, assertiveness, and competitiveness of the hegemonic masculinity (Krane, 2001) with which boys and men are socialized. They provide credibility to the male sporting experience and illegitimize women's sporting experiences through socializing factors such as adapted sports exclusive to women (e.g. ringette and softball in place of ice hockey and baseball), parental influences, limited opportunities for female participation, and limited and hyper-feminized media representations of women in sport (Fielding-Loyd & Meân, 2008; 2011; Graham, McKenna & Flemming, 2013). Ultimately, femininity is positioned in opposition to masculinity, reducing the skilled and knowledgeable sportswoman to an unwelcomed deviation from the norm and a challenge to the male preserve (Krane, 2001).

The woman soccer referee is one such sportswoman. She has gained inclusion within sport and must perform according to the dominant ideals and practices of refereeing that are outlined and maintained by the patriarchal regimes of power that govern the domain of refereeing. Within the domain of refereeing the discourse of ability constructs both her skill as a referee and her competence to perform her duties as the unbiased arbitrator in the midst of a male dominated sport. Drawing upon Foucault's concepts of discourse and the subject (Mills, 2003;

Weedon, 1997) and discourse analysis, I explored the processes through which women soccer referees in Ontario are subjected by the discourse of ability. Though a Foucauldian perspective guides this research, my interpretations go beyond the works of Foucault and references Butler's interpretations of the subject, and poststructuralist and psychoanalytic readings of Foucauldian theory.

Moreover, within this exploration "I" am both the researcher and an Ontario woman soccer referee. Barker and Galasiński (2001) highlight that critical discourse analysis is interpretative. Thus the researcher is not objective; my attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions will be unavoidably woven into the analysis and interpretations of the texts within this article. However, this does not pose a direct threat to the credibility of the research, as the pair also highlight that critical discourse analysis maintains the assumption that, like discourse, the analysis of discourses are not static, there is no true interpretation; analyses are ever-changing and subject to change.

### **Discourse and Subjectivity**

Throughout my study I recognized discourses as the historically relevant ideas and statements that define societal norms, and the attitudes, behaviors, and actions that do, or do not comply with these norms. They dictate the ways in which we understand and navigate our daily experiences as well as how we view and understand ourselves within the world by inscribing and shaping power relations (Baxter, 2003; Elder-vass, 2011; Mills, 2003; Smith Maguire, 2002). Within our lived experiences, everything (actions, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes) is constituted through, and bound by, discourse. It determines our modes of dress and behavior at work, home, and in the social sphere, the various ways in which we relate to family members, friends, and colleagues, and our positions on various social conflicts. For instance, when I referee I do not

engage in stereotypically “feminine” behaviors during a match – I do not wear makeup, my uniform is oversized and ill-fitting, I spit, I burp, I’ve been told that I don’t smile, and I most definitely do not speak quietly. Despite this behavior I do not escape the discourses of femininity, rather, as a referee, I am the subject of alternative discourses of femininity (Weedon, 1997) that go beyond normalized “feminine” practices, and may include “sporty”, “butch”, “masculine” or “androgynous” femininities. As a woman, I cannot escape femininity, because gendered discourses are inevitable; they constitute both society and culture and exist in relation or opposition to other discourses and are derived from fragments of existing discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; McGee, 1990; Mills, 1997; Schiffrin et al., 2001).

Resultantly, there are multiple dominant and alternative discourses co-existing within a given domain that structure the ways in which we operate within that domain; each constituted by a multitude of sociological practices that (re)produce, challenge, or change them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). These sociological practices are regarded as “discursive practices” (Baxter, 2003) and like discourses, discursive practices are historically and culturally relevant practices that we learn through our lived experiences (Schiffrin et al., 2001; Weedon, 1997) and inevitably perform as “natural” or second nature. Consequently, we are not born knowing what is to be or act “feminine”, in the same way that a champion is not born knowing how to be a “good athlete”, and a championship winning coach is not born knowing how to be a “good coach”. It is through our experiences and social relations that we learn the practices that allow us to ascribe to a particular discourse of femininity, athleticism and referee ability. Our relationships with our families, the media, and other sources tell us about wearing high-heeled shoes, applying makeup, shaving our legs, and other “feminine” practices that we may take-up or resist in order to ascribe to dominant or alternative discourses of femininity.

**Subject positions and subjectivity.** Within discourse, discursive practices generate a multitude of subject positions by way of the social (power) relations within a given domain. These subject positions define the subject's ways of being, the point from which they interpret the world, and highlight the ways in which one is a subject of power (Moore, 2013; Ryan, 2012; Weedon, 1997). As self-determining agents we are either *subject to* discourse by control or dependence, or *subjects of* discourse through knowledge and critical self-awareness (Mahrouse, 2005; Markula & Pringle, 2006) – thus we knowingly or unknowingly occupy particular positions within discourses, engage in the discursive practices indicative of that position and perform them as second nature – as though “natural” to our ways of being (Weedon, 2004). Moreover, a subject's position will change in varying social situations (Weedon, 1997); therefore, within the discourse of competitive sport she may occupy the position of “champion”, but may also be a “doting mother” at home, “bossy supervisor” at work, and “disgruntled customer” when she has to make a call to her telephone company. These varying subject positions exist due to varying power relations across social contexts based on constructs such as gender, class, race, age, etc. that alter the range of positions available to the subject and the discursive practices that contribute to their position within the discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Weedon, 1997). Thus, at any given time, the subject occupies a multiplicity of subject positions and calls upon whatever subject position is suited to her particular situation (Weedon, 1997). For instance Ryan (2012) explains that,

[O]ne illustration of the multiplicity of subject positions we occupy occurs when we examine the contents of our wallets. Identification cards illustrate what states we are subjects of, drivers licenses show which road jurisdictions we can drive in, and thus what rules of the road we are subject to, visas or green cards tell of our temporary permission to

reside in “other” states, while maintaining that our positions in these states are precarious, insurance cards tell of our subject status in the medical field, credit cards provide proof that we are subjects of capitalism, even our “coffee loyalty” cards can tell us about our relationship to our caffeine addiction.” (p. 4)

Weedon (1997) ascertains that the subject may either embrace a subject position through normative discursive practices or resist a subject position by engaging in alternative discursive practices that challenge societal norms. However, in doing so, they become subjects of an alternative discourse, thus occupying a related yet contradictory subject position. Resultantly, subject positions are contingent upon the subject’s understanding of, and relation to, discourse as determined by their subjectivity. Subjectivity – the subject’s ways of thinking, and the ways in which they view themselves in the world (Moore, 2013; Tew, 2002) – is both the process of the subject relating to discourse and the result of the relationship between the subject and discourse. It contains both a relational and reflexive component influenced by how the subject views herself in the world, and how she believes she is viewed in the world; it encompasses her self-concept, consciousness, judgment, and agency (Moore, 2013). Like the tenants of discourse addressed before it, subjectivity is neither innate nor inherited; rather it is learned through an array of discursive practices and performed within particular contexts of social interactions. Consequently, subjectivity is determined by multiple sources that, in turn, generate a multiplicity of subjectivities that exist in connection or opposition to other subjectivities and are available to the subject dependent upon their social location (Tew, 2002; Weedon, 1997).

**Subjectification and the subject.** The multiple positions and subjectivities of the subject are produced by discourse, learned, negotiated, and altered through discursive practices, constructed through language, power relations, and embodiment, and taken up through subjectification

(Brady & Shirato, 2010; Burke & Hallinan, 2006; Mackay & Dallaire, 2013; Moore, 2013; Zembylas, 2003). Subjectification refers to the process of forming the subject through regulatory regimes of power. It simultaneously brings the subject into being and subjects her through discourse (Brady & Shirato, 2010). According to Brady and Shirato (2010)

for Foucault subjects are brought into being by fitting into and gaining recognition in, and performing congruently with regard to, a discursive grid of intelligibility made up of normative categories, descriptions and narratives. Their place within this discursive space is maintained via techniques and operations of discipline and surveillance. (p.21)

Thus it is through discourse that the subject is brought under the regulatory regimes of power, is recognized within, or actively takes up a subject position, and works to maintain their subject position. It is the process through which she becomes *subject to* or a *subject of* discourse, and assumes her subjectivity. Moreover, subjectification affords the subject recognition within her domain and a position within the wider socio-cultural field (Brady & Shirato, 2010).

Thus far I have introduced and defined the constituents of discourse that are key to this study, however, I have neglected to define “the subject”. I have not forgotten the subject, however, I struggle to do so singularly and conclusively because as per my understanding the subject is not singular. Moore (2013) clarifies that a single subject cannot be equated with a single individual; the subject pre-exists the individual (Ryan, 2012). Rather, the subject is constituted by a range of subject positions and subjectivities which they use to understand and navigate discourse, the discursive practices that constitute them, and make meaning of their lived experiences. Contrastingly, “individuals are multiply constituted subjects who exist and develop a sense of self through multiple and potentially contradictory positioning and subjectivities” (Moore, 2013, p. 204) – a singular expression of several subjectivities and subject positions

produced by and maintained through discourse. Thus the individual emerges once the subject has been subjectified. She is whom we see in society, the articulation of the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs constructed within and bound by, discourse, exercising agency and navigating her lived experiences (Tew, 2002). Throughout my reading on discourse and the subject I searched for a singular understanding of the subject that would aid my analysis. In light of a definition provided by Ryan (2012), I have determined, that for the purposes of my study the subject is: she who is subjectified by the ideals and practices defined and maintained through discourse.

Consequently, the focus of this study does not concern the woman soccer referee as an individual; rather it is concerned with how she is constituted as a subject through discourse. Mahrouse (2005) explains this as the ontological position of “decentering the subject” that leads to an illustration of how discourses make different positions for individuals to take up. Thus, drawing upon Foucault’s concepts of discourse and the subject this article aims to explore the ways in which women are constituted as subjects within the domain of refereeing by examining one of the key discourses which they use to make meaning out of their experiences as soccer referees – the discourse of ability.

### **Researching Women Soccer Referees**

The women recruited for the study are English-speaking referees, ages 21-54, with 1 or more years of experience and having refereed at least 1 boys and girls under-13 game. Additionally, all women were registered with the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), the provincial body charged with the certification and regulation of all referees in Ontario, and range from recreational to elite referees, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

*Number of referees included in the study according to level of competition and corresponding OSA grading level*

OSA Referee Grading Levels	Levels of Competition	Number of Referees
District 1-5	Recreational	4
District 6-7	Intermediate	9
District 8		
Regional 9-10	Elite	2
National 11		
FIFA 12		

*Note.* OSA referee Grading Levels and Levels of Competition are from the “OSA Grading Protocol”

It is important to note that age is not always indicative of a referee’s years of experience or grading level. At the time of the study I was a 23 year old District 8 with 5 years of experience, however there are also referees at the same level that are younger and older than myself with less or greater years of experience. Each woman included in the study is identified by a pseudonym of her choosing in order to respect and protect her anonymity. Interviews were analyzed using a process of discourse analysis that explored the social practices and actions that constitute the woman soccer referee (Potter, Edwards, & Wetherell, 1993) and aimed to understand how the subject reproduced and interpreted discourses within the verbal texts (Meân & Kassing, 2008). Discourse analysis maintains that language is indicative of our subject positions and our use of language is indicative of the active role of discourse in constructing our lived experiences (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Coyle (2007) ascertains that there is not a defined process of conducting discourse analysis and researchers often borrow methods from multiple sources to

conduct their analysis. In this fashion I derived my process of discourse analysis from the works of Willig (2001) and Jackson II (1991) by adapting the concepts of discursive constructions and discursive mapping, respectively, from their works.

Following the transcription and coding of each interview, the first step of analysis was to identify the ways in which the women constructed 4 key areas of their referee experience: (1) becoming a referee, (2) being a referee (benefits and challenges), (3) continuing to referee, and (4) being a woman referee. In doing so excerpts from each referees' answers that made reference to a particular experience was cut and pasted into a table that was organized according to the 4 key areas of experience. Each excerpt was then categorized according to how they made reference to, defined, described, and/or associated with each key experience.

As I identified the ways in which the key experiences were constructed in the texts it became apparent that there was a strong relationship between many of the constructs. A single construction could be applied to more than one area of experience and there were stark similarities between various constructions. The excerpts amongst them had common and related discursive practices, subject positions, and social relationships. For example initial constructions of time spent, desire, missed social engagements, goals and aspirations, training, and supportive and unsupportive family and friends had a common thread: they demonstrated the subject's level of commitment to refereeing. In order to explore the connectivity amongst discursive constructions I employed discursive mapping which involved tracking modes of representation within texts and categorizing them according to their commonalities (Jackson II, 1999).

I outlined all my categories of discursive constructions and grouped together the constructs that were closely related and connected. I then named each group according to an overarching theme that pertained to all the constructs within it – these became my discursive

fields. Within the study several discursive fields resulted from mapping, and they construct the experiences of woman soccer referees according to: (1) ability, (2) knowledge/experience, (3) rewards, (4) commitment, (5) being discounted, (6) abuse, (7) being alien, (8) helping, (9) support, and (10) their relationship to the game.

Each of these fields represents a space that can be further explored through analysis to unearth the ways in which women constitute themselves as soccer referees (Jackson II, 1999). Thus, in this article I aim to explore the ability field, which is characterized by statements regarding the referee's competence to perform her duties as an official. In order to synthesize, organize, and properly interpret the bulk of information within this field and identify relevant statements, I executed a secondary mapping of the ability field to find commonalities amongst statements within the corresponding texts. As a result of this secondary mapping, it became apparent that they constructed ability according to: (1) first experiences, (2) recognition and validation of skill, (3) being a good referee, and (4) proving yourself. I then summarized these fields into Stories of Ability.

### **Stories of Ability**

**First experiences.** Throughout the study I spoke with women of varying ages and years of experience that have refereed at varying levels of competition. Some began as youth referees and slowly climbed the ranks to become elite officials, some are ex-athletes who turned to refereeing in their adult lives as an alternative to playing, some were drawn to refereeing through friends and family, and others began refereeing as "something to do." Despite when or why these women became referees each had an unforgettable story, good or bad, about their first time on the pitch that marked the beginning of their career and captured what it was like to be a novice referee. Muhtikulus (age: 52, level of competition: Intermediate), who began refereeing after she

registered her son for youth soccer, recounted a haunting experience characterized by self-doubt, ignorance, and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Multikulus: Oh my God my first game I still remember my first game. It was terrible, it was terrible, it was awful. They assumed that because you're an adult you can handle a girls' U14 with two ARs [assistant referees]. I had no idea what a flickin AR was anyway! You know and he kept raising his flag at me and I kept thinking "Why are you doing this?", and it was terrible, it was terrible. I ran all over the field I had no idea what I was doing I really, it was awful, I will *never* forget my first game, ever, ever.

