"Why Did I Really Want to Coach? To Help Girls": A Foucauldian Feminist Analysis High-Performance Female Rugby Union Coaches' Experiences

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The purpose of this study was to investigate women coaches' experiences in high-performance rugby union. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four women who had experience coaching at the representative, university, and/or international level. Informed by a Foucauldian feminism, the analysis revealed how disciplinary power, the formation of dominant knowledges, and the pervasiveness of surveillance operated in a deeply masculine environment of high-performance rugby. This study provides an in-depth examination of femininity, masculinity, and what it means to be a woman leader in the world of high-performance rugby union.

Keywords: coaching, rugby, women, Foucault

The 2017 Women's Rugby World Cup in Ireland was a landmark year for women's rugby union as viewership and popularity reached unprecedented heights. It was the best attended, most viewed, and most socially engaging World Rugby event of the year. An audience of 3.2 million tuned in for the France-England semi-final and with 45 million views crossing official platforms the tournament was not only the best-performing but the biggest World Rugby event since the 2015 Men's Rugby World Cup (World Rugby, 2017). However, only one team, Hong Kong, had a female head coach. This paucity of female head coaches remains for the 2021 World Cup (to be played in 2022) – of the seven teams automatically qualified, only France has a female head coach.

As an emerging female rugby coach myself, the lack of women coaches in rugby is of great personal concern. In my work, I follow LaVoi (2016) who suggests that sustainable change toward more equitable coaching necessitates interrogation of the dominant narratives, beliefs, values, norms, and stereotypes perpetuating male power and privilege in sport. Therefore, the purpose of my research project is to investigate how the women rugby coaches' experiences are shaped by the dominant culture of rugby. To

do this, I first review the existing literature on female coaches' experiences in sport cultures. I then outline my method—interviews with four high-performance female rugby coaches—before detailing my Foucauldian analysis of women coaches' experiences in the world of high-performance rugby.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To provide background to my research, I first detail critical feminist accounts on the underrepresentation of women coaches. I then review Foucauldian research specifically focusing on rugby to locate the experiences of women who coach in this context.

Several researchers have employed a critical feminist lens to map problems related to women in coaching (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Braithwaith, 2015; Burton, 2015; Demers & Kerr, 2018; Kane & LaVoi, 2018; LaVoi, 2016; Massengale, 2009; Norman, 2012, 2014, 2016; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003; Theberge, 1990). These studies critique asymmetrical power relations that privilege men to routinely marginalize and devalue women (Kane & LaVoi, 2018). Typically, critical feminist coaching studies apply the concept of hegemonic masculinity to illustrate how sport has been a powerful tool in substantiating the domination of men over women (or other men) who constitute a subordinate social group in sport (Norman, 2014). For example, in her interview studies of high-performance women coaches in the UK Norman (2012, 2014) demonstrated that the masculinist sport culture isolates many women head coaches eroding their motivation and discouraging them from seeking higher opportunities in coaching. Allen and Shaw (2009), who also interviewed women coaching in high-performance sport, identified distinct feelings of coaches acting in isolation. The lack of female mentors and access to networks were particular barriers for these coaches. They highlighted the following additional constraints for their development: finances, professional development opportunities, selection, and gendered assumptions about competence.

Based on these studies, women high performance coaches struggle against systematic gender-based oppression facilitated through power relations such as race, sexuality, and class. Women coaches, however, must redefine, contest, and transform the "patriarchal culture of sport that is sexist, elitist, and discriminatory" (Norman, 2012, p. 228). Consequently, Norman argued that women in high-profile coaching roles can resist unequal power relations and challenge taken-for-granted knowledges and oppressive ideologies. Shaw and Hoeber (2003) further advocated for a collective, conscious, and politically motivated resistance whereby women form a highly public and visible agency to "permeate the ideologies of men as a culturally dominant group and masculinity as

the dominant ideology" (p. 238). They call female coaches to acknowledge that they are feminists and understand that both coaching and playing act to resist masculine hegemony and threaten male privilege.

From a critical feminist perspective, it is imperative to detect how the access and support of leadership positions are impeded and impacted by ideologically supported hegemonic masculinity. While offering important insights to the barriers female coaches face, critical feminist studies tend to repeat similar messages of underrepresentation due to gendered job selection, a fear of failure, and the inability to break in to the 'old boys club' (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Burton, 2015; Kane & LaVoi, 2018; Norman, 2012, 2014). While urging women coaches to resist their oppression, this research has been unable provided clear actions towards changing the coaching conditions. To further identify how women rugby coaches may overcome these prevalent problems, I now review Foucauldian literature on power relations characterizing rugby union as a sport.