Interviewer: So did you have enough support going into your first game?

Multikulus: I didn't think anything cause I didn't know. Seriously, I had no idea, I had, my AR, this was his first year refereeing too – very experienced though cause he was a very high end soccer player in the league and stuff so he knew what he was doing. I had *no* idea you go to the course and this guy reads these rules to you and you're like "Oh yeah, easy, easy, easy, easy" you go on the field and you have to interpret them and you're like "Oh my God!" I just sucked balls, I was so bad, I was terrible. I was so bad, I didn't even know how bad I was, seriously.

While other experiences were not as disastrous, they too included refereeing mistakes, having feelings of self-doubt, and being overwhelmed, alongside confusion, second-guessing their performance, and eventually questioning their decision to become a referee altogether. Patricia (25, Intermediate) recalled forgetting the hand signal for a goal kick, Kathy (41, Intermediate) forgot to get a soccer ball for kickoff, Brianna (26, Elite) questioned every decision she made

during her first match, and Sarai (31, Intermediate), who began refereeing during the last year of her undergraduate degree, froze after blowing the whistle for a penalty during her first adult match because she was scared. She explained:

I remember the first game, maybe it might come out in your questions but in my first game, adult game, it was a women's rec [recreational] game, I went and I called a penalty and then I just froze. It was a valid penalty, there was a foul in the penalty area but I just froze, I did not have the guts to actually go and take the steps and manage the penalty.

And then I came out of that game and said, what the hell, what am I doing here?!

[laughing]...

Overall these were discouraging, often comical, stories of incompetence or in some cases, perceived incompetence – novice referees that felt that they were unprepared and out of their depth. They felt that their inexperience made them unskilled and ineffective, plagued by feelings of doubt and inadequacy, with little to no confidence in their ability to referee.

The actions and behaviors that constitute the novice referee are forged in forgetfulness, doubt, ignorance, and inexperience as understood through their reflections of their inability to control, follow, and understand the game, and properly execute their duties on the field of play. For the referees, the field of play is a prominent site of subjectification, it is the place in which they came to realize themselves “a referee” and determine their fit within the wider scope of refereeing according to their competency on the field. Gowlett (2012) highlights “that the subject is brought into being through a performative act” (p. 888), which for these women, is the act of refereeing. By performing on the field of play they are subjectified by the dominant ideals and practices they were taught about “the referee”, and their ability to measure up to these ideals and

practices. Through Muhtikulus (52, Intermediate) and Sarai's (31, Intermediate) stories we see that as beginners, referees have difficulty aligning their on field performance with the norms concerning the skills and abilities of the referee, and they begin to doubt their skill and competency as a referee and come to understand themselves as inferior referees – novice referees.

It is their knowledge and understanding of the referee that leaves them with these feelings of inadequacy. Resultantly, the field of play is not the only site of subjectification for the referee. In the excerpt Muhtikulus (52, Intermediate) made reference to “the course” as the place where she learned the rules and believed that refereeing would be “easy”. “The course” that she refers to is the Ontario Soccer Association's (OSA) mandated Entry Level Referee Clinic which all persons wishing to become accredited as a referee must successfully complete. During this 2 day, 16 hour course, an OSA appointed Referee Instructor outlines and explains the rules of the game in accordance to the FIFA Laws of the Game, and following the clinic, each person is required to complete an exam and achieve a mark of 80% or higher in order to successfully become accredited as a referee (Ontario Soccer Association, 2015). This is her primary site of subjectification; here she was subjectified by the Laws of the Game, taught to her by the instructor, as well as the instructors understanding and expectations of the referee. At the referee clinic, subjectification occurs through the mechanism of power/knowledge in which power is exercised upon and/or through the subject through the dissemination of knowledge, which in turn affects the subject's actions, behaviors, and attitudes. According to Mills (2003) “it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (p. 69). This power and knowledge have a reciprocal relationship and combined effect on the diffusion, understanding, and maintenance of norms, and – as with

Multikulus (52, Intermediate) and Sarai (31, Intermediate) – mediates the subject's understanding of herself and her position within her domain (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos, & Walkerdine, 2008; Ryan, 2012) – refereeing. Consequently, the Laws of the Game and the referee instructor determined her understanding of what it is to be a referee, her ability to successfully referee a soccer game, and provided her with a point of reference from which to fashion her performance on the field of play (Brady & Shirato, 2010). Upon successfully achieving her accreditation and title as a referee, as a subject, she simultaneously developed an attachment to the position and a desire to perform her role and exhibit her skills and achievement (Weedon, 2004; Weiss, 2001). Sadly, when her performance did not align with the norms of refereeing she became discouraged, and doubtful of her ability to referee, thus coming to understand herself as the novice referee.

The “novice referee” also emerged in interviews as the “bad referee” or the “terrible referee”. I chose to identify this position/subjectivity as “novice” rather than “bad” or “terrible” because, it is indicative of the earlier stages of the referee's career. The novice referee is formed through the repeated performances of the practices that constitute the position/subjectivity, thus she can change her subjectivity by changing her discursive practices (Ryan, 2012; Zembylas, 2003). Throughout the interview process, and my own refereeing involvement, I learned that with time the referee develops and changes her subjectivity through experience, by adopting new, better, and more efficient refereeing practices. With experience she develops her skills, becomes comfortable with her role as a referee on and off the field, and develops a greater understanding of the game and her role within it – illustrating that the “novice referee” exists in opposition to the “experienced referee”. The novice referee is constructed in accordance to refereeing ability – or rather an inability to referee. It is through her performance on the field that

the subject comes to understand and realize herself within the greater domain of refereeing, view herself in relation to the dominant ideals and practices of refereeing. This leads to doubt and inadequacy for the novice referee, however, despite her negative first experiences and her inferior positioning/subjectivity she was not deterred, she continued to referee.

**Recognition and validation.** Recognition and validation proved to be powerful motivators for the women to continue refereeing. Following their stories of their initial refereeing experience(s), their recounts of their journeys and development as referees are earmarked by episodes of recognition and validation of their skills, talents, and abilities by leaders within the referee community (i.e. more experienced referees, head referees, district coordinators, assessors, and instructors), players, coaches, spectators, and family members. Foster and Appleby (2015) highlight that women's motivation to continue their participation in sport and physical activity is affected by their confidence in their ability to perform. Thus, women soccer referees are likely to continue refereeing and reshape/transform from the novice referee if they believe that they have the ability to perform according to the dominant ideals and practices of refereeing with which they were subjectified. Resultantly, the referees benefited from support and recognition of family members and mentors within the referee community to whom they could ask questions, who affirmed their knowledge and skill, and provided them with the social support that helped to motivate them and build their confidence to continue to referee.

The effects of social support are exemplified through Brianna's (26, Elite) youth refereeing experience. Brianna (26, Elite), who began refereeing at the age of 12, constantly second-guessed herself during her first soccer game.

So that's what my first game was like but eventually, like the third game when the head referee came he was really impressed actually, he was like, "you knew that you couldn't

substitute on a corner kick”, that’s actually what it was, I was like, “yeah, we learned that at the course”, and he was like “wow, most people don’t know that, so good job, and you knew this was an indirect kick, so good job” and I was like, “yeah, I did know that...” it made me feel really good, like very reassured cause he was, you know, validating everything and making me feel like I was doing it right and it did give me the confidence to keep going. And then he made me like Referee of the Month so like, huge.

She felt validated by her club Head Referee when he congratulated her performance; overtime she stopped second-guessing her actions and decisions during her games, as she did before, because she became a more confident referee knowing that she impressed her Head Referee and that he confirmed her competency as a referee.

Though the referees appreciated and relied on the recognition and validation from members of the referee community, it was the recognition and validation from players and coaches that were salient amongst their stories. Not all referees had encounters or relationships with mentors and other leaders in the referee community, thus they relied heavily on the opinions of those involved in the matches that they refereed to gauge and measure their competency. For Sarah (33, Intermediate), it was the opinions of the players following her first adult game that gave her the confidence to continue refereeing long term.

Interviewer: Is there a pivotal moment that has defined your experiences as a referee?  
[...]

Sarah: I think probably my first Old Timers game in the center was the moment I realized I could do this. Where I could referee – the first couple years I didn’t take old timers games because Kathy [friend and fellow referee] doesn’t do Old Timers games in the center, she doesn’t want anything to

do with that anymore, she used to but now she doesn't want to now, so I decided I'm not going to do it either. And that first Old Timers game where I did it and both teams came off and they had been yelling at me and yelling at each other all of them after the game were like, "Good game ref, that was the best refed game I had all season." And they could have been blowing smoke up my ass for all I know but, I went "Okay, I can do this. I can do this at whatever game I'm assigned, I can do the men, I can do the women, it's good." I think that was pivotal for me just for confidence or anything like that, yeah, that was the first game where I was like, "Okay! This is something I can do long term"

For Alexandria (38, Elite), who began refereeing as a teenager, it was also the recognition of the players that garnered the attention of referee community leaders and gained her recognition as a skilled referee.

Slowly but surely I started doing higher-level soccer and yes actually it was an old timers men soccer team who wrote a letter to the provisional association saying "Somebody needs to come out watch this girl because she is really good." Then I started getting like assessors coming out and things like that...

As she developed and gained status as an elite official, recognition continued to be a powerful motivator for her and originated from multiple sources. She was recognized by fellow officials, referee assessors, players, and coaches alike as she progressed through the ranks as a referee. Most important to her is the support that she received from her parents. The confidence that they had in her skills and ability to be an elite referee provided her with greater confidence in herself, and reassured her belief in her skills as a referee.

I think for me a really big switch in my life came off after I got my appointment to my first men's professional game. I had a real – when I got the appointment I was really, like I didn't even accept it the first time I saw it because I thought this can't be right like. They are not really sending me to Vancouver to referee this game, like I don't think this is right. And it took me a couple of days and finally my dad said well, like “Do you not think you are as good as everybody else?” And I was like “No, I know I am as good as everyone else” and I had three days where I was nervous all the time.

And when I accepted that game he made me like really think back I said, “No, you are right. I am just as good as everyone else and I know that I can do this game” and then that was a big change in mentality.

The social relationships encountered by the subject can both hinder and support her continued sport performance and participation (Foster & Appleby, 2015). Norman (2014) highlights that many women choose to discontinue their coaching participation because of the negative perceptions of their abilities and the negative attitudes they face at the hands of players and fellow coaches alike. Thus, for women soccer referees, the likelihood of them continuing to referee is decreased in the face of negativity, and in contrast – as for the women in this study – positive social relations will motivate the referee to continue refereeing. Within these episodes of validation and recognition it is apparent that the endorsement of leaders within the referee community, match time participants, and family members alike motivated the women to continue to referee, gave them confidence in their abilities and allowed them to view themselves as skilled officials who developed beyond the incompetent novice referees they once were. These social relations influenced the subject's changing subjectivity as she transformed from the doubtful novice referee to the confident experienced referee.

It is important to remember that subjectivities are collectively constructed (Pillet-Shore, 2015); they are simultaneously produced by discourse (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013), shaped by our social, cultural, and political spaces (Blackman et al., 2008), negotiated and reshaped by discursive practices (Zembylas, 2003), mediated by the mechanism of power/knowledge (Ryan, 2012), and influenced by the subject's social relations (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013). Thus, subjectification is also collective – the subject relies on multiple sources of subjectification, one of which is the relationships that compose her system of social support.

By performing under the direct observation of players, coaches, and spectators, the referee is able to display her refereeing abilities as well as gain recognition within her role as “the referee” (Weiss, 2001; Pillet-Shore, 2015). Her recognition in her role as “the referee” is a form of social subjectivity that fulfills the subjects need for social acceptance and confirmation through sport (Weiss, 2001) and (re)shapes and (re)inforces her subjectivity. For these women, the attitudes and opinions of participants, leaders, and family members (re)shaped the ways in which they viewed themselves according to the norms that deemed them as valuable and recognizable as referees (Brady & Shirato, 2010). Resultantly, subjectivity is characterized by how the subject views herself, as well as how she is viewed by others within her social space (Baxter, 2003; Cregan, 2012b). Moreover, the subject becomes dependent on the social relations she encounters as a referee in order to understand herself and her trajectory within the domain of refereeing. This dependency is indicative of the multiple power relations that subjectify the referee and influence her subjectivity (Allen, 2008) – namely her participant/referee, leader/referee, and supporter/referee relationships. Allen (2008) highlights that within such power relations those on whom we are dependent for our subjectification are able to exercise power as “they can either foster or thwart our aims, desires, and overall well being” (p. 208)

because of our dependency upon them. This we see as the positive feedback received by the subject (re)affirmed her beliefs in her refereeing abilities and (re)inforced her desire to continue to referee.

This is not to say that the women in this study did not receive negative criticism throughout their careers, on the contrary – they did, however, their negative experiences did not have the same impact as the recognition and positive feedback they received from participants, leaders, and their family and friends. Weedon (2004) highlights that some modes of subjectivity – and thus the tenants of their collective construction – have more power than others – they have more force and/or effect on the subject. Thus some social relations and experiences have more impact on the subject than others, like for Alexandria (38, Elite), who was assigned her first men’s professional game by an assignor that recognized that she had the level of ability to successfully referee the match, however she was doubtful until she spoke to her father who is also an Elite official and has supported her throughout her academic and athletic endeavors. Illustrating that for Alexandria (38, Elite), in that moment, the supporter/referee relationship worked in conjunction with her leader/referee relationship to impact her subjectivity.

**Being good.** Refereeing ability also gained the referees recognition as “good referees” within the soccer community. Alexandria (38, Elite) and Musiá (51, Intermediate), who became a referee after playing in a women’s soccer and wanted to see more officious women referees, had experiences in which coaches publicly and voluntarily recognized them as good referees.

Alexandria: If I can do the job hopefully they will support me and one of the biggest examples of that is when I was refereeing in the MLS and I was as a 4<sup>th</sup> official and I did some pre season games and one of the coaches stood up in the coaches meeting and said “That girl needs to referee regular season

games”. This is a professional coach who probably ... really in the end he has nothing invested in my career but I had 2 or 3 or 4 games for them and he said like “She is good enough to be in this league.”

Interviewer: [...] so how else would you describe yourself as a referee?

Musiã: I like to think that I’m a good referee. There have been times where I was late for one game because I took what I thought was a shortcut but there was lots of construction and I was late and I apologized to the coaches. One said, “Oh, no you’ve reffed us before, you’re worth the wait” I mean that’s a great feeling when someone tells you that.