Foucault, Rugby, and (Female) Coaches

Rugby is a full contact, highly aggressive, and dirty game commonly leaving players visibly wounded. Using Foucauldian notions of disciplinary processes, power, and docile bodies Chase (2006) examined the complexity of the female rugby body and demonstrated how rugby can be a site for women's embodiment in sport. Focusing on athletes' experiences in United States, Chase found that many players celebrated the development of their physically strong, muscular, battered, and bruised bodies. They actively worked to construct powerful, athletic bodies and were very aware that as such, their bodies resisted the ideas of normative femininity. Chase further observed that as rugby required different types of bodies, it promoted diversity and inclusion for all women. While this study focused on athletes, the findings may extend to female coaches not only because most are former players, but they too occupy spaces typically dominated by masculine men. There is also recent Foucauldian scholarship on coaching that, while not specific to rugby, informed my study.

Recent Foucauldian coaching scholarship has focused on the ways coaches influence and control athletic bodies and athletic experiences (e.g., Avner, Denison & Markula, 2017; Denison & Avner, 2011; Denison, Mills & Konoval, 2017; Pringle & Hickey, 2010; Shogan, 1999). They typically employ Foucault's concept of disciplinary power to examine the experiences of coaches. Much of this research has focused on male coaches' experiences (e.g., Denison & Mills, 2014a; Denison & Mills, 2016b; Denison & Mills, 2016c; Denison, Mills & Jones, 2013) and has examined unequal power relations that result in the formation and perpetuation of dominant knowledges through coaching practices that tend to discipline both the athletes and the coaches into docile,

unthinking bodies. There is less Foucauldian research on experiences of female coaches (e.g., Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Stangl, 2013; Theberge, 1990). Nevertheless, I have found Stangl's (2013) work very relevant to my research. In this study, the researcher asked: Where have all the (women) coaches gone? Using a Foucauldian perspective, Stangl investigated opportunities for female coaches to question and resist (un)seen power relations within coaching, and challenged the (over)use of hegemonic masculinity as an explanation for the lack of female coaches to shift the focus from women to men as a reason for women's subordination in coaching. From this perspective, women are not passive spectators with coaching autonomy. Women who coach are active performers and the examination of their experiences are central when challenging dominant taken-for-granted narratives of those assumptions inherently linking leadership with men and masculinity. To this end, Stangl (2013) sought a "more sensitized approach that accents the individual's possibility for freedom by enhancing the awareness of the (female) coach as subject, rather than object" (p. 403). This alternative approach, Stangl argued, offers the "disconcerted female coach some peace of mind about her markedly insecure profession" (p. 421).

From a Foucauldian perspective, women rugby coaches can enact change through reflection and reflexivity of their practices as performers in their own right. They are potentially capable of creating more ethical coaching practices to challenge traditional normative masculine notions of coaching. From this perspective, women coaches work within the established power relations through an understanding that small actions multiply to effect momentous change. Consequently, documenting smaller, discrete actions may increase personal awareness and provide opportunities to change the coaching culture within rugby. Indeed, the mere act of women coaching may become a site of emancipation from subtle yet insidious overt control and surveillance women in sport coaching face. As a female coach seeking change, I adopt both Foucauldian and feminist assumptions to guide my research project. The Foucauldian feminist approach allows for a unique, in-depth, and meaningful examination of femininity, masculinity, and what it means to be a leader in the world of high-performance rugby.

RESEARCH METHODS

Conceptualizing the relational nature of power locates female coaches' experiences and perceptions within the cultural context of rugby (Foucault, 1995). To examine these experiences, I used qualitative interviews.

Method: Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative semi-structured interviews provided a platform for the coaches to share their stories and facilitated the gathering of in-depth knowledges about their experiences (Markula & Silk, 2011). Moreover, open-ended discussion enabled an interaction between each coach and me as the researcher (Markula & Silk, 2011). Each participant completed a single, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interview between 60 to 120-minutes conducted in a location of the participants choosing (e.g., home, coffee shop, office). Where in-person interviews were not possible, the interview was completed online using Zoom Video Conferencing. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me as the researcher. The interview guide (Appendix A) informed by previous literature, my feminist-Foucauldian perspective as well as my personal coaching experience, aimed to broadly explore three over-arching themes of women in coaching: their experiences as coaches and players, barriers they faced while coaching, and their advice for developing women in coaching. I employed theory-based Foucauldian interview analysis to locate women rugby coaches' individual meaning making within historical, political, social, and economic contexts of rugby (Markula & Silk, 2011).

Prior to the interviews, I carefully assessed my personal researcher predisposition to direct, react defensively, assert superiority, or otherwise coerce the participants to respond a certain way. The coaches openly offered their personal and sensitive experiences and my reflexivity assisted in empathizing with the participants as well as serving to remind myself that researcher's personal values, beliefs, and perceptions shape the research process (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas & Caricativo, 2017).

Participants

I used purposeful, convenience sampling (Patton, 1990) to select participants who coached provincial, representative, university, and/or international teams. Both current and retired coaches were included to analyze the awareness of their experiences, reasons they are continuing to coach, or the reasons they chose to retire. To ensure anonymity all possible identifying information was removed and the participants were randomly assigned one of the following labels: Coach 1, Coach 2, Coach 3, Coach 4 [*Table 1*]. This study was approved by University of Alberta REB I prior to implementation.