At this point in their careers, both women were confident, experienced, and committed referees – no longer the confused, apprehensive, and insecure referees of their earlier years. They did not need validation from players and coaches to provide them with confidence and motivation to continue refereeing, however, these declarations made a significant impact on their experiences as referees. They reaffirmed their own beliefs in their capabilities, and illustrate the respect they gained as a result of their skill and competency as referees.

For many women being recognized as a “good referee” was a mark of their time to advance – to ascend the ranks as a referee, seek a greater challenge, and become an elite official. As a result the validation and recognition from leaders in the referee community also lead to elitism amongst referees who learned that they were superior to other referees. Prone to these statements was BB (21, Intermediate), an upgrading intermediate referee, whose recommendation from her district coordinator validated that she was an exemplary referee whose skills separated her from other referees. When asked, how she felt she has grown as an official she replied,

A lot [laughs]. I mean like, well to enter the regional upgrade you have to get recommended by your District Regional Coordinator right? So I mean like just to say, yes you are competent enough to get into the Regional Upgrade Program that's a lot.

Once they were recognized as good, experienced, or skilled referees in time they became skeptical when working with novice or younger referees, began to pride themselves on being assigned "higher-level games", surrounding themselves with a support system of higher level referees, and criticized the leagues and divisions that are not "challenging enough" for a referee of their caliber. Evidently, recognition as a "good referee" operates as a mechanism of distinction and achievement within the domain of refereeing and the soccer community at large (Burton, 2004; Clark, 2012). It marks the subject as valuable, skilled, talented, and unique within the domain of refereeing, whilst simultaneously rendering the position and abilities of less skilled referees as inferior – as witnessed by their elitism.

Contrastingly, the need to upgrade was not shared by all officials, as expressed by Sarah (33, Intermediate). She was told by players, coaches and leaders within the referee community that she was a good referee and was approached numerous times by leaders in the referee community about upgrading as an official, however she refused. When I when asked about her future aspirations as a referee we spoke of this experience:

Sarah: Its obviously flattering when somebody's after you, multiple times a year because they say "You're a good referee, you'll be a great referee you should do this", that's good for the ego – anybody that says otherwise is lying, it is – it can also be frustrating that I keep saying no because I'm not interested, its just not something that's in me to do, I prefer that eventually

when I've said no, no means no, the cliché, I'll approach you when I'm ready to be upgraded...

Interviewer: I almost want to ask why you're not interested but it's because it's just not for you at this point or it's just not what you see for yourself?

Sarah: I really don't think I'm good enough. I mean, ultimately it boils down to I don't think I can withstand the scrutiny and because of that it's just not worth the money to me to do it. I know I'm a good referee in what I'm doing now, I'm confident in terms of my ability, you know enough people have told me but ultimately I know I'm a good referee for what I'm refereeing. I don't think I'd be a good referee at the levels they want me to be. Whether it's just my personality or my foul recognition or anything like that, I just don't think it would be a good fit.

Interviewer: Do you think you have a ways to develop still?

Sarah: I certainly think that anybody that says they're not able to develop is...you always want to be better, you always want to get your skills up that's why I go to the – well, no, I go for the money to the education sessions – I am willing to learn and look at the rules and I have conversations on the rules, I've had a 2 hour argument about a penalty that got called last night with another referee and with a player, I like having those conversations, I think that makes you smarter because your thinking about the rules, your thinking about interpretation, so yes. There's *loads* of room for improvement, it's not that I am not willing to be a better referee, I just

don't really want to be refereeing at the higher levels. I would rather be a better referee at what I'm doing now.

Though she was recognized as a good referee on numerous occasions and identified with the position of the good referee, she was subjectified differently than her fellow referees. For her the "good referee" is not synonymous with "elite referee". She too believes that she is a good referee, however, her story highlights that there are varying degrees of "being good" within the domain of refereeing, each indicative of the level of competition, and the expectations of the referee.

Moore (2013) ascertains that power, by way of social relations, generates various subject positions however, it does not determine how the subject takes up, or identifies with a subject position or subjectivity. Various social-cultural factors such as age, race, class, and socialization mediate the ways in which the subject understands each subject position and the degree of commitment with which she takes up her position, and in turn, it affects the ways in which she understands herself and interprets the world (MacKay & Dallaire, 2014; Moore, 2013). Thus, for Musia (51, Intermediate) the "good referee" is a compliment, an elite status and mark of achievement for BB (21, Intermediate), and for Sarah (33, Intermediate), the position has a more humble and less accomplished characterization. Being recognized as a good referee does not inspire all referees to become elite officials and exemplifies that "being good" is not synonymous with "being elite" official as there are good referees at all levels of the game. Ultimately, women took pride in being recognized as good referees, it separated them from the "others" – the novices, the unskilled, and the bad refs.

Unlike recognition characterized in *Recognition and Validation*, here the referee is subjectified when (through recognition of her exceptional ability) the position of "good referee"

is bestowed upon her. Recognition however, does not guarantee performance. It is by accepting the position bestowed upon her that the subject comes into being as she is subjectified by the discourse of ability. The subject must accept and identify with the position, embody the accompanying subjectivity, and live it out as if natural (Weedon, 2004) in order to perform according to the norms of the subject position bestowed upon her. Thus recognition and identification, on the part of the subject, must take place in order for the subject to take up the position of the “good referee” (Moore, 2013). By relating experiences in which she was recognized as a “good referee” we see that subject has reconciled herself within the position and has come to understand herself and navigate the domain of refereeing from the position of the good referee.

Moreover, the ways in which the women characterized and described themselves as good referees confirm that in “being” a good referee, they adopted the discursive practices and accompanying subjectivity of the “good referee”. The “good referee” was characterized by her ability to keep calm under pressure, be a fair and consistent arbitrator of the game, her physical fitness, and her degree of knowledge. I hesitate to further explore the notion of knowledge here as this is a story of the salience of ability within the narratives of women soccer referees, however, it is inescapable. In brief, I defined ability as the referee’s competence to perform her duties, however, without knowledge – the information or know how to perform her duties – she cannot be a competent referee.

Like Sarah (33, Intermediate), many referees referenced their knowledge of the game, studying the Laws of the Game and discussing the Laws of the Game with other referees in conjunction with being a good referee. For the subject, “being” – performing/living out her subjectivity – is an ongoing social, interactional process (Pillet-Shore, 2015) through which she

is (re)affirmed within her position through the social relations she encounters within the domain of refereeing (Brady & Shirato, 2010). Resultantly, in discussing the Laws of the Game with other referees, Sarah (33, Intermediate) is also subjectified by the referee/referee relationship, and (re)affirmed as a good referee by having knowledge of the Laws of the Game and her ability to demonstrate the depth of her knowledge off the field of play amongst other referees. This (re)affirmation of subjectivity is also characteristic of the subject's need to prove her abilities as a referee on the field of play.

**Proving her ability.** Despite the recognition and validation, and the distinction of being recognized as a “good referee”, women consistently feel the need to prove themselves as a “good referee”; to prove that they can manage the games that they are assigned, that they have the athletic ability to keep up with the game, and that as women, they are good referees regardless of their gender. Throughout their experiences they had to prove to players, coaches, spectators, and community leaders alike they are indeed “good referees”. This practice of proving her ability is central to the experience of being – and projecting the subjectivity of – a good referee (Allen, 2005; Cregan, 2012a).

When I spoke with Alexandria (38, Elite) about her reasons for continuing to referee it became apparent that for her having to prove herself was a part of the allure of being a referee as well as an avenue to develop her self-confidence. It was also necessary for her, as a young referee, to gain the respect of the players during her games and change their attitudes towards her. When I asked her if she continues to referee for the challenge or the validation she said,

I think it's both, I think refereeing back then and today still the reason I still referee is because every game is different and there is challenge in every game. It was about

proving that I was the best referee in my area and I might have been a young girl but that I can do those men's game that I started doing when I was very young.

So part of it was proving it to myself and to all other people – the men players that didn't believe that I can referee and that kind of thing. And then the validation helps, I mean the validation that they think you are a good referee when they doubt it when you arrive at the field that helps, the validation from – I don't want to say your bosses – but the assessors and the other referees that helps as well. And I think my parents were really influential in my refereeing and to this day.

Here she is not clear if she was underestimated because of her youth, physical appearance, or gender, however, she aimed to prove that she is a good referee in spite of many the socio-cultural factors that may affect the ways in which she is perceived as a referee. She wanted to prove that she was neither intimidated nor abashed by her position as a woman in the midst of a masculine contest – the men's soccer match. For many other women the topic of having to prove themselves as referees centered at the convergence of their ability and gender. Amazingly, when asked, a majority of the referees within the study did not believe that they were discriminated against because of their gender, however, they did believe that they are perceived as bad or lack luster, and not taken seriously as referees because they are women. Resultantly, they used the practice of proving their ability to resist the stereotype of the bad female referee, whilst (re)affirming their position/subjectivity as good referees.

This was true for Refhre (53, Intermediate), a referee with over 20 years of experience who was the only woman referee in her city when she began refereeing soccer.

Interviewer: Do you think you battled more attitudes against female officials in your earlier days?

Refhre: Yes, because there was less of us and, like you heard last weekend “That’s why I hate female officials” so you have to set – you have to establish your reputation and the reputation of females was that we didn’t know, we were unfit, we didn’t know what we were doing and we weren’t competent so yes, every time I stepped on the field, I had to set my reputation again. Now there are enough females around that it’s not an automatic “Females don’t know what they’re doing” so yeah, more difficult then.

Sarah (33, Intermediate) had to make a concerted effort to show players in her adult men’s game that she was capable of refereeing and did not align with the “wussy girl” stereotype of the weak, meek, and ineffectual woman soccer referee.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt like you had to prove yourself as a referee? Like as a woman?

Sarah: Yes

Interviewer: How so?

Sarah: Again, the Old Timers games I do, I think that immediately I have to set the tone that I’m not going to be this wussy girl that’s coming out to referee, that I understand that I’m doing Old Timers and I’m strong enough to do that, so immediately you are projecting an image of something. And I don’t change my personality, but certainly tone of voice. You know, a little bit deeper, a little stronger, it’s definitely not going to be, I’m never wussy in terms of how I talk, I’m assuming you’ve seen that so far, it’s just that it is what it is and I think I have to – I feel far more

conscious about making sure that's how I'm projecting myself to them because I don't want to be the stereotypical girl that can't handle men's refereeing. Whether there aren't any refs that can't it just that that's the stereotype that's there, I don't ever want to be in that boat

There is a negative stereotype framing women soccer referees perceived inability to referee. Resultantly, these women felt the need to constantly prove their ability so that they can be accepted and respected as referees regardless of their gender, hence, distance themselves from the stereotype of the "incompetent female referee".

Within these episodes of recognition and proving herself multiple social relations once more subjectifies the referee within the discourse of ability as she performs her duties and subjectivity under the direct observation of others. The participant/referee, leader/referee, and referee/referee relationships are pervasive throughout her subjectification and vital to the evolution of her subjectivity from her days as a "novice referee" until she comes into her own as "a good referee", and the (re)affirmation of her subjectivity and position within the wider domain of refereeing. Subsequently, the referee becomes tied to these social relations not only for subjectification, but also for (re)affirmation of her subjectivity and position within the wider domain of refereeing.

The practice of proving her ability is twofold for the woman soccer referee. It exists to both (re)affirm the position/subjectivity of the referee within the discourse of ability, and battle the hegemonic, androcentric norms and ideals that characterize the good referee. The (re)affirmation of her subjectivity takes place through a system of direct observation in which the subject performs the discursive practices of the "good referee" under the gaze of match time participants in order to project her subjectivity as a "good referee" and sustain her recognition as

such (Burton, 2004; Pillet-Shore, 2015). In seeking (re)affirmation from match time participants she becomes tied to, and dependent upon the social relations that subjectify her (Allen, 2008). She is reliant on the reactions and opinions of coaches, players, spectators, and fellow referees as indicators of the degree to which she aligns with the norms of the “good referee”. Accordingly, “the subject is not only constituted through and dominated by, but also remains necessarily tied to and reliant on, the practices and discourses of power as a form of subjectification” (Brady & Shirato, 2010).

I assert that the “good referee” is characterized by hegemonic norms according to the characterizations that she actively resists when proving her ability and the traits she uses to describe the “incompetent female referee”. According to Alexandria (38, Elite), Refhre (53, Intermediate), and Sarah (33, Intermediate), the incompetent female referee is weak, unfit, uninformed, unskilled, meek, and speaks with a passive or soft tone of voice; descriptors that I believe are stereotypically feminine characterizations. Moreover, Krane (2001) and Kavoura, Ryba, and Chroni (2015) assert that characteristics such as passivity, gentility, compassion, and beautification constituted hegemonic femininity, whereas strength, physical prowess, confidence, and assertiveness characterize hegemonic masculinity. Through the practice of proving their ability, the subject attempts to embody masculine characteristics whilst resisting feminine characterizations when projecting this subjectivity, signifying that the “good referee” is a male sex typed position (Meân, 2001).

Consequently, being the good referee is antagonistic to being feminine, thus femininity and ability are contradictory (Krane, 2001). Burke and Hallinan (2006) highlight that the disciplinarians of modern regimes of patriarchal power that discipline and subjectify woman are difficult to identify, however, the beneficiaries of discipline are identifiable and recognizable.

The pair ascertains that men benefit from the norms of femininity that discipline women, position men and women differently within society, and outline the actions and practices that do or do not align with femininity. Thus, by identifying with, and performing her position/subjectivity on the field of play, the subject challenges the dominant gender structures within the domain of refereeing. As a result, the practice of proving herself is a mechanism through which the subject is disciplined for challenging the norms of the “good referee” (Kavoura, et al., 2015). She is doomed to constantly prove her ability to match time participants each time she enters the field of play. It is the price she pays for being a skilled woman in the midst of a predominantly masculine domain.

### **Subjectification of the Woman Soccer Referee**

The experiences of women soccer referees are constructed within and bound by the discourse of ability. It distinguishes the referee as “capable” or “incapable”, “competent” or “incompetent”, “skilled”, “talented”, “awful”, “good”, or “bad”. It constructs her development and journey from a novice to an experienced referee, dictates the favorable capabilities and ideals of the referee, determines and marks her achievements, provides distinction within the refereeing community, and denotes her value as a referee. Moreover, the discourse of ability shapes the socio-cultural spaces – the clinic, the field of play, and in the company of her fellow referees – in which she is subjectified. It is within these spaces that she comes to realize and understand herself as “the referee”, performs her subjectivity, and gains recognition from the other subjects performing within them.