Table 1. Coach Information

Participant	Career	Current Occupation	Education	Certifications	Experience
Coach 1	24 – 30 years	Small business owner	Undergraduate: Bachelor of Arts	NCCP/World Rugby Level 3 Coach; World Rugby Level 3 Course Conductor (Coach Educator).	Both women and men: school aged, club, representative, university, and international (age grade XV's).
Coach 2	23 – 25 years	Stay at home mom and small business owner	Undergraduate: Bachelor of Education	NCCP/World Rugby Level 1 Coach; Unconfirmed completion of NCCP/World Rugby Level 2	Primarily women: school aged, club, representative, and university.
Coach 3	2 – 5 years	Professional coach, fully employed by a National Sport Organization	Unspecified	NCCP/World Rugby Level 1 and 2 XV's Coach; NCCP/World Rugby Level 3 in progress. NCCP/World Rugby Level 1 and 2 VII's Coach; World Rugby Coach Educator	Primarily women, limited experience with men: club and international (age-grade and senior XV's and VII's).
Coach 4	21 – 25 years	Professional coach, fully employed by a National Sport Organization	Graduate: Master of Business Psychology	World Rugby Level 3; World Rugby Level 4 in progress; World Rugby Coach Educator and Trainer	Both women and men: school aged, club, representative, university, and international (age-grade and senior XV's and VII's).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

My results are structured around two distinct yet overlapping themes: the development of the participants' coaching career and their experiences as women in a predominantly male profession. These themes demonstrate both the common features of the participants' coaching experiences and provide insight into their individual lived experiences.

Career Development

In this section I outline how the participants began coaching and how their career was influenced by their playing experiences. All of the coaches played at similar levels of local competition before transitioning to coaching. Coach 3 was the only person to have competed professionally at the senior international level. Coach 1 was selected as a replacement to compete internationally as a senior player but did not see any playing time. Coach 2 competed internationally at the age-grade (under-23) level and attended multiple senior training camps but never played at the senior international level. Coach 4 was the only participant who did not play internationally in some capacity. Due to an injury, she began coaching her team as a "player-coach" and realized she "couldn't do two jobs very well." Consequently, she considered being more successful as a coach.

All of the participants explained that their experiences as players influenced their future coaching practices. Coach 2 identified how her experience as a player that "always had to work hard … (and) had to struggle" assisted her in relating with her players. Coach 3's international experience allowed her to relate to the players because she was "the one (being) paid to play" and had developed a "different set of values" and a "different type of standard" compared to those coaching less competitive groups. Negative playing experiences such as having poor coaches and unfair selection treatment were recognized by Coaches 1, 2, and 3 as influential on their future coaching practices. For example, Coach 2 did not enjoy her experience on the under-23 team because she did not believe her coaches were suited for the position: "They didn't do their homework, like they didn't know who any of us were." When she moved to coach in a different context, she found knowing "how to win" important because of "that extra quality …The floating air space … You either get it, and you know how to make that magic happen, or you don't." Coach 1 regarded her selection as a replacement player as a negative experience: despite her being "by far the best striker" the coaches perceived as her having a "bad attitude" and thus, she selected only as a replacement. Coach 3 believed that it is "experiences of the coaches you don't really like" which helped her to improve her own coaching practice.

The transition from athlete to coach took place in several ways, but three coaches (Coaches 1, 2, and 4) began their careers following deselection from a team. For example, Coach 2 talked about deselection from her basketball team when she transferred from College to University. She described how this experience led her to discover rugby: "You know, one door closes another door opens ... One of the assistant coaches (she) was like, 'You really should try rugby ... I instantly fell in love with it." Coach 3 was the only participant actively fast-tracked into high-performance coaching due to an athlete transition program designed by her National Sport Organization (NSO). Relevant to my findings, Blackett, Evans, and Piggot (2018) analyzed the lived experiences of men's football and rugby union coaches to question the simplistic, logical, and unproblematic preference of fast-tracking elite athletes into high-performance coaching. The authors suggested that some of the former athletes lacked critical self-awareness about the formation of their coaching knowledges and simply replicated the disposition and practices of their previous coaches. The participants of my study similarly identified how their experiences as players influenced their coaching practices, but questioned experiences they deemed as negative. In contrast, experiences and knowledges deemed as positive were unquestionably adopted and, in most instances, replicated. This is potentially problematic as it can "create a homogenous coaching workforce, one with a narrow developmental experience" (Blackett et al., 2018, p. 117). It further highlights the uncritical adoption of normative assumptions of good, acceptable coaching acquired during a competitive athletic career predominantly linked with men and masculinity.

Potentially even more problematic is the preference of recruiting male coaches for women's rugby teams. This also demonstrates the gap in the numbers between male and female rugby players. Coach 4's brought up the complexity of recruiting high-performance female coaches:

> There's not many high-performance female coaches because they're not good enough. That is the reality ... (they) haven't been exposed to that experience. Ex-male players have already got 15 years on female coaches ... they've been involved in that performance environment. They get it. They've forgotten stuff that some female coaches don't even know because they were never taught it. You don't know what you don't know.

I consider the notion that women are "not good enough" to coach in high performance contexts problematic. Similarly, the gender gap is not simply remedied by professionalization of women's sport. These type explanations are supported by dominant knowledges about men's inherent leadership abilities. They further locate

individual women as the sources of their lack of coaching knowledge and experience There is an unquestioned assumption that it is women who must be reshaped to fit the construction of an ideal leader instead of reshaping or even removal of this construction.

Mentorship and Network

The coaches' emphasis on the importance of mentorship in their early coaching practices reaffirms findings of previous coaching research (e.g., Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014; Norman 2012). The participants stressed the value of mentor-coaches in supporting, developing, and retaining their careers. Similar to coaches in Norman's (2012) research, they viewed positive role models important for aspiring women coaches. All but Coach 1 identified a mentor and for some coaches, men inspired and informed their decisions. While acknowledging the importance of men for her career, Coach 2, nevertheless, attested to a different style of coaching. On multiple occasions, she discussed how her father and high school basketball coach would "yell all the time on the sideline...When I first started, I definitely was quite loud and vocal and hard on the players ... I'm ... way evolved (now) ... What's the point in yelling? That's a waste of energy, right?" Their priority on practicing fundamentals, however, was a lasting influence for her. Coach 2 summarized that she is a "milder version of" her Dad with the same core coaching values: "like be on time, work hard, have a good attitude, you know those kind of basic things." Coaches 3 and 4 also discussed how their coaching had been influenced by male colleagues and identified the value of working with and sharing ideas with men. Coach 3 identified a former male coach as a significant role-model because of "the way he coach(ed), and the standard that he brought to us. It totally changed my mind from a mature player to a professional player." Coach 4 identified that the many male and female mentors she has worked with not only assisted with improving the technical components of her coaching but also had significant impact regarding her career decisions and the manner she coaches: "the style, what you're doing, your accountability ... and challenging you as well." Coach 4 further explained how "mentors are extremely important to have, not only in coaching but in life as well. Just to bounce ideas off, to guide you through." The interviewed coaches also reinforced that they must be cognisant of unquestioningly copying how men coach and play.

Coach 1 was the only participant without a mentor coach, but she surrounded herself with experienced colleagues and selected assistant coaches on areas she lacked knowledge:

> It's not like I couldn't coach ... when you come to the game (late) you don't have anything that's intuitive really. So, you surround yourself with all the expertise

you need for the field work … no team in the world has one coach that does it all.

Like previous research findings (e.g., Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014; Norman 2012), the coaches in this study identified the difficulty in creating a network of successful female coach mentors in part because there are not many high-performance female coaches. Coach 2 and 3 also valued mentorship as well as female-specific learning as crucial for supporting aspiring women rugby coaches. Fielding-Lloyd and Mean (2016), however, reminded that while specialized female only development courses offer safe and supportive spaces and appear empowering, they can also be problematic. Such courses have the potential to reproduce socially constructed gender differences, because they are based on the notion that women coaches are inherently inferior and must be fixed. Ultimately, this positions women as the 'other' coaches and naturalizes the differences between men and women.

In addition to the absence of a women's coaching network, Coaches 2 and 4 described how the structure of the National Sport Organization's coach development obstructed their progress. For example, Coach 4 had to go out of country to complete her accreditation for the highest level of coaching by World Rugby. Coach 2 repeatedly expressed her frustration with the World Rugby and NCCP coaching accreditation, because neither her numerous years as a teacher, nor her "20, 22, 23 years of experience" working with successful coaches, nor her Degree in Education were recognized as valid coaching experience. In addition to the institutionalized coach education framework, Coach 2 attributed some of these barriers to the differences between priorities of the men who were in charge and the needs of women coaches. Formerly a member of a Women's Committee for coach development, Coach 2 expressed her frustration with how the man identified as the head of the NSO's coach development programmes did not necessarily support coach mentorship. As Coach 2 emphatically questioned:

Why? Why do you want to set people up to fail? Why don't you want to have a support network when you have a player that you don't know what to do with? Who you could pick up the phone and call somebody to help you?

The interviewed coaches identified how female role models were a source of motivation and inspiration to begin a career in coaching. They now saw themselves taking on the same role for young coaches and reinforced that developing high-performance female coaches requires support that increase their confidence. Norman (2012) earlier suggested that more opportunities would be "achieved through a restructuring of women's

competitions in the UK so that existing female coaches have more chances to experience coaching on a frequent basis in order to increase women's confidence" (p. 230). The coaches in Norman's study explicitly stated that they worked independently from their NSOs as their professional development came through support networks or actively seeking out mentors from professional coaches in different sports. While women coaches in my study faced similar problems, all of six high-performance coaches in Norman's investigation, unlike the coaches in my study, were fully employed and currently working. Coach 3 and Coach 4 advocated, however, that supportive networks improve female coaches' self-efficacy not only because coaching is often lonely, but also because they can question, lead, fail, and learn in an environment they perceive to be safe.