Within these discursive spaces the referee encounters the social relations that bring her into being as the “novice referee”, the “experienced referee”, the “good referee”. As she relates with instructors, participants, leaders, supporters, and fellow referees she is subjectified by the

dominant ideals and practices of the referee, their view and acceptance of her in her role as the referee, and the recognition that they bestow upon her as the referee. These social relations function as mechanisms of power in which the subject is subordinate to and thus dependent on the instructor, the participant, the leader, the supporter, and her fellow referees for her subjectification and the (re)affirmation of her identity. According to Butler (1997),

If following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. (p. 2)

Thus the subject capitulates to and becomes tied to the sources of her subjectification – social relations – in order to prove and affirm that she is performing according to the norms of the referee within each discursive space.

Social relations also exist as mechanisms to discipline the woman soccer referee (Kavoura et al, 2015). The patriarchal regimes of power that govern the domain of refereeing dictate the gender structures as well as the acceptable practices of the “good referee” within each discursive space. Sadly for the woman soccer referee the practices of masculinity constitute the position/subjectivity of the “good referee” rendering her performance of the position a challenge to the norms and gender structures within the domain of refereeing. Consequently, she is doomed to prove her ability and (re)affirm her position/subjectivity as a “good referee” under the surveillance of the social relations that she encounters within each discursive space that she performs.

**Chapter 6: “Because there are so few of us”: Exploring the effects of under-representation on the experiences of women soccer referees in Ontario, Canada through the discourse of the outsider**

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Maximum 25 pages

Interviewer: Do you think you experience refereeing differently because you are a woman?

Sarah: [...] If I'm being honest, I probably don't want to admit that, but yeah, I would say that yes, it's different

Interviewer: So what would make it different?

Sarah: The experiencing it differently? Because there are so few of us. I've said this before to other people but I think I'm a novelty to Old Timers, because there's so few female referees so I'm experiencing those game differently than other referees because they're going to treat me differently, they are. They're probably going to say other stuff to a men's referee or they may keep yelling at them. I flirt a little bit and laugh and such and then they feel bad for yelling at the girl.

## **Introduction**

Historically, the discourses that shape the dominant ideals and practices concerning those in positions of leadership/power are associated with assertiveness, aggression, fearlessness, and competitiveness – tenants of hegemonic masculinity (Parker, 2001; Pfister, 2015). Not surprisingly, these characteristics exist in opposition to the meekness, frailty, and gentility that is often associated with femininity (Fielding-Loyd & Meân, 2008; 2011; Krane, 2001). Resultantly, “sportswomen maintain a position that challenges the boundaries of femininity by displaying stereotypically masculine characteristics in sport” (Halbert, 1997, p. 11). Our position as actively engaged sportswomen classify us as deviant within the sporting landscape and susceptible to a myriad of factors that contribute to the under-representation of women within the androcentric, male dominated, historically patriarchal sport institution (Liston, 2006; Mercier & Werthner,

2002; Parker, 2001; Pfister, 2015). Notably, Cunningham (2011) outlines 3 categories of factors that influence the under-representation of women in management positions within sport organization each of which rely on the dominant gendered discourses surrounding occupational/positional “fit” (Koca & Öztürk, 2015). I believe that these categories – stereotypes, structural factors, and personal characteristics – can be applied globally to sportswomen in non-playing roles and used to explore the issues of women’s under-representation in sport.

The first of these categories is: stereotypes. Along with labels and stigmatization, stereotypes are designed to identify and discipline sportswomen as deviants within our respective domains and influence surrounding attitudes and behaviors towards us, and whether or not we can perform according to the dominant masculinized ideals and practices associated with those who stereotypically occupy our position(s). These stereotypes are often misleading and result in the perceived incompetence of many sportswomen despite their qualifications and expertise, thus relegating women to positions of little to no power and perpetuating our continued under-representation (Cunningham, 2011; Krane, 2001; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, Kauer, 2004; Ponterotto, 2014; Sibson, 2010). The second characteristic is structural forces. These are “established forces that serve to constrain the advancement of women within a given domain” (Cunningham, 2011, p.113), they are engrained in our sport culture and (re)produce the devaluation of sportswomen. These forces create a gendered hierarchy within the sport institution in which exclusionary mechanisms are used to preserve and maintain the gender order (Reade, Rogers & Norman, 2009). These mechanisms include: the old boys network, the glass ceiling, homogenous reproduction, and treatment and access discrimination which leads to lack of female mentors and role models for younger sportswomen, inadequate numbers of qualified

female candidates for leadership positions, and limited opportunities for advancement (Cunningham, 2011; Graham, McKenna & Fleming, 2013; Reade et. al, 2009; Koca & Öztürk, 2015; Walker & Bopp, 2010). Lastly, personal characteristics are characterized by the sportswoman's self-efficacy – her attitude toward her current position, her intentions to advance, and her likelihood to leave the position altogether (Cunningham, 2011; Graham et. al, 2013). These mechanisms also require sportswomen to adopt and adapt to a masculine sport culture, and consistently prove themselves in order to work their way up the hierarchy whereas the competence of their male counterparts is often viewed as indisputable (Walker & Bopp, 2010).

As sportswomen we are often aware of our under-representation and the stereotypes we are susceptible to – as exemplified by Sarah in the excerpt above. Resultantly, throughout our experiences in sport, we develop and utilize numerous strategies, both overt and covert, to make sense of and manage gender relations within our chosen domains and cope with the gendered discourses that perpetuate our under-representation (Sibson, 2010; Welford, 2011). These strategies (i.e: emphasizing male superiority, undermining the ability of sportswomen, forming female only spaces, openly challenging “masculine practices”, etc.) are dependent upon our gender identities and the sport culture in which we perform, and either comply with, or resist the dominant gendered ideals and practices that structure our sport experiences (Sibson, 2010; Welford, 2011). Moreover, McKay (1997) asserts,

Given that men control the most powerful social institutions, and their values are more highly esteemed than women's, then women must continually “do” gender under disadvantaged conditions. Kandiyoti (1988, 286) uses the term *patriarchal bargains* to refer to the fluid and tension-ridden ways in which both men and women “accommodate

and acquiesce” to preexisting gendered structures and meanings, even though women generally “bargain from a weaker position”. (McKay, 1997)

Consequently, many sportswomen find it difficult to resist the normalized patriarchal and masculinized sport practices associated with both their position and sport culture and resort to accommodating masculine practices in order to gain acceptance and recognition within their positions (Hall, 2002; Kerr & Marshall, 2007; Welford, 2011; Young, 1997). This is especially pervasive within the soccer community. Parker (2001) and Pfister (2015) highlight that hegemonic masculinity is deeply rooted within the soccer culture and despite the feminization of soccer and the growing numbers of female participants, soccer will continue to be a masculine arena in which women must constantly work to be accepted.

Within this article I aim to focus on the gendered stereotypes that generate ideological and discursive barriers that women must overcome in order to maintain and perform in their role as soccer referees.

### **The Research**

The data for this article was generated from my wider study exploring the dominant and alternative discourses with which women make sense of their experiences as soccer referees within Ontario, Canada. I recruited Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) registered and certified referees for a one-on-one, 90-minute, semi-structured interview by utilizing a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. By activating relationships with women within my soccer referee network, and asking them to ask women within their own networks on my behalf, I successfully recruited and had the pleasure of interviewing 15 English speaking women soccer referees ranging from 21-54 years of age, performing at the recreational to elite levels of the

game with 1 or more years of experience, and having refereed at least 1 boys and 1 girls under-13 game, as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

*Number of referees included in the study according to level of competition and corresponding OSA grading level*

OSA Referee Grading Levels	Levels of Competition	Number of Referees
District 1-5	Recreational	4
District 6-7	Intermediate	9
District 8		
Regional 9-10	Elite	2
National 11		
FIFA 12		

*Note.* This is also Table 5.1. OSA referee Grading Levels and Levels of Competition are from the “OSA Grading Protocol”

Despite their differences and whether or not they were actively concerned with the under-representation of female referees, each referee was aware that women are under-represented as referees in Ontario. Using a Foucauldian lens, I explored the effects of under-representation on the gendered experiences of women soccer referees by examining the ways in which they construct their experiences in order to uncover the discourse(s) that they employ to make sense of their experiences of being a woman in the midst of what is considered a male dominated sport.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Throughout this article I drew on discourse analysis as outlined by Fairclough (2010) who maintains that it addresses social wrongs “by analyzing their sources and causes, resistance to them, and the possibility of overcoming them” (p. 231). In using discourse analysis I

recognize discourses as the historically relevant ideas and statements that define societal norms, and the attitudes, actions, and behaviors that do or do not comply with these norms (Elder-vass, 2001; Mills 2003; Smith Maguire, 2002). They determine the ways in which we construct our world view, the social (discursive) practices in which we engage, and the ways in which we (inter)act within a given domain according to our social position(s) (Fairclough, 2010). They generate a multitude of subject positions that define and constitute our identities and highlight the ways in which we are controlled by, resistant to, or aware of the dominant discourses that exist within social structures (Mahrouse, 2005). Ultimately, discourse is the site of power and through the analysis of discourse we can unearth the ideological pressures and power relations that exist within social structures (Wooffitt, 2005).

It is important to highlight that discourses are neither static, nor wholly contextual. Discourses are fragmented; they are composed of recontextualized remnants of other discourses (Fairclough, 2010) that come together to help us interpret and make meaning of our experiences within each domain that we perform (Mills, 2003; Smith Maguire, 2003). At any given moment the subject has access to a myriad of discursive fragments with which to make sense of and reflect on her experiences, and structure her (inter)actions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wooffitt, 2005). The discursive fragments that she draws on to do so are reflexive of the social structure, her position within it, and the circulating dominant and alternative discourses. For example, the “wussy girl referee” stereotype contains discursive fragments from the discourses of: ability, femininity, athleticism, gender, knowledge, and sexuality. Whereas a young novice referee may not be aware that she engages in some of the discursive practices of this position, a mature elite referee may actively engage in discursive practices that challenge the “wussy girl

referee stereotype” in order to align with the dominant ideals of “the referee” and gain acceptance from those within the refereeing domain.

**Method.** Wooffitt (2005) ascertains that “the ways in which we talk about the world reflect wider ideological pressures and, ultimately, particular constellations of power relations” (p. 140), and by analyzing verbal texts we are able to “focus on the interrelationships between discourse and the wider social structures” (p. 139). Thus, my method of discourse analysis entails identifying the discursive fragments (re)produced by the woman soccer referee subject during semi-structured interviews and linking them in order to establish pattern(s) regarding the ways in which they construct their experiences of being women soccer referees.

Throughout the study of language, psychology, sociology and other disciplines there are numerous ways of “doing” discourse analysis (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Wooffitt, 2005). Consequently, there is not one defined method of discourse analysis on which to base my research method, but many methods from which to draw. Resultantly, I applied the first two stages of Willig’s (2008) stepwise approach to discourse analysis that consists of (1) identifying the ways in which the discursive object/object of the research is constructed within each interview and (2) locating these constructions within wider discourses. Through this method of analysis I was able to uncover the discursive fragments that were (re)produced by the woman soccer referee subject and the wider discourse in which they were located.

**“Doing” discourse analysis.** Within my wider study I determined 4 key areas of the referee’s experience that are pertinent to my study: (1) becoming a referee, (2) being a referee (benefits and challenges), (3) continuing to referee, and (4) being a woman referee. In order to explore the woman soccer referee’s gendered experiences and how she makes sense of her under-representation, I focused on the fourth key area of experience – “being a woman soccer referee”.

Following the transcription and coding of each interview, the first step was to identify and categorize the ways in which each referee's answers within her interview transcript made reference to, defined, described, and/or associated with being a woman referee. Secondly, I outlined all my categories of discursive constructions according to the discursive fragments that they reproduced. Lastly, I identified and placed the resulting discursive fragments into a wider discourse according to the ways in which they related and constructed the experiences of the woman soccer referee. The analysis revealed that the woman soccer referee is an outsider within the referee domain. Throughout her experiences she becomes aware of her status as an outsider, internalizes her subordination, faces an established system of normalized sexual discrimination against women soccer referees, and in turn comes to normalize the sexism that she faces as a result of being under-represented within the refereeing domain. Resultantly, she employs "the discourse of the outsider" to make sense of her gendered experiences as a soccer referee.

### **The Discourse of The Outsider**

As a woman in the midst of a male dominated sport who has worked and achieved her status as "the referee", the woman soccer referee is made to feel that she is unconventional, abnormal, and anomalous by the men and women that she encounters within her refereeing experiences; exposing that within the refereeing domain – and the soccer community at large – the tenants of "the referee" are not wholly achieved, but ascribed. As a novice referee these moments characterize her experiences as she develops her skills and knowledge of the game, learns to become comfortable on the field, begins to navigate the many relationships within the refereeing domain, and becomes aware of the stereotypes surrounding women soccer referees (Reid, 2016). However, as she develops into an experienced referee she continues to be haunted by the feeling that as a woman soccer referee, she is not the "norm".

For Alexandria (age: 38), an elite referee with over 10 years of experience, this made arriving at her games very troubling and she had to take the first moments of her time at the field to overcome her discomfort before beginning her game.

Yes I think for me the most nerve wrecking part was always arriving at the field. So arriving at the field, either getting dropped off or whatever, however it was, and then walking to the field. I always find that kind of the most nerve wrecking part because that is when everybody is like “Oh my God it’s a girl” or ... the older you got “Oh it’s a “chick referee””.

Just this whole like uncomfortable situation where you are getting dressed and they are there and they are talking about you and they think you can’t hear them. Like I always find that even to this day on the local park like it’s just a weird thing for me. I always found it very strange to arrive to a field where everybody is just in shock that there is this girl there...

Because of her gender, her position as a soccer referee is unexpected and cause for speculation and chatter amongst game time participants. These relations left her feeling ostracized and aware of her subordinate, outsider position within the refereeing domain. Moreover, Alexandria highlights that there are negative stereotypes surrounding women soccer referees. When she arrives for her game, participants are shocked not only because she is performing a role stereotypically occupied by men, but also because of the social significance of her gender to her refereeing ability. Stereotypes such as the “girly referee” and the “chick referee” are synonymous with “the bad referee” and haunt and debilitate women soccer referees, alter participants’ attitudes and behaviors toward her, and remind them that as referees they occupy a deviant position within the refereeing domain (Reid, 2016). These stereotypes undermine their refereeing

ability, uphold the dominant ideal of “the [male] referee,” and affect her belief that she can excel within the refereeing domain (Walker & Bopp, 2010).