The interviewed coaches emphasized the importance of reflection to ensure their continued growth and improvement. For example, Coach 3 explained she has moved from measuring athletes against herself as a player. Instead, she works to "see the good and bad … Try and find a balance … Instead of trying to modify them in the same way." Coach 4 identified four phases of her coaching journey: fun, performance, learning and researching, and her current professional environment. In this environment, she noticed that her coaching has shifted from an enjoyable process, "the Art of Coaching" to "the Science of Coaching." Notably, Coach 4 believed that she has yet to reach her full capacity as a coach: "I reckon I'm probably 60% out of 100, in terms of my coaching capacity," but in different circumstances, she would "probably shoot up to 80 … and really find my own style and identity – which I don't think I've got yet." Although the importance of women's coaching network and women coaches as role models was generally recognized, Coach 2 was frustrated that no young coaches were seeking her help or her mentorship:

> Anybody who wanted to come coach with me, I would have given them anything. Anything. I don't care. Here. Here take it all. Go for it. You take everything. Take from me. Take what you don't like, don't use it. Take what you like and use it.

Coaching Philosophy

According to Cushion and Partington (2016), a coaching philosophy represents coaches' everyday taken-for-granted knowledges about their practices. In general, however, coaches do not engage in nuanced discussions through which to problematize their underlying assumptions and biases. In my study, the coaches had developed their own coaching philosophies that aligned but also differed from their role model coaches' practices. Their approaches to coaching shared such elements as honesty, empathy, humility, vulnerability, and building relationships. Coach 2, for example, emphasized

"playing like a team … work ethic, putting in the extra time … having (the team) play as a unit." All of the participants noted the importance of working with the players as individuals. For example, Coach 3 explained that all players, regardless of how they appear physically "deserve a chance to have a try" and thus, she looked for ways for players to prove themselves. Coach 1 stressed equality: "There's no judgement! You all come in with your shit, put it at the side of the field, and we go play rugby … I don't care! Once we're on the field … it's all there is."

Coaches 1, 3, and 4 explained that their coaching philosophies are not based on gender but made sure to note ways in which they interact differently with men. Coach 3 reflected that because women are "so vulnerable … so easy to breakdown" she contemplated to "train them to toughen up." She felt compelled to coach men more often because too much involvement with women caused her to worry about "being too soft and being too sincere." Coach 4, by far the biggest advocate for female coaches working with both men's and women's teams, compared the differences in terms of building, "brick by brick," competence and trust:

> With men you start with zero points … you got to earn respect, earn the right, earn the trust and the knowledge, and you have to prove yourself. With women, you kind of start with 10 points and bit by bit, as and when you let them down, they take one away. With men you're kind of building up, with women you're kind of coming down.

Coach 4 teeter-tottered between upholding her image as warm, caring, and trustful when working with women with that of a strong, experienced, and knowledgeable leader when working with men. While Coach 1 said that gender does not change her coaching, she noted that supporting the individuality of each player is a pillar of her philosophy, because "all of our lives, as females, we've just been conditioned to compete with each other for any attention." While clearly having thought extensively about their coaching philosophies, these coaches did not demonstrate a critically reflexive attitude about the social formation of their coaching knowledge. These statements reveal underlying, unquestioned assumptions connecting leadership with masculinity and perpetuating stereotypical gender norms associated with femininity.

Coach 2 was the only participant to ground her coaching philosophy on gender, because she was staunchly against coaching boys. She was disappointed to hear that a colleague coached a high-performance men's team because "she's a good coach and the girls need her." Coach 2 admitted that this was "her choice and she grew and became a better coach for that. And there's no doubt it pushes you out of your box." She added

that as a strong, successful coach "the girls deserve me. The boys get everything already ... I just feel like if I have something to give, I want to give it back to women." Professional female coaches interviewed by Norman (2012) showed a similar preference for positive discrimination, actively using deliberate, conscious, and strategic efforts to give women positions of authority.

Coach 2 further explained how coaches must "believe in who you're coaching" and her distinct value of "believing in you, and your abilities, and your personality." Coach 4 was adamant that her current overarching priority for coaching is to get "the best out of players ... whether that means that you're not liked as a coach, or you have to do stuff that you're not comfortable with." She reflected how she has evolved while maintaining her "coaching blueprint" by "making the complex simple:"

> There's a hell of a lot of complexity in the game but you've got to make that simple to the players and the staff ... You can go through coaching and you can try and let people know how much you know ... The best teams in the world do the simple things right. But there is so much detail and so much complexity behind that, that you have to know how to coach that at the most efficient and effective way under time constraints.