Brianna, a 25-year-old Elite referee, is also aware of the shock and alarm of many game time participants when they realize that she is the referee amongst her crew of 4 officials.

Interviewer: Have you ever been in a situation where, like [your] game, I was in the crowd and everyone was like “Oh, the girl’s going to ref” that’s what we were hearing, have you ever been in a situation where you heard it?

Brianna: Oh yeah, all the time...all the time, no matter what level, OYSL [Ontario Youth Soccer League], rec ... they always will direct their attention to like the oldest male or whoever they perceive to be their idea of “the referee” and its usually never me unless they know – unless they’re familiar with me...

And again when we spoke of some of the difficulties of being a young female referee, she argued that:

Brianna: There are a lot of perception issues, like we talked about how if the coach is talking to the crew, they’ll pick the one that looks like the referee in the air quotations “the referee”. So most people don’t perceive young and female to be the stereotypical referee so there’s always that. [...] We’re not the stereotype, we’re not who people think will referee and we’re not people who think, who like coaches and like –

Interviewer: And we’re not the ones they have the confidence in

Brianna: Yeah, for sure, they don’t think that we will succeed. So anytime you come into contact or anytime I come into contact with someone...it’s

fighting against that. It's like having to show them. And like I said before in the first part of the interview, it's not like the referees so much, well it is them too, but its everybody, especially I feel like the coaches and the players it's huge, the older they are, the harder it is [...] So you're fighting that all the time so some games are difficult where they shouldn't be, like from a refereeing standpoint.

The surprise and speculation faced by Alexandria (Age: 38, Level of competition: Elite) and the perception issues face by Brianna (25, Elite) provides the referee with the awareness that she does not align with the dominant characteristics of "the referee". "The referee" is associated with maleness and by virtue of being female the woman soccer referees does not and cannot align with the dominant characteristics of "the referee". As a referee, she is resigned to strive for an impossible standard in order to gain acceptance and respect from players, coaches, and spectators alike. Moreover, such responses to women as soccer referees have the unintended consequence of undermining her developing identity as a "the referee" (Velija and Malcolm, 2009).

Consequently, women soccer referees come to internalize these feelings of being marginalized. Some begin to fixate on and expect the mechanisms of their marginalization and constantly feel the need to prove themselves – their ability to referee, their knowledge, their fitness, and their toughness – each time they get on the field as evidenced by BB (21, Intermediate) and Kathy's (41, Intermediate) feeling of the lack of respect they receive from game time participants (players, coaches, and spectators).

Interviewer: Have there been any other issues [with refereeing] because you're a woman?

BB: Credibility, like not listening to you at all because you're a woman. Or like, sometimes they'll be like "oh it's a woman, let's not listen to her" – well I feel like that anyways. I feel like they are doing that anyways, so they're going to be like, "oh it's a woman, maybe she's not going to be right", or "she won't be able to keep up". And like, I'm qualified to do this game, they're not going to give me a game that I shouldn't be refereeing...

Kathy: Because as a female you don't get a lot of respect necessarily, especially starting out because they think it's a boy's sport and the boys know what's going on and the girls don't know what's happening. And they test that, like, so until you prove to them that "listen, I know what I'm doing" they're on you a lot...

Alongside awe and speculation concerning her gender, the lack of respect given to the woman soccer referee is also a mechanism used to marginalize her. In having to prove herself each time she is on the field, she has to work to gain the respect of game time participants and prove that, despite her gender, she is worthy of being "the referee". She learns to expect and accept this marginalization as a byproduct of being a woman soccer referee and internalizes her outsider position.

By virtue of being "the referee", referees have tumultuous relationships and interactions with many game time participants (Anderson, 2008; Forbes, Edwards & Flemming, 2014; Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Hepburn, 2013), however, the woman soccer referee is further loathed and marginalized not only for her role on the field of play, but also because of her gender. It is through gendered relations that the woman soccer referee becomes aware of her position as an

outsider within the soccer community and internalizes her position as evidenced by the ways in which her outsider position is expressed within her narrative and characterizes her experiences as a referee.

**Normalized Sexism.** The outsider position and continued marginalization of the woman soccer referee is (re)produced, maintained, and made possible by both subtle and covert forms of sexual discrimination within the soccer community. Employed by leaders within the referee community, fellow referees, and game time participants, this systemic discrimination is enacted in the many interactions she has as a referee, and ensures the subordination of the woman soccer referee. It is woven into the social structure of the soccer community (Caudwell, 2011; Forbes, Edwards & Fleming, 2015; Knoppers & Anthoniosen, 2003; Schlesinger & Schlesinger-Weigelt, 2012) and welcomes the woman soccer referee into a system that has established mechanisms to deter, punish, and police her because of her gender. She must regularly face and cope with both covert and subtle forms of sexism throughout her experiences of being a referee.

For Patricia (25, Intermediate), who was once an Elite referee, a memorable moment occurred during a post-game assessment at a national tournament for which she was an assistant referee (AR) on a team with 3 male officials. During the assessment the assessor – a man – asked her to turn around so that her fellow referees could see that the outline of the red card that she had in her back pocket was visible on her bottom; a matter for which she was being scolded that it did not look good and it was unprofessional. She recounted that the situation was visibly awkward and uncomfortable not only for herself, but also her fellow referees who tried to change the topic of the conversation thereafter. When she told one of the main assessors who asked about her assessment, he too was in a state of disbelief. She was being singled out for being what she described as “quite curvy” and for a matter that had little to no relevance to neither her game

time performance nor her ability to conduct her duties as an AR. This situation stood to single her out and embarrass her as the woman amongst a group of male officials.

Notably, Patricia highlighted this was not the typical reception of males within the refereeing community, she contended that interactions like these were an exception, but I would argue that for what is supposed to be an exception it occurs all too often. Muhtikulus (52, Intermediate) recounted multiple occasions in which she was on referee teams with male officials who overlooked and discounted her ability to referee – they did not look her way during the game, they ignored her calls, and they treated her in a cold and hostile manner when she arrived at the games – she describes this as the worst part of being a referee.

Interviewer: What do you think is the worst part of being a referee? Cause we talked about the abuse before – you mentioned the abuse before

Muhtikulus: Yeah, its not so much the abuse it's the, what's the word I'm looking for? It's the lack of...what's the word?

Interviewer: Respect?

Muhtikulus: From fellow referees – men.

Interviewer: That's the worst part?

Muhtikulus: That is the worst part and it's the respect and the fact that they don't think that I know what I'm talking about, seriously.

Interviewer: So you get undermined that often?

Muhtikulus: Mhm

Interviewer: And it really does affect your game?

Muhtikulus: Yep, Yep. Cause usually when I'm on the line. When I'm in the middle of a men's game with male ARs its usually pretty good cause the men who

are playing begin to understand that, yes, I do actually know what I'm talking about a little bit therefore the ARs will kick in and say "okay cool". But it's when a man is in the middle and I'm on the line

Interviewer: Then it becomes difficult?

Muhtikulus: Yeah

The lack of respect for the woman soccer referee is too frequent an exception, and what I believe to be the main mechanism through which the woman soccer referee is undermined, marginalized, discriminated against, and kept aware of her subordinate status within the refereeing domain. Again, the woman soccer referee has to prove herself in order to be deemed acceptable as "the referee". However, Muhtikulus feels she has to prove herself to game time participants as well as her fellow referees – making her an outsider amongst participants as well as her peers, as perpetuated by male referees.

The majority of the referees within my study faced sexism at the hands of game time participants, in particular, soccer players – both male and female – that treated them in a hostile manner, showed little to no confidence in their ability, or did not respect their authority on the field. Whether they were questioning the woman referee's calls or berating her on the field (Kathy, 41, Intermediate), undermining her decisions by openly consulting her male colleagues (BB, 21, Intermediate), or trying to physically intimidate her during or after the game (Muhtikulus, 52, Intermediate; Vera, 54, Recreational) players are often the source of the sexism that women regularly face within the soccer community. Brianna (25, Elite) commented that sexist comments are a regularity. When I asked if she was ever treated badly on the grounds that she was a woman she fiercely replied, "Of course, haven't you?!" It has become an expectation

that as women soccer referees we have or will experience sexism throughout our careers. She told me of a participant that told her to “Go to the kitchen!”; of such experiences she expressed,

Brianna: ...it’s really bad, like “go have a baby”, somebody said that...  
“Go have a baby, in the kitchen, while making me a sandwich” like we make jokes about it. Like, I’ve heard like “go get a boyfriend” during a game...just stuff that’s like, “Are you serious?! Are you seriously just saying that?!” And it’s women too, a lot of the time the worst comments come from women and I find that repugnant like, and these are people who, like, have kids, have daughters, and they’re yelling this, and like, is this how you feel about your daughter? That she can’t do something because she’s a woman, like it disgusts me...

Interviewer: Like I’ve seriously never –

Brianna: Never had it? Come ref in Toronto more. And then you get comments when you’re good like “oh, even though you’re a woman you’re still good” like, oh thank you...I think. But yeah, for sure for every game, you’re fighting against the perception, women’s game, men’s game, it doesn’t matter like you’re not the typical referee and you’re fighting against that every single game

The frequency of these encounters and the openness with which participants make sexist comments highlight that sexism is normalized within the soccer community. Dominant ways of thinking become normalized when they become embedded in language and “in the ways in which groups of individuals are normally thought of” (Ng, 1993, p. 194), and the ways in which we communicate with and about them – they are regarded as irrefutable truths and acceptable

communication. For the woman soccer referee, these sexist comments affect how her authority is perceived and received, the degree to which she can be effective within her role, perpetuates her subordination, and disempowers her within the soccer community (Ng, 1993). Moreover, though she is disgusted by these sexist comments and is aware that they are wrong, by making jokes about these comments she also normalizes sexism. Yet, joking about it becomes a strategy for coping with this outright sexism. In making a mockery of the sexist comments she encounters she aims to take away the power of such comments, removing their stigmatizing capabilities, and reducing them to mere words that have little to no bearing on her ability to referee and her identity as the referee (Tew, 2002).

*Challenging sexism.* Gaucher (2011) highlights that when sportswomen neglect to address remarks and challenge the sources of their sexual discrimination, their silence can be misconstrued as acceptance and lead to further normalization of sexist exclusionary and discriminatory practices. Though the woman soccer referee normalizes sexism in order to remove its stigmatizing capabilities, she does not always tolerate discriminatory comments and behaviors.

As a referee it is within her authority to discipline any form of “dissent by word or action” and the use of “offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures” (FIFA, 2016, p. 28-39) by players and take “action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at [her] discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds” (p. 25). However, her ability to do so is dependent on the referee’s knowledge of the Laws of the Game, her confidence to take action, and her experience as a referee. Patricia (25, Intermediate), who, at 15, was verbally abused by a coach during a youth competitive match, did not take action in this particular incident. As a novice referee she was

intimidated by the adult, male coach, and though she was aware that it was within her authority to take action against the coach, she was unaware of what truly constituted verbal abuse.

Whereas, at the age of 14 Brianna “tossed a coach” as it is commonly referred to, and described it as a defining moment in her experiences as a referee.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a moment that changed you're experience as a referee thus far?

Brianna: The first time I tossed a coach when I was 14, that changed a lot of stuff, but not just refereeing, everything. Like how do I tell a grown man, “no you cannot be here”, and as a 14 year old girl “you have to be over there, and I'm not starting until you leave” that's huge and like every other – any time where you have to stand strong when everyone doesn't expect you to or doesn't want you to, but as time goes on you have more and more experiences like that. Like that's always big, when you have to toss a coach, yeah cause when you have to toss a coach in a big game that's something you never forget, especially if the coach is like, big and bad... and they have coached this national team and this professional team, who cares?

Moreover, sexist attitudes and behaviors may be difficult to discern. Sexism can be blatant, subtle, or covert, and what one referee deems as acceptable behavior, another may deem offensive – identifying sexism is at the referee's discretion. Consequently, there is no concrete established standard for the discriminatory acts that the referee must take action against – it is a matter of what each individual referee will or will not tolerate. As well, some referees believe that taking action against each discriminatory practice employed by participants can become

trifling, and cause unnecessary and avoidable tension with game participants, thus, worsening the attitude of the players and the hostility faced by the referee causing her greater hardship and stress during the match. This increased antagonism is a deterrent for many of these women and they would prefer to ignore sexist comments rather than take action against them. Furthermore, as outsiders, it is difficult for the women soccer referee to properly challenge and change the dominant discourses that frame/produce/govern women and refereeing in soccer, because it is established members of the social structure that (re)produce and maintain the dominant discourses that are used to make sense of her role as “the referee”.

Women soccer referees are not unified in challenging sexism. Each discriminatory behavior that goes unaddressed, unchallenged, and unpunished contributes to the further normalization of sexism within the soccer community and the continued subordination of the woman soccer referee.

Sexual discrimination of the woman soccer referee is an acceptable practice rippling through all echelons of the soccer community from referee leaders, to referees, to game time participants; so much so that it has become normalized. The embeddedness of this systemic, normalized sexism contributes to the frequency with which the woman soccer referee encounters sexist attitudes and behaviors, reflects the dominant ideals concerning gender and refereeing and punishes the woman soccer referee for performing in a masculinized position of authority. In highlighting normalized sexism, my aim is not to identify the woman soccer referee as a victim rather, as Ng (1993) ascertains,

in highlighting systemic sexism, the goal is not to attribute blame or identify victims, but to explicate the systemic character of sexism as it is manifested in interactional settings [...] In doing so we move away from treating these incidents as idiosyncratic, isolated

“wrong doing” perpetrated by few individuals with attitudinal problems. Instead we aim at a fundamental re-examination of the surrounding structures and relations within the domain in which we have marginalized subordinate groups. (p. 191)

At this moment I wish to return to my earlier introduction of Cunningham’s (2011) factors that influence the under-representation of sportswomen and highlight the parallels between our findings. Through my research on the gendered experiences of the woman soccer referee it is evident that her marginalization stems from the stereotypes surrounding women soccer referees, the structural forces that constrain her are expressed as systemic sexual discrimination, and despite the barriers that they face within the soccer community they remain resilient – they continue to referee despite the stereotypes, the subtle sexist attitudes, and overt sexist comments though it affects the ways in which they view themselves as referees, they continue to referee.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The discourse of the outsider is derived from Elias and Scotson’s (2008) Theory of Established-outsider Relations. The pair maintains that longstanding power relations between interdependent groups co-existing within a given domain stratify their social structure and determine their social dynamics (Liston, 2005; Velija, 2012). Resultantly, the group with greater access to resources and a stronger collective identity emerge as the “established”, resigning the subordinate group – who has little to no collective identity or social capital – to the position of the “outsiders”. Within the domain, the established (re)produce the dominant ideals and practices that are regarded as social norms in order to maintain their status and power, and the outsiders – who strive to be like the established – come to internalize and normalized their subordination (Liston, 2005; Velija & Flynn, 2010; Velija & Malcolm, 2009).