Illuminating as they may be, these sentiments are potentially problematic because both Coach 2 and Coach 4 had minimal tolerance for error. Coach 4 unintentionally furthered a perfectionist ideal surrounding high-performance coaches: "Unless you are absolutely shit on and know your stuff, you can't do it." As there is already a lack of women coaching high-performance rugby, statements such as these may prevent women from choosing a coaching career for fear of failure or ridicule from both men and women.

Women in Masculine Spaces

Many of my participants experienced blatant discrimination during the coaching careers. Three of the coaches shared stories where male coaches purposefully eclipsed their positions to further their own careers. Coach 1 was denied a head coach position for an age-grade international team because she apparently "couldn't coach the new game." She explained that her years of success, experience, and passion for the women's game were deemed less valuable than the chosen male coach, who was using this team as a stepping stone to work with the men's program. Discussing a similar situation, Coach 4 explained how all things equal, such as level of education, number of years played internationally, "same experiences, same knowledge, same everything," women will be perceived less qualified while men are automatically positioned higher. Coach 4 further believed that "perceptions at play" create a hierarchy where men are positioned at the

higher end. This type of systematic and deliberate hiring and advancement of men—preserving inequality, inaccessibility, and unequal treatment within organizations—has been documented as a contributing factor for the underrepresentation of women in coaching (Kanter, 1977; Sagas, Cunningham & Teed, 2006). The participants in my study voiced their frustration with the exclusionary network of the "old boys club" not only because of preferential hiring, but also due to feeling silenced. For example, Coach 2 described how she felt stifled by a male colleague who studiously avoided introducing her to other professionals in the field because "he didn't want to be exposed for not doing anything."

Following the appointment as head coach for a women's competitive club team, of which she had been a member for 16 years, Coach 3 was pushed out of her position. She explained that the male head coach suggested a focus on playing rather than coaching:

> I said, I don't really mind, but I would say it's up to you … I'm just worried about losing my job as a coach and I'm not sure if it's good for the team … As long as the team is getting better … I will go for it. I will 100% support it.

At the conclusion of the season her "salary was cut" leading Coach 3 to resign. Coach 2 shared multiple stories of feeling trapped and manipulated by male colleagues. During one instance, she was the head coach of a successful junior varsity team that acted as a development team for a more competitive, but less successful, varsity team. The assistant coach of the varsity team was a man who reduced the number of players on the junior varsity team to eliminate Coach 2's position:

> They completely took away my power and what I was running … I lost all control. I was like a non-entity … I got the first 20 minutes with them and then we had to practice together … They totally stifled me … It was totally a calculated control thing.

In addition, the male assistant coach "used to touch the girls, like rub their backs and stuff" even though the girls "didn't want to be anywhere near him." Frustrated, Coach 2 resigned: "in that situation, like … what do you do? If I would have ran my mouth, they would have blacklisted me." Women, she continued, "have to be really smart … maneuver" and subtly situate themselves within sporting organizations. The coaches in my study appeared obligated not to disrupt deeply entrenched power arrangements (Kane & LaVoi, 2018).

Silencing, Surveillance, and Normalization of Coaching

Coach 1 believed women coaches stay silent about their unfair treatment, because they are looked down upon as 'stupid' and their feelings are disregarded as "just a girl thing." In addition, anxiety for their job security as well as defamation of reputation made the participants unable to speak or act freely. Coach 1 added that female coaches are "completely isolated" due to their fear and/or inability to speak out. Coach 4 explained how her international level coaching role "basically took over my whole life," but "how lonely it was," although she thrived in this head coaching position. She added that "coaching is a really lonely place and a lot of females don't like being lonely." She believed, nevertheless, that women can use the perception that they are unthreatening to further their development: she met with the head coach of a professional men's team, sat in the changing room, and attended players meetings unobtrusively to develop her own coaching. Coach 4 acknowledged that this may be "good or bad," but reframed her position as a female coach as advantageous because preferential access to some male coaching contexts. Coach 4, however, constantly self-surveyed her performance: her gendered role was "on the back of your mind all the time actually." She concluded that women coaches feel pressure to perform, because they have to "fight just to survive there, and then … be really good to perform there." From a Foucauldian perspective, women coaches self-survey to maintain the 'correct' masculine defined rugby coaching. Barker-Ruchti and Tinning (2010) view coaching as a panoptic structure where invisible gaze, in my case the masculine rugby culture, reinforces dominant ways of coaching through self-surveillance that the individual coaches learn to use to discipline their behavior. My participants also regulated and surveyed their coaching practices and knowledges against an invisible control of what is 'correct' coaching. The characteristics of 'good' and 'correct' coaching practices, nevertheless, remain amorphous, ambiguous, and highly subjective. Regardless, an exemplary coach should follow such practices.