Moreover, Liston (2005) argues that established-outsider relations' focus on power relations and status make it easily and readily applicable to power and gender relations within sport. It has been used within the study of sport as a framework to explore and analyze power relations between male and female athletes within male dominated sports such as golf (McGinnis, McQuillan &Chapple, 2005), cricket (Velija & Malcolm, 2009), and Gaelic football (Liston, 2005), amongst differing groups of female cricketers (Velija, 2012), and social exclusion amongst tennis players (Lake, 2011). Furthermore, Velija and Malcolm (2009) highlight that it is particularly useful as a framework for understanding power relations between men and women in contemporary sport because it emphasizes not the material barriers which perpetuate inequality (such as organizational separation), and which are increasingly coming under attack, but the ideological barriers which are less tangible but...seemingly more enduring. (p. 632)

Allowing me to better focus on the discourses – ideas, behaviors, and attitudes – which perpetuate the unequal power relations between men and women and the degree to which this inequality is engrained within the social structure.

The woman soccer referee is subjectified by the ideas and practices defined and maintained through the discourse of the outsider as reflected by the ways in which she makes sense of her gendered experiences as a referee. As a sportswoman occupying and actively performing in a masculinized role, the woman soccer referee is susceptible to and constrained by stereotypes such as the “girly/chick/wussy referee” stereotype, which undermine her competency, disempower her as a referee, and denote her as a bad and incapable referee (Reid, 2016). These stereotypes influence the attitudes and behaviors of referee leaders, referees, and game time participants and contribute to her marginalization and sexual discrimination within the

soccer community. As an outsider she comes to internalize her subordination and normalize her discrimination in order to be accepted and respected within her position as “the referee”. In order to manage her position within the soccer community as a referee and an outsider, the woman soccer referee must constantly prove her refereeing capabilities on the field of play and find ways to destigmatize her discrimination.

The referee’s subordination and systemic, normalized sexual discrimination make it difficult to correct and combat the issue of women’s continued under-representation as referees. However, Fairclough (2010) suggests that it is important to move past these difficult elements by focusing on how she deals with under-representation, in part, by contesting or challenging it. In doing so I propose that women soccer referees first develop fellowship. According to the theory of established-outsider relations, outsiders have a lack of a collective identity because they do not aim to be like each other, but aim to be like the established – the male referees. Women should take pride in being a woman soccer referee; take an interest in their fellow woman soccer referee, and work to address their individual as well as collective concerns. In doing so they must exercise their authority and be unafraid to challenge the status quo and discipline sexist behavior the first time, and every time they encounter it on the field of play. When a woman tolerates sexism, she unintentionally deems such behavior acceptable and makes such behavior an issue for other female referees. Through fellowship women soccer referee will realize the connected nature of all women soccer referees further motivating her to challenge sexism on the field of play.

Secondly, I propose that women soccer referees must aim to become leaders – instructors, assignors, assessors, etc. – within the referee domain. I believe that this is an issue that must first be challenged at the upper echelons of the refereeing domain so that it can be

corrected amongst leader/referee and referee/referee relationships, and in relationships across the soccer community. As leaders they can generate greater visibility for women soccer referees, and reduce and challenge dominant ideas that women referees are anomalous, and our normalized sexual discrimination both on and off the field of play (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013; 2014).

Moreover, in achieving the position of a “referee leader” they can establish that women soccer referees align with the ideals of “the referee” and are capable of excelling as referees. Once we address and correct marginalization and sexism within the refereeing domain it will be easier – in conjunction with leaders within different domains across the soccer community – to challenge and change the marginalization and systemic discrimination of women soccer referees through awareness and education of the barriers we face and their effects on women in soccer, and the future and development of soccer as a whole.

Velija and Malcom (2009) assert that “normalized” beliefs become barriers to female participation” (p. 635), however, these women continue to referee – they refuse to capitulate to sexism. Their continued performance of their role as “the referee” is a challenge in and of itself. In this vein I suggest that the woman soccer referee work to cultivate the novice referees within the refereeing domain so that they too can persevere and continue to referee for as long as they choose rather than being deterred by negative gendered experiences. The presence of more women in refereeing will once more increase the visibility of women soccer referees, close the gap between the number of female and male referees, and eradicate the under-representation of women soccer referees. Under-representation is a matter of numbers, and if we increase our numbers throughout the refereeing domain we can tackle the position and treatment of women soccer referees within it.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **An Underlying Sensibility**

Within this investigation of the lived experiences of women soccer referees I explored two of the dominant discourses central to the ways in which women make sense of their experiences as soccer referees. The first, the discourse of ability, focuses on the importance of skill, talent, and performance to being, becoming, and developing as a soccer referee, and the second, the discourse of the outsider, focuses on the marginalization and sexual discrimination of the woman soccer referee. You will find that the first investigation is more telling of the subject's experiences as a referee – how she comes to understand the role and herself as a referee, how she interprets the interactions and relationships that she encounters, how she believes she is perceived, and how these factors impact her decisions to continue to referee – whereas the second focuses specifically on her gendered experiences. I purposefully executed this division of the topics because as I interviewed each of the women within my study and analyzed the resulting texts it quickly became apparent that performance and ability was more central to their experiences than gender. Their stories of triumph and failure, the benefits and disadvantages of being a refereeing, and their reasons for continuing to referee centered on their skill and talents as an official, not being a woman. Needless to say there were also stories that hinged on gender discrimination, biases, and wanting to “do it for the girls” that are specific to the female soccer referee's experience, however, they were not as prevalent as the stories of ability, and the women took more pride in their refereeing ability than their positions as women within the refereeing domain.

I believe that this is due to the position of soccer within the Canadian context and the nature of refereeing. As I highlighted earlier in Chapters 1 and 3, within Canada, soccer does not carry the burden of masculinity and national identity (Harris, 2001; Knoppers & Anthonissen,

2013); it does not have a strong history as a male dominated sport as with ice hockey in Canada (Holman, 2009; Robidoux, 2002); there is a continued increase in the number of girls and women participating in soccer (Canadian Heritage, 2013); and women's soccer has garnered greater global recognition over the past 10 years than men's soccer – as Canada has hosted more international women's championship tournaments, and the Canadian Women's National Team has maintained a higher global ranking compared to the Canadian Men's National Team (Canadian Soccer Association, 2013a; 2013b). Ultimately, soccer in Canada is feminized; there are limited hegemonic forms for which women can be compared and evaluated against result in greater opportunities for women to influence the growth and development of Canadian soccer and impact changing power relations within the Canadian soccer community (Liston, 2006). Unlike the Europe, the UK, and Australia – areas from which the majority of the studies on women in soccer originate – women's participation in soccer is not unorthodox in Canada, it is now the norm.

In regards to the nature of refereeing, being a referee is not a team endeavor. Though there is camaraderie amongst referees, many of the referees within my study only interacted with other referees (male or female) at games, tournaments, or soccer/referee related events. Though they may work in a referee crew during a match, they potentially work with a different group of referees for each throughout the season, and part ways with their crewmates once they have completed their duties at each match. They attend training sessions and referee education session together, but ultimately each referee is responsible for her own fitness, knowledge of the Laws of the Game, and game-time preparation and performance. They are evaluated at games in which they referee within a crew however, each referee within the crew is evaluated separately – in addition to their ability to work with the other referees within their crew – and progresses

through the ranks of refereeing as an individual, not as a member of a referee crew. This breeds individualistic attitudes amongst referees in which each referee is responsible for her own successes and potential demise, and must focus on developing her own skills to ensure that she can be a “good referee”. Consequently, there is a preoccupation with development and performance more so than a collective concern for the position of and treatment of women soccer referees within the refereeing domain.

Furthermore, unlike playing, there is no binary, gendered division within refereeing. As a soccer player, typically, women play in women’s leagues on women’s teams against other women, and men play in men’s leagues on men’s teams against other men, and within each league they can play at the recreational to elite levels of competition. Within the larger landscape of the sport institution there is also a gendered division of labor in which women are streamlined into “helping positions” such as secretaries, team managers, and “team moms”, and men occupy positions such as directors and head coaches – men occupy positions of power whilst women are there as support. Consequently, the sporting ability of male and female players closely aligns with their gender as they are judged against the ability and performance of those that they play with and against, and those in non-playing roles, are evaluated against those that stereotypically occupy their positions – men (Ferez, 2012; Lavoie, 2009; Welford, 2011). As a soccer referee, with the exception of FIFA competitions, men and women can referee any match at the level of competition for which they are certified (OSA Match Officials Development Department, 2016). For example, as a referee with a District-8 level/grade, I may referee a boy’s U-16 regional cup match on Sunday, a men’s competitive regular season league game on Wednesday, and a U-15 girls regional competitive regular season league game on Friday. I am qualified to referee at these levels of competition despite the gender of the competitors. Consequently, the women

within my study expect to be perceived, judged, evaluated, and accepted on equal footing with all referees, regardless of gender, as “soccer referees” and not “women soccer referees” – prefacing ability over gender.

Notably, when questioned about their gendered experiences Sarah (33, Intermediate), Mallory (44, Recreational), and Vera (54, Recreational) expressed that they do not focus on gender disparities amongst soccer referees throughout their refereeing experiences. In fact, Sarah explicitly stated that she does not care for any gender specific, “women’s only” events or initiatives for referees. When I asked her if she thought it was important to have women soccer referees she replied, “No. No I don’t. I think whether its men or women refereeing makes absolutely no difference as long as their qualified, as long as they’re skilled” – and she was not the only referee that held this belief. Seemingly, the woman soccer referee has bypassed access discrimination within the refereeing domain as a woman in a position of power, and has gained equality within the refereeing domain as she can be judged and evaluated as an individual, solely on her ability because refereeing does not adhere to traditional norms of gendered segregation.

Such beliefs closely align with the postfeminist sensibility that maintains that women have achieved equality and have moved beyond the need for feminist intervention (Pomerantz, Raby & Stefanik, 2013; Scranton, 1994). It includes an emphasis on women’s self-surveillance, monitoring, and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice, and empowerment; “the bold assertion of women’s sexual difference” (Gill, 2007, p. 149); and is the basis for discourses such as “Girl Power”, “Successful Girls” and the “New Woman” (Genz, 2010; Heinecken, 2016; Pomerantz, et. al, 2013). Genz (2010) refers to Ruth Shalit to highlight that the postfeminist sensibility idolizes a woman that is “untrammled, assertive, exuberantly pro-sex, yet determined to hold her own in a man’s world...she knows that she is as smart and as ambitious as a guy, but

she's proud to be a girl and girlish" (p. 27-28). Within academia, the postfeminist sensibility is criticized for abandoning the analysis of patriarchy within the social structure and focusing specifically on the actions, abilities, and accomplishments of the individual woman. In doing the latter it is both pro-woman and antifeminist because it maintains that women can achieve any and everything that they put their mind to, however it also belittles and disregards feminist concerns such as access discrimination, under-representation, and sexism as legitimate barriers affecting women in sport because it produces "a rhetoric of tokenism that redefines oppression and structural disadvantages as personal suffering while reframing success as individual accomplishment" (Genz, 2006, p. 343; 2010).

This underlying postfeminist sensibility amongst women soccer referees contributes to the lack of a collective women soccer referee identity and fellowship amongst women soccer referees. Additionally, it further propagates their position as outsiders and their continued marginalization and discrimination within the soccer community (Reid, 2016b). Traditional feminist approaches to the socio-cultural barriers that limit women in sport call for solidarity and fellowship amongst women in order to battle the barriers that they face as a united collective. Contrastingly, postfeminism takes an individualistic approach to combating the same barriers as each woman is responsible for addressing negative behaviors and attitudes toward her in the pursuit for her own success (Heinecken, 2016; Washington & Economides, 2016). It is at this juncture that I struggle to make recommendations on how to address the under-representation of women soccer referees in Ontario. Knowing that there are women soccer referees like Brianna (26, Elite), Muhtikulus (52, Intermediate), Musia (51, Intermediate), and Refhre (53, Intermediate) that actively try to build women soccer referee networks to motivate women to become referees and continue to referee, and other referees who do not care for or are ignorant of

women's only networks and addressing the barrier faced by women soccer referees, do I advocate for a traditionally feminist approach or do I consider recommendations that can satisfy both the feminist and postfeminist sensibilities amongst women soccer referees?

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Rather than call for, or cause a rift between an already under-represented and subordinate population, I choose to recommend approaches that satisfy both the feminist and the postfeminist sensibilities amongst women soccer referees, and hope that through further study we can build from these recommendations and address this divide amongst women soccer referees. The ultimate goal of my recommendations is to increase the number of women that choose to continue to referee for more than a year or two, as well as boost the notoriety of women soccer referees within the refereeing domain. These recommendations are to be coupled with those made in *Chapter 6: "Because there are so few of us": Exploring the effects of under-representation on the experiences of women soccer referees in Ontario, Canada through the discourse of the outsider* for how women soccer referees should contest and/or challenge their outsider status within the referee domain and soccer community at large. In doing so women soccer referees can gain greater visibility, recognition, and acceptance within the soccer community for our skills and abilities rather than being over looked and/or marginalized because of our gender.

**The Entry Level Course.** The retention and attrition efforts of leaders within the referee domain should begin in the classroom, before women officially gain their certification as referees and referee their first match. The Entry Level Referee Course is the place in which women develop their knowledge and understanding of "the referee" and if they are capable of emulating the desired characteristics of the position. This is the point that leaders must be both encouraging

and realistic about the standards and expectations of a new referee, and the difficulties and apprehensions that they may have and how to manage or overcome them. They must communicate to new referees that though they will make mistakes throughout their development they are still capable of becoming “good referees” and they have to go through the progression from a “novice referee”, to a “developing referee” in order to be recognized as a “good referee”. They should focus on positive discourses such as being a “developing referee” or a “good referee” rather than teaching them to avoid the practices of the “bad referee” which they may later fixate upon. Leaders must work to provide an understanding of “the referee” and her duties that is both identifiable and attainable for future referees.