To analyze further how the dominant masculine ways of coaching may have shaped the women rugby coaches' narratives, I follow Pringle and Hickey (2010) to locate the coaches' experiences within a web of power inextricably linked with masculinity. Participants of this study (un)consciously linked leadership and intelligence with men and masculinity while rendering their female bodies invisible. For instance, Coach 3 stated that men "always know more than a girl," while Coach 4 discussed how "performance equals man, performance equals masculinity" and regularly heard phrases like "oh, you're such a woman … You're thinking like a woman you need to think like a man on a performance level." Coach 1 echoed these sentiments, explaining how young women are "scared to be the athlete" because girls have "clear credence for being

frightened of letting themselves think positively." Coach 2 felt pressured to choose a male assistant coach instead her female assistant coach whom she preferred, "because how could an all-female staff possible produce? It's the stigma." Coach 1 had heard a male colleague say: "Nobody respects you – and nobody will. Nobody will ever respect you because you're a woman." Coach 1, nevertheless, accepted such behavior as "just one of those things…That's just how it was" and thus, normalized the differences between male and female coaches.

From a Foucauldian perspective (Pringle & Hickey, 2010), the women coaches found the masculine culture normalized as the dominant way of knowing rugby. Their stories demonstrated a prevailing assumption that women, perceived as less capable leaders, are invading the male-dominated world of sport coaching. Coach 4 mused that "not many men are comfortable with … having a female superior in a male dominated environment (i.e., coaching)" explaining that "innate perceptions of men and women" situate men as possessors of the right to coach and women as usurpers. She continued that "unless men are completely secure in their own ability" they will be unable to honestly recognize that a woman is "there because she's better." Coach 2 felt "a huge burn" when her previous players were excited to get a male coach who was going to advocate to the Provincial Sport Organization about increasing support for the women's program. Coach 2 now questioned:

> Why am I here? … What do you think I've been trying to do for you (players)? Sitting on committees … It's the male gender role. The Daddy. The CEO … The leadership role…and that's it, in a nutshell … At the end of the day, most young girls still see a guy that's gonna save them.

Foucault (1995) explained that such beliefs act as strategic, efficient, and organized use of power to produce a desired outcome. In the context of rugby coaching, the utility of men is maximized by normalization of the masculine rugby culture. Both women coaches and their athletes are disciplined into useful bodies through the organization of the sport and physical training (Shogan, 1999). The position of rugby as a masculine sport is secured through statements reinforcing the positions and practices of male coaches as normal (Pringle & Markula, 2005). It is not the game itself nor its participants' that are problematic, but gendered relations of power that must be challenged (Pringle & Markula, 2005).

In conclusion, the naturalization of good leadership as masculine is an effect of disciplinary power which favors the production of masculine leaders because of their perceived superiority, efficiency, effectiveness, and economic value. In direct opposition

are the inefficient and undesirable behaviours deemed as female coaching performance. In this context, the women coaches need to transform themselves to be equally effective to men. If unsuccessful, they are eradicated entirely. Therefore, women who coach constantly survey their coaching to adopt the 'normal' coaching practices. As a result, women coaches participate in their subordination by reinforcing their placement as inferior coaches. Women learn to 'follow the rules' and mitigate their practices so as not to appear as the dreaded feminist. Insidious power relations of masculine dominance further the oppression and discrimination of female coaches and cause a "form of individual, emotional struggle on women for daring to step out of the kitchen onto the court" (Norman, 2014, p. 546).

CONCLUSION

My study revealed a deeply masculine environment of high-performance rugby. The interviewed women high-performance rugby coaches had both negative and positive experiences as players that then informed their coaching practices. They revealed how invisible effects of disciplinary power and surveillance acted to normalize experiences of gender discrimination. While the findings, in many ways, align with the previous research findings, they are significant because of the specific focus on women coaching high-performance rugby, a sport labelled as an extraordinarily masculine environment.

My Foucauldian feminist analysis also provided critical insights to question the dominant masculinist coaching narratives. The tenuous, isolated positions restrict women coaches' entrance and movement within rugby coaching culture. The deliberately invisible binary branding of normal (male coaches) and abnormal (female coaches) subjugates women who coach to those techniques, instruments, and institutions designed to measure, supervise, and correct abnormal beings (Foucault, 1995). Subtle regimes of power uphold the position, power, and privilege assigned to male coaching narratives. Ultimately, women coaches equipped with a critical attitude of their coaching practices and their positions within the male-dominated world of rugby may recognize their unique identity as a female coach as an opportunity of resistance (Stangl, 2013). I suggest that with a critical reflexive attitude and the very act of coaching can challenge dominant narratives furthering men in positions of power. As a consequence, women coaches can be better able to: (re)evaluate feelings of isolation and frustration, (re)arrange their coaching practices as well as (re)arrange leadership knowledges, and (re)position themselves within masculinist regimes of power.

Consequently, a future research project could include new and experienced women coaches in a variety of sports. Furthermore, Coach 3 urged us to "find a success case ... to show people around the world (that) females can also be one of the leaders." However, we need conversations that do not follow the all too common simplistic, deterministic, and established solutions to include more women in coaching. Rather, future research should make women who coach question their own solutions. That is, for change to take place women who coach must recognize their positions within a masculinist regime and know that their continued coaching resists and destabilizes the deeply ingrained belief that good coaching is inherently linked with men and masculinity.

It can be argued that the theoretical nature of this study does little to mitigate the continued lack of suggestions for actionable measures to rectify the dearth of high-performance female coaches. My research, nevertheless, provides an opportunity for both men and women to question how they have come to know and reproduce dominant coaching narratives. It is worthwhile to consider an intervention-type study that actively challenges masculinist regimes of rugby whereby coaches implement various methods of coaching, discuss their effects on the athletes and on themselves, and question and reflect on the reasons for these effects.

In conclusion, following the call to action by LaVoi (2016), this project endeavored to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions that authority, competence, and leadership are intimately linked with masculinity. I want to conclude my work by acknowledging that writing this has been the most challenging and daunting undertaking of my entire conscious life. Every time I read about masculinity, leadership, and the lack of female leadership I was struck deeply at the difficulties women coaches face. The act of transcribing and meticulously reviewing each conversation with the coaches inspired me to truly question what it means to be a coach. At the outset of this study, I believed coaching to be a simple act and thus, the solution to ensure women continue coaching must be simple as well. The candour of the women I interviewed demonstrated the value in adopting a Foucauldian feminist sensibility to consider the disciplinary effects of power. This enabled me to recognize how my coaching actions potentially marginalize women and have the unseen effect of furthering a deeply ingrained sense of inadequacy through the gendered identity of a female coach. I remember, however, that Coach 2 explained: "Why did I really want to coach? .... To help girls empower themselves." We should encourage one another to ask hard questions and learn from the discoveries. Women who coach would be in a hopeless position if we had no form of resistance. I suggest also educating men because they are a part of power relations in rugby. In addition, we need to create environments where women coaches flourish. These

environments, instead of a patronizing 'girls only' mantra, should be spaces which remove women from the web of masculine sport culture that disciplines and punishes their behavior. Women coaches should have opportunities to develop their coaching by adopting a critical attitude of what good coaching 'looks like.' With the existing initiatives by the Rugby Union, such as World Rugby Women's Committee of which some of the interviewees also acknowledged, I hope that ultimately the climate of coaching changes. As Coach 4 succinctly expressed: "You've got to be fuckin' good at what you do whether you've got a vagina or penis."

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background and Ice Breaker Questions
- Please describe how you began coaching.
    - Can you explain why you started?
    - Do you believe your playing career influenced your coaching? Why or why not? In what ways?
    - How long have (did) you been coaching for?
    - What is the highest level of coaching you achieved – including education, certifications, and teams?
- Please describe your current occupation – be as detailed as possible.
    - How long have you been in this occupation? What are your main roles and responsibilities?

Early Playing Experiences.
- Please describe your career as a rugby athlete.
    - What were your primary positions? Career length? Highest level you achieved? Any outstanding memories you would like to share?
- What stories can you share regarding gender issues while playing?

Coaching Experiences
- What are your proudest coaching moments?
- What would you say are the biggest challenges you've faced while coaching?
- Who would you say are/were your coaching mentors? In what ways did they influence your coaching?
- Could you describe your early coaching practices? (e.g., How did you plan practices? Manage relationships?)
    - What influenced your early coaching knowledge and practices?
- As you developed and grew as a coach, in what ways did you change? In what ways did you stay the same?
    - What would you say were the causes for your change and development?

Philosophies and Practices of the Coach Regarding Gender and Equity
- How would you describe your coaching philosophy?
    - How did you develop this philosophy?
    - What knowledges and experiences informed your coaching practice?

- How is your philosophy is based on gender?

Experiences of Gender in Coaching

- When have you felt pressure to coach a certain way?
    - Would you say this is based on your gender? Why/why not?
    - Where would you say this pressure came from?
- Did you feel / Have you felt obligated to act certain ways in different coaching scenarios?
    - Why? Where would you say this feeling came from?
- What stories can you share of experiences with gendering issues while coaching?

Reasons for the Underrepresentation of Women in Coaching

- What was the main reason(s) you chose to (dis)continue coaching?
- In your opinion, what would you say are the main reasons other women choose to <u>discontinue</u> coaching?
- In your opinion, what would you say are the main reasons other women choose to <u>continue</u> coaching?

Suggestions for the Development and Retention of Women Coaches

- In what ways can we address and resolve the underrepresentation of women in coaching?
- What would you say are the most important factors to ensure women stay in coaching?
- What do you believe are the best ways to share knowledge and experiences with developing female coaches?
- In your opinion, what are the best ways to support developing female coaches?
- If you had the ability to give advice to yourself when you began your coaching career, what would you say?
- Are there any further experiences or insights we have missed, and you wish to share?