**Support networks.** Referees need a support network. This network can be comprised of any combination of referee leaders, family members, friends, or fellow referees. These are the individuals most likely to advocate for, defend, and support the referee. Whether or not they themselves are referees or have knowledge regarding soccer, they are pivotal as a sounding board for referees to vent their frustrations, ask questions, and a place that they can turn to for support that they may need so that they do not have to shoulder the troubles that they face as a referee alone. According to the women in my study having someone that they could talk to after a difficult game, clarify a Law or procedure for them, or support the sacrifices that they made for refereeing greatly improved their refereeing experiences and contributed to their decision(s) to continue to referee. Referee community leaders must educate referees about the benefits of having a support network as well as being open and available to being a part of a referee’s support network whenever possible.

A referee’s first experiences on the field of play can be daunting and it is an endeavor that they should not face alone. It is the responsibility of referee community leaders to advocate

for, as well as provide support for novice referees during their first matches. Where they are unable to watch and mentor referees, they must encourage referees to have family and friends there to support them at their games. This will help referees to gain confidence and feel supported when they may feel alone and overwhelmed as the official on the field of play amongst 22 on-field players and their respective team benches for which they are responsible. In the case of young referees, they must advocate that parents become actively engaged in their daughter's refereeing so that they can provide support whether technical (interpretations of the Laws, executing signals, game management, etc.) or mental (motivation, self-awareness, preparation etc.) to help to develop their daughter as a referee and encourage them to continue despite the hardships that they may face.

Leaders and other members of the referee's support network must also recognize and validate the skills and talents of developing referees as a strategy to encourage and motivate them to continue to referee. The women soccer referees within this study responded positively to the recognition and validation of their skills by referee leaders and game time participants alike. The referee needs to know that she is "doing a good job" and properly emulating the characteristics of the referee that she was introduced to during the referee course, and as she develops, that she is aligning with the characteristics of an elite referee. This helps to develop her goals and ambitions as a referee as well as her confidence in herself and her abilities as "the referee".

**Building referee/referee relationships and community awareness.** The woman soccer referee subject is tied to the sources of her subjectification – the social relations that she encounters. Thus community leaders must work to develop camaraderie and fellowship across the refereeing domain and develop strong ties in order to harbor positive relationships that can motivate women to continue to referee.

Referee workshops for young referees and referees at the recreational to intermediate levels can help to foster a sense of community amongst referees that can carry on into their later years as elite officials. This will battle the development of individualism amongst developing referees so that they can still know and learn the importance of training and education themselves as officials, but they can also become aware of the issues that are faced by other referees, if they have common struggles, and how they can address these struggles together. Unlike the classroom which can be a very formal space and not always conducive to interactions, workshops provide referees the opportunity to interact and work together in a hands on environment and further opportunities to speak about other referee related topics can emerge. I do not recommend this as a gender inclusive space rather than one that is women's-only. It will require extra work from community leaders to encourage women to participate but it will also be a great space for women soccer referees to meet, train, and work alongside other women soccer referees and see them perform alongside male referees – which can be very motivating. Women must continue to train and learn alongside male soccer referees, so that they can recognize and respect the skills and talents of women soccer referees, and help to combat negative discourses surrounding women's abilities as good, competent referees. Additionally, referees can motivate and encourage each other to continue to referee and develop as referees. I recommend this approach for the recreational to intermediate referees because, to a certain degree, elite referees need an individualistic attitude to be successful. According to Alexandria (37, Elite) and Brianna (26, Elite) elite officials have to train and push themselves to perform at a high level and compete against their fellow officials. When asked about how she maintains her elite status as an official Alexandria (37, Elite) said that

[...] it takes a bit of competitive nature. But not competitive in the sense that I am better referee or I am going to do better than these referees, it's a personal competition. It's "I am going to show people my abilities on the field and by showing them how good I am then I am going to get other opportunities". And it also comes out every day when it's dark out and it's snowing you have to get up and train, I think in my head "Who else is training?" or "Who else is not training?"

So that is how I get through those days where I don't want to train or I come home from work and I am tired and I want lay on the couch I use that kind of competitive nature in myself to motivate myself to get out yes.

Resultantly, I believe that this approach is best initiated amongst referees at lower levels of competitions so that when they get to the elite levels they can still have the individualistic attitude that they need to succeed, however they will also have relationships with other referees and a greater awareness of the experiences of referees within the soccer community.

### **The Unexplored Discursive Fields**

I wish, for a moment, to return to the 10 discursive fields that I introduced as areas for further exploration in *Chapter 4: Research Method*: (1) ability, (2) knowledge/experience, (3) rewards, (4) commitment, (5) being discounted, (6) abuse, (7) being alien, (8) helping, (9) support, and (10) a relationship to the game. Through the process of discourse mapping I uncovered these fields however, I formally addressed only the first field – the discourse of ability – within *Chapter 5: "I'd like to think I'm a good referee": Exploring the subjectification of women soccer referees in Ontario through the discourse of ability* and in *Chapter 6: "Because there are so few of us": Exploring the effects of under-representation on the experiences of women soccer referees in Ontario, Canada through the discourse of the outsider* I explored the

discourse of the outsider. In writing 2 research articles for this thesis I was unable to write an article to formally address each of the 10 discursive fields, however, you will find that each of these fields are reflected within both research articles. The fields of knowledge/experience, commitment, rewards, support, and a relationship to the game are addressed in Chapter 5 through the referee's journey from a novice to a good referee. The fields of being discounted, abuse, and being alien are reflected in the discourse of the outsider, which defines the woman soccer referee's gendered experiences within the soccer community. Though I did not formally address each of these discursive fields in separate research articles, I feel that each discursive field was reflected throughout both research articles.

### **Getting Personal...Again**

I began this study in 2014 and two years later I find myself more enlightened and aware of not only the experiences of women soccer referees in general, but of my own refereeing experiences. During the earlier phases of my graduate research I situated this study on the basis that I rarely saw female referees at my games and tournaments, and of the few that I did know, many did not continue to referee for long. I wanted to shed light on women soccer referees within feminist studies of sport but I wanted to focus on the positives of being a woman soccer referee – I did not want to produce yet another study about the women that discontinued their sporting experiences. I wanted to learn from women like me, and the women ahead of me, and give them an opportunity to relate their experiences in their own words. I wanted to make champions of the women that continued to referee – the women who continue their sport experiences in spite of the numerous studies and attention granted to those who chose to quit or not participate at all. I expected to write of resistance, empowerment, and women who spat in the face of patriarchy; I expected to paint a picture of the resilient woman soccer referee who masterfully navigates the male dominated soccer community – something that was far unlike my own experience.

Following the interview and participant observations processes I realized the experiences of the 15 women within my study were similar to my own, and that the woman soccer referee was not the domineering force that I conjured her to be. I too was nervous for my first game(s), made laughable mistakes, faced verbal abuse by game time participants, and yearned for recognition from a “good referee” or someone that knew what on earth I should really be doing. I realized that though we did not have the same experiences, there were stark similarities between our experiences despite our years of experience and level of competition. This is not to undermine

the woman soccer referee; on the contrary, I found this to be reassuring. I was reassured that it is normal to be scared, doubtful, or second guess myself; that we all have difficult games and make mistakes at pivotal moments, but we can bounce back and successfully continue to referee; and, from speaking to more experienced referees, that I was on the right path as a developing referee. I thought the “good referee” referee was this elusive position that I could never occupy when all along I was a “developing referee” learning to become a “good referee” and that there are multiple interpretations of who qualifies as a “good referee”.

For the referees that were less experienced than myself I saw my experiences in their own, I saw opportunities for me to help them, share my experiences, and what I learned in order to help them – the very thing that interviewing more experienced referees did for me. In a way I found my place in the grand scheme of officials as a referee that was neither novice nor elite, but somewhere in between where I now knew enough to help those new to refereeing, but still had a lot to learn about becoming and being a good referee.

Another realization that I made was that, I don't love refereeing, I don't love soccer, and that is not an issue. When I asked the women in my study why they continued to referee, many replied that they had a “love of the game” or a “love for refereeing”. Admittedly, this made me feel like an imposter – here I was amongst women that were passionate about soccer and/or refereeing and would do all they could to continue to be an active part of the game, whereas I simply enjoy refereeing and that it rids me of the monotony of my usual school, work, and home life. Elite referees openly admitted that they didn't love refereeing or love soccer, they had other sports or activities that they were good at; however, they were climbing the ranks as a referee, and gaining success and so they continued to referee. After hearing others admit that they do not love refereeing I did not feel like an imposter anymore, I realized that everyone had a unique

reason for both becoming and continuing to referee and loving soccer and refereeing were not one of mine.

Lastly, I was surprised and fascinated with the concept of proving oneself. When this began to emerge from the referees' narratives I was surprised because I could not recall feeling that way, and fascinated because it was so common amongst the referees. Some said it plainly ("you have to prove yourself") while others talked about feeling like they had to show that they were good, which ultimately amounted to the same thing. This made me reflect on my experiences once again and realize that I too had experiences similar to the ones that made the women feel like they had to prove themselves, however I did not have the same feeling. For example, there is a local Assistant Coach for a boys team that I see often, and when I first refereed one of their games he asked me, "When is the referee going to get here?" and upon realizing it was me, he seemed very skeptical. After the game and since then, whenever he sees me he greets me with a more pleasant countenance, but I still feel that he continues to have some skepticism about my abilities as a referee. All along I was having to prove myself but I did not know – I had the feeling but did not know how to name it. It surprised me that I did not realize what was happening, but I wonder if it is still proving myself if I am not actively trying to please him and showcase my ability – truthfully, my primary focus during every game is to not mess up and hope to God I don't miss something important.

I know I said the previous realization was the last, but I cannot conclude this study without saying, I was extremely disappointed that women "don't care" about the under-representation of women soccer referees or the barriers that we face. Too many of us are willing to accept the status quo and too little of us are willing to do something to change it. I told someone about my

study in hopes to recruit them as a participant and they replied, “Why does that even matter?!” If we, as women, do not care about each other, and ourselves who will?

### **Unfortunate Truths**

During the spring of 2015 I was informed that the OSA’s WISER Committee would be suspended for the 2015 season. This was an unforeseen decision that was made by the OSA, not the committee, and I was blindsided by it – it felt like the work that the committee was trying to accomplish was not appreciated. In the year that I was on the committee we were active at a number of soccer tournaments in Southern Ontario providing mentorship and information sessions for female referees; we surveyed women soccer referees registered in Ontario and used the results of the survey to alter our community activations and make presentations to other soccer associations; we organized women’s only referee and referee instructor courses; we held a Think Tank at the OSA Annual General Meeting weekend; and had presentations during the OSA’s Soccer Summit.

In doing my research I discovered that the committee is no longer suspended and was active at the OSA’s 2016 Soccer Summit. I do not know in what capacity or what work they have been doing as I am no longer involved with the committee as I was not informed that they would be active this season. I feel like committees like WISER are needed in the referee community as a source of an established network for women that are new to refereeing as I outlined in my recommendations. Though I am no longer involved I hope that they continue to help women soccer referees realize their potential to develop into good referees, provide support for the women who need it, and provide opportunities for referees to work alongside each other off the field of play, despite their gender.

Additionally, I am no longer a referee. Over the past year I had a rather complicated relationship with refereeing in which it was becoming more of a time consuming burden to continue to referee whilst I was attending school, working part-time, and had to travel to my games with public transportation. I altered my work schedule and job in order to accommodate my WISER committee obligations and then the committee was unexpectedly suspended and with school coming to an end and trying to find full-time employment I made the decision to not renew my registration for the 2016 season.

Though I am not a referee at the moment I still believe in the validity and necessity of my study and care about improving the experiences of women soccer referees in Ontario. This is not the first time that I walked away from refereeing so I know that it is within me to go back.

*May 3, 2016*

*Preparing the final draft of my thesis for submission*

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**Appendix B**

File Number: H05-14-03

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/02/2014



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
 Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

**Ethics Approval Notice****Health Sciences and Science REB****Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)**

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Christine	Dallaire	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Supervisor
Kamiel	Reid	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Student Researcher

**File Number:** H05-14-03**Type of Project:** Master's Thesis**Title:** The Untold Stories of Women Soccer Referees

<b>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Approval Type</b>
06/02/2014	06/01/2015	Ia

**(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)****Special Conditions / Comments:**

N/A

File Number: H05-14-03

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/02/2014



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above named research project. Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the project, the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the project (e.g., change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, including consent and recruitment documentation, should be submitted to the Ethics Office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

Please submit an annual report to the Ethics Office four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval. To close the file, a final report must be submitted. These documents can be found at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: [ethics@uOttawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uOttawa.ca).

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kim Thompson".

Kim Thompson  
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research  
For Daniel Lagarec, Chair of the Health Sciences and Sciences REB

## Appendix C

## Participant Observation Guide

Category	Description	Researchers should note
<b>Appearance</b>	Clothing, age, gender, physical appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does she arrive in uniform?</li> <li>• Does she get dressed at the field?</li> <li>• Condition of her uniform</li> <li>• Does she wear makeup?</li> <li>• Countenance</li> <li>• What equipment is she using?</li> </ul>
<b>Verbal behavior and interactions</b>	Who speaks to whom, who initiates interaction, language spoken, tone of voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does she speak to players one-on-one?</li> <li>• How close is she to the players?</li> <li>• How does she speak to coaches, parents, players?</li> <li>• How is she addressed by coaches, parents, players?</li> <li>• How does she communicate with other referees? (Where applicable)</li> <li>• Is she vocal on the field?</li> <li>• What is her tone of voice when communicating to players?</li> </ul>
<b>Physical behavior and gestures</b>	What people do, who does what, who interacts with whom, who is not interacting, how close people stand to one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does she act with a sense of urgency on the field?</li> <li>• Is her body language on the field positive (tall, upright, confident) or negative (slouching, shy away from players)?</li> <li>• How does she address conflict (if applicable)</li> </ul>
<b>Human traffic</b>	People who enter, leave, and spend time at the observation site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of players, parent, and coaches</li> <li>• What, if anything, are parents, players, and coaches saying about the referee</li> </ul>
<b>People who stand out</b>	Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there someone distracting the referee or distracting others from the game?</li> <li>• Anyone making sideline comments about the referee?</li> <li>• Is there anyone causing conflict?</li> </ul>

(adopted from Mack, Woodsong, Maqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005, p. 20)

## Appendix D

### Interview Guide

#### Introduction

1. How old are you?

#### The Game

Ask the referee questions regarding the soccer game at which I observed her refereeing. These questions will be generated from my field notes and will address her behavior during the game, her interactions with parents, players, and coaches, and other areas of observation outlined in the Participant Observation Guide.

#### The Experience

1. What was your initial experience with soccer?
2. Why did you become a soccer referee?
  - a. Who recruited you to referee? (if recruited)
  - b. What was your initial experience with refereeing
3. How long have you been a referee?
4. How would you describe your experiences as a referee thus far?
5. How would you describe yourself as an official?
  - a. Does this describe you in your daily life? (Personal and professional)
6. Why do you continue to referee?
7. Was there a time when you thought to yourself ‘this is why I love refereeing’?
8. Do you have other roles in soccer such as coach, player, etc.?
  - a. If so, what is unique about being a referee compared to these positions?
  - b. If not, why do you choose to be a referee above all else?

9. What is the best part of being a referee?
  - a. What is unique about refereeing compared to other jobs/activities/hobbies?
10. What is one of the worst parts of being a referee?
  - a. Was there ever a moment when you felt like you wanted to quit?
11. What have you gained from being a referee?
12. Have you ever had to make sacrifices for being an official?
13. Have you ever had to sacrifice refereeing for another activity/opportunity/engagement?
14. Has officiating afforded you any opportunities that would be otherwise unavailable to you?
15. Do you have future plans/goals/aspirations as a referee?
  - a. If so, what are they?
16. Does your role as a referee impact your daily life?
  - a. If so, how?
17. Do you maintain relationships with other referees?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. Is this an important part of being a referee?
  - c. How would you describe these relationships/networks
18. Do you remember your first game as a referee?
  - a. How do you differ then from now?
  - b. Where was it? (Tournament, league game, exhibition, festival, etc.)

**Referee**

1. What is your current level of certification?
2. What level games do you referee?

- a. In what district do you currently referee? (Regional referees and lower)
  - b. Have you ever refereed in another district/area/province?
3. What are the most difficult games to referee
  - a. Why?
4. What are the easier games for you to referee?
  - a. Why?
5. Which level and types of games do you enjoy refereeing?
6. How comfortable are you with the varying roles as a referee?
  - a. Do you have a preference?
7. How do you handle parent/player/coach reactions during a game?
8. Is there a pivotal moment that has defined your experience as a referee thus far?
9. Is there any advice that has guided you as a referee?
10. Is there a particular experience that was key to your development as a referee?
11. Are there external factors that affect your role as a referee?
12. Was there ever a time that you felt inadequate as a referee?
  - a. What contributed to it?
  - b. Were you able to overcome it?
13. Was there a time you were made to feel inadequate by/around other referees?
14. Was there ever a time you felt disappointed in your performance as a referee?
15. Was there ever a time you were proud of your performance as a referee?
16. Was there ever a time that you felt triumphant as a referee?
17. Was there ever a time that you felt proud to be a referee?

18. Was there ever a time that you did not want others to know that you are a referee/  
ashamed of being a referee?
19. Does your role as a referee continue off the field of play or outside of the game?
20. How important is the relationship between yourself and the other referees before, during,  
and after the game?
  - a. How important is it to communicate with other referees?
  - b. How do you maintain relationships or communication with referees?
21. Do you have a support system of referees?
  - a. How does this support system help you as a referee?
22. Why is it important to be a referee?
23. Do you have a support system of family and friends
24. Does your time as a player affect how you referee and visa versa?

### **Woman Referee**

1. Have you ever encountered issues as a referee because you are a woman?
2. Do you think you experience refereeing differently because you are a woman?
  - a. Why or why not?
3. Do you referee boys' games or girls' games?
  - a. If both, do you notice a difference between the two?
    - i. Is there a difference between refereeing boys and refereeing girls?
      1. Why or why not?
    - ii. Do you prefer one compared to the other
    - iii. How are you treated by parents, players, and coaches in each instance
  - b. If one, would you like to referee both boys and girls?

- i. Do you have any fears about refereeing boys/girls (depending on which they do not currently referee)
4. Do you think that it is important to have women official?
  - a. Why or why not?
5. Do you believe you are treated differently as a referee because you are a woman?
  - a. By parents/coaches/players
  - b. When others learn you are a referee?
6. Has there ever a time you were made to feel like you are the token 'woman' referee?
7. Have you ever been celebrated as a woman referee?
8. Do you believe you are discriminated as a woman soccer referee?
9. Are there any barriers or obstacles to being a woman referee?
10. Would you recommend refereeing to other women?
11. Are there any changes you would like to see made for women referees?
  - a. Or referees in general?
12. What advice would you give to women who wish to become referees?
13. Are you aware of any of the stigmas and stereotypes that surround women in sport?
  - a. Do you think women soccer referees are exempt from these stereotypes?
14. As a woman soccer referee, do you feel you have to prove yourself?

**Appendix E**

**Coding Template**

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>1. How old are you?</b>	
<b>The Experience</b>	
<b>1. What was your initial experience with soccer?</b>	
<b>2. Why did you become a soccer referee?</b>	
<b>a. Were you recruited as a referee?</b>	
<b>b. What was your initial experience with refereeing?</b>	
<b>3. How long have you been a referee?</b>	
<b>4. How would you describe your experiences as a referee thus far?</b>	
<b>5. How would you describe yourself as an official?</b>	
<b>a. Does this describe you in daily life?</b>	
<b>6. Why do you continue to referee?</b>	
<b>7. Was there ever a time you thought to yourself, “this is why I love refereeing”?</b>	
<b>8. Do you have other roles in soccer such as coach, player, etc.?</b>	
<b>a. If so, why be involved in multiple roles?</b>	

<p><b>b. Is there a role that is most important to you?</b></p>	
<p><b>c. What is unique about refereeing compared to these positions?</b></p>	
<p><b>d. If not, why do you choose to referee above all else?</b></p>	
<p><b>9. What is the best part of being a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>a. What is unique about refereeing compared to other jobs/activities/hobbies?</b></p>	
<p><b>10. What is the worst part of being a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>a. Was there ever a moment when you felt like you wanted to quit?</b></p>	
<p><b>11. What have you gained from being a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>12. Have you ever had to make sacrifices for being an official?</b></p>	
<p><b>13. Have you ever had to sacrifice refereeing for another activity or opportunity/engagement/life choice?</b></p>	
<p><b>14. Has officiating afforded you any opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to you?</b></p>	
<p><b>15. Do you have future plans/goals/aspirations as referee?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If so, what are they?</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>16. Does your role as a referee</b></p>	

<b>impact your daily life? If so, how?</b>	
<b>17. Do you maintain relationships with other referees? • Why or why not?</b>	
<b>a. Is it an important part of being a referee?</b>	
<b>b. Does this impact your experiences as a referee? How so?</b>	
<b>c. How would you describe these relationships/networks?</b>	
<b>18. Do you remember your first game as a referee?</b>	
<b>a. How do you differ then from now?</b>	
<b>Referee</b>	
<b>1. What is your current level of certification?</b>	
<b>2. What level games do you referee?</b>	
<b>a. In what district do you currently referee?</b>	
<b>b. Have you ever refereed in another district/area/province?</b>	
<b>c. How would you compare your experiences in each place?</b>	
<b>3. What are the most difficult games to referee? Why?</b>	
<b>4. What are the easier games for</b>	

<b>you to referee?</b>	
<b>5. Which level and types of games do you enjoy refereeing?</b>	
<b>6. How comfortable are you with the varying roles as a referee?</b>	
<b>a. Do you have a preference?</b>	
<b>7. How do you handle parent/player/coach reactions during a game?</b>	
<b>8. Is there a pivotal moment that has defined your experience as a referee thus far?</b>	
<b>9. Is there any advice that has guided you as a referee?</b>	
<b>10. Is there a particular experience that was key to your development as a referee?</b>	
<b>11. Are there external factors that affect your role as a referee?</b>	
<b>12. Was there ever a time that you felt inadequate as a referee?</b>	
<b>a. What contributed to it?</b>	
<b>b. Were you able to over come it?</b>	
<b>13. Was there a time you were made to feel inadequate by/around other referees?</b>	
<b>14. Was there ever a time you felt disappointed in your performance as a referee?</b>	
<b>15. Was there ever a time when you felt proud of your performance as a referee?</b>	

<p><b>16. Was there ever a time you felt triumphant as a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>17. Was there ever a time that you felt proud to be a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>18. Was there ever time where you did not want others to know that you are a referee/ ashamed of being a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>19. Does your role as a referee continue off the field of play?</b></p>	
<p><b>20. How important is the relationship between yourself and the other referees before, during, and after the game?</b></p>	
<p><b>a. How important is it to communicate with other referees?</b></p>	
<p><b>b. How do you maintain relationships or communication with other referees?</b></p>	
<p><b>21. Do you have a support system of referees?</b></p>	
<p><b>a. How does this support system help you as a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>22. Why is it important to be a referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>23. Do you have a support system of family and friends?</b></p>	
<p><b>24. Comparing playing to refereeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>• Does your time as a player affect how you referee and visa versa?</b></li> </ul>	

<b>Woman Referee</b>	
<b>1. Have you ever encountered issues as a referee because you are a woman?</b>	
<b>2. Do you think you experience refereeing differently because you are a woman? Why or why not?</b>	
<b>3. Is there a difference between refereeing boy's games and refereeing girls' games?</b>	
<b>a. Do you prefer one to the other?</b>	
<b>b. How are you treated by parents, players, and coaches in each instance?</b>	
<b>c. Do you have fears or apprehensions about refereeing boys that you do not have with girls? (or visa versa)</b>	
<b>4. Do you think it is important to have women officials?</b>	
<b>5. Do you believe you are treated differently as a referee because you are a woman?</b>	
<b>a. By parents, coaches, players?</b>	
<b>b. When others learned you are a referee?</b>	
<b>6. Has there ever been a time when you were made to feel like the token 'woman referee'?</b>	

<p><b>7. Have you ever been celebrated as a woman referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>8. Do you believe you are discriminated as a woman soccer referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>9. Are there any barriers or obstacles to being a woman referee?</b></p>	
<p><b>10. Would you recommend refereeing to other women?</b></p>	
<p><b>11. Are there any changes you would like to see made for women referees?</b></p>	
<p><b>a. Or referees in general?</b></p>	
<p><b>12. What advice would you give to women who wish to become referees?</b></p>	
<p><b>13. Are you aware of the stigmas and stereotypes that surround women in sport?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think WSRs are upheld to these stereotypes or they are exempt?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>14. As a woman soccer referee do you feel you have to prove yourself?</b></p>	
<p><b>15. Gender on a referee crew</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only woman</li> <li>• One of 2 women</li> <li>• All woman crew</li> </ul>	
<b>EXTRA</b>	

**Appendix F***Defining characteristics of each discursive field*

Discursive Field	Characteristics
<b>Ability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Expertise, skill, proficiency and a talent for refereeing</li> <li>• Being a ‘good’ or ‘bad referee’</li> <li>• Athleticism, fitness, and exercise</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge/Experience</b>	
<b>Rewards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining opportunity</li> <li>• Remuneration</li> <li>• Special privileges</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication to refereeing</li> <li>• Spending time away from family and friends</li> <li>• Time spent training and learning</li> <li>• Financial costs of being a referee</li> </ul>
<b>Being Discounted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to being undermined, overlooked, and/or underestimated</li> <li>• Due to gender</li> <li>• Due to appearance</li> </ul>
<b>Abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to altercations with players, coaches, parents, and spectators</li> <li>• Verbal and physical</li> </ul>
<b>Being Alien</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to gender</li> <li>• Feeling left out amongst male referees</li> <li>• Being singled out amongst male referees</li> </ul>
<b>Helping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to/helping the referee community</li> <li>• Being a mentor/role model</li> <li>• Volunteering time</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support/help/motivation from family and friends</li> <li>• Support/help/motivation from members of the refereeing community</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship to the Game</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love of the game</li> <li>• Being a part of the game</li> <li>• Enjoyment</li> </ul>

## Appendix G

### Recruitment Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a Master's student at the University of Ottawa pursuing a degree in Human Kinetics. As part of the requirements for my degree I have to complete a thesis with a research component. I have found that I am particularly interested in gendered experiences in sport, especially the experiences of women sport officials. As a result I have decided to focus on women soccer referees in Ontario. I find soccer particularly interesting because of the continued growth of the sport amongst women and youth, the success of the Canadian women's national soccer team on the world stage, and the upcoming 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup and the 2015 Women's World Cup that put a spotlight on the growth and development of women's soccer in Canada. Additionally, I played competitive soccer for over 7 years, and though I have since stopped playing, I continue to be involved in the sport as a soccer referee. As a woman official I have noticed the under-representation of women soccer officials and difficulty in retaining young women officials. As an official that is actively engaged in the soccer community I am interested in providing women officials, like myself, the resources and opportunities to excel as officials, and well as motivate women to become soccer referees. This research project is an excellent opportunity for me to combine academia with my love of officiating.

I am writing this email to see if you might be interested in taking part in this study. I want to begin to understand how being a woman affects your experiences as a soccer referee. Should you decide to join this research I would ask that you participate in a participant observation component and an interview component. For the participant observation component I wish to watch you referee a soccer game whilst I observe how you interact with the coaches, players, and parents, your presence during the game, and other aspects of the game and surrounding environment. For the interview (about 1 hour and a half) I will focus on the game during which you were observed, how and why you began to referee, why you continue to referee, the issues you may face as a referee, the experiences that define their roles as referees among other questions. You will only be invited to share as much as you wish about your personal experiences as a soccer referee. You will have the decision to remove yourself from the research project at any time, should you choose to do so.

To participate in this study, you must be a returning women soccer referee, 18 years old or over, currently registered with the Ontario Soccer Association and be able to do the interview in English. I also ask that you have refereed at least Under 13 (U13) boys and girls soccer and older during your referee career.

The study will recruit 15 to 20 research participants who will be selected on a first come basis. Due to limited financial resources to travel for data collection, the study will focus particularly, on referees in Eastern and South Ontario.

You may be wondering what the benefits of a research project like this are. A research project like this is simply beneficial because it helps to shed light on the varied experiences of people in the world. There have been many studies done on women in sport. However, little has been done on soccer referees, and women soccer referees especially. In fact, very little has been done on Canadian women soccer referees. A study like this will help add depth and a new perspective to research on Canadian women in sport by providing valuable insight on women soccer referees' experiences. This project, while obviously benefiting me (it will help me attain a Master's degree), will also be beneficial to you. Participants will have the chance to contribute to the enrichment of data regarding women's unique experiences as soccer referees. This will be an opportune time to reflect on your experience as a soccer referee. Interviews will be a setting for sharing of stories and knowledge regarding an activity you are passionate about.

Please note that this research study is being conducted by independently of the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) and all other soccer or referee/sport officials associations.

If you interested in this research please let me know as soon as possible and we can set up a time and place to meet at one of your games and plan an interview. Also, if you know of anyone else who may be interested in joining this research project please forward this email with my contact information along.

Thank you,

Kamiel Reid