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## Exploring the Underrepresentation of Women Coaches in Canadian University Sport

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Education

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## Abstract

Currently, there are disproportionately few women who hold coaching positions within Canadian university sport. To investigate the gender gap, this dissertation explores the institutional practices that inform women coaches' working realities. Applying Smith's (1987) institutional ethnography as a mode of inquiry directed the exploration towards the everyday practices and processes that inform experience, to better understand current barriers and supports in place. In this study, particular attention is given to social relations, which Smith (2005) calls the relations of ruling that coordinate activities and experiences of individuals within organizations. Institutional ethnography aims to explicate these relations of ruling by exploring individuals' everyday work practices, which was done through interviews with current women coaches at a Canadian university. Additionally, two university sport gender equity policies (*Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* and the *U Sports Equity Policy*), and women coaches' work schedules were analyzed. The findings illuminate women coaches' daily activities within the university and how the relations of ruling coordinate these realities. It was revealed that hegemonic masculine ideals shape women coaches' daily realities within the university. For example, the challenge of achieving work-life balance, and women coaches' participating in unseen and unrecognized work. This research illuminates the complexity of women coaches' daily activities, and challenges Canadian university sport to do things differently. Recommendations based on the research findings include community building, coaching education that reflects current working realities, and action-based gender equity policies. By listening to the experiences of women coaches' and mapping out the relations of ruling that informs their daily lives, this research has challenged the taken-for-granted practices and processes within university sport, calling for a more nuanced understanding of women's work in coaching.

Keywords: Institutional ethnography, women, leadership, coaching, work, relations of ruling, university, sport, Canada

## Summary for Lay Audience

Currently, women coaches are largely underrepresented within Canadian university sport. Studies that have explored why there is a gender gap in coaching are largely focused on individual barriers, such as self-efficacy, with limited research focused on the Canadian context. Alternatively, the present study is a qualitative exploration of how one Canadian university informs the everyday working realities of both the head and assistant women coaches who work there. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of how institutional practices in Canadian university sport, contribute to the gender gap in coaching. Eight women head and assistant coaches at one Canadian university shared their daily work experiences. Additionally, two sport gender equity policies (*Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls and the U Sports Equity Policy*), and women coaches' work schedules were analyzed. In combination, the interviews and text analysis illuminated how the institution impacts women coaches' daily activities. The findings of the study revealed dominant hegemonic masculine ideals within the institution that are shaping women coaches' daily realities. For example, an emphasis on winning makes it difficult for women coaches to achieve work-life balance. The pervasive hegemonic masculine culture sustains taken for granted norms within Canadian university sport. Recommendations based on these findings include community building, coaching education that reflects current working realities, and action-based gender equity policies. The current normalized practices within Canadian university sport must continue to be challenged and reimaged, in order to better support both current and future women coaches in the field.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for my supervisor, Dr. Rita Gardiner, whose kindness, and patience supported me throughout the completion of this degree. I am grateful for her unwavering belief in me and my abilities, even when I was full of self-doubt and uncertainty. My graduate experience has been enriched by her mentorship, and her encouragement to step outside my comfort zone. I am fortunate to have had her guidance throughout this process. Thank you for this incredible journey and for fostering both my academic and personal growth.

I am also grateful for my committee member Dr. Melody Viczko, whose feedback and encouragement helped me find my voice within my research. By challenging my thinking, she has helped me gain a newfound confidence in my work. In addition, I want to thank the faculty members in the Critical Policy, Equity, and Leadership Studies ARC for what they have taught me during my time as a graduate student.

To the women coaches in this study, I appreciate your generosity and honesty in sharing your stories. Thank you for participating in research that sought out to develop a greater understanding of the challenges faced by women coaches in Canadian university sport.

Finally, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without my family and close friends, who have each practiced infinite patience with me during this demanding process. To my siblings, Katie, Ryan, and Mallory, thank you for always cheering me on. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my parents, Sean, and Cheryl, for your love and encouragement. You have always empowered me to pursue my ambitions, through the reminder that we are the sum total of our life experiences. I also would like to thank my Grandma Carol for instilling my love of reading and writing during the summers together growing up, and my Grandpa Bill, for teaching me the value and rewards of hard work and the power of education.

Most of all, thank you to my partner, Matt, who has encouraged the pursuit of my goals and has supported me every step of the way. I could not have done this without you.

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction

Currently, women and girls have access to a broad range of sport participation opportunities in Canada, ranging from recreational to competitive levels (Canada Women & Sport, 2020). However, despite the varied participation opportunities, women remain alarmingly underrepresented in sport leadership positions (Burton, 2015; Norman, 2014; Pauline, 2012; Walker & Bopp, 2011). In particular, coaching is the area with the most significant gender imbalance (Kamphoff, Armentrout & Driska, 2010; Norman, 2010; Welch & Singelman, 2007). This is problematic because coaches are visible leaders in sport, who impact the day-to-day experiences of their athletes. Additionally, sport organizations lose out on the benefits of diverse perspectives and lived experiences resulting from a lack of women's leadership.

The underrepresentation of women coaching in Canada spans across all levels and disciplines. At the national level, women made up just 16% of head coaches and 18% of assistant coaches across 54 Canadian national teams (SIRC, 2021). During the recent 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Canadian women won 18 of Canada's 24 medals, yet only 18% of the 131 Canadian coaches were women (Ewing, 2022). That percentage has decreased from 20% during the 2016 Rio Olympics (Ewing, 2022). These numbers are alarming, given that the Government of Canada has "committed to achieving gender equity in sport by 2035" (Canadian Press, 2019).

At the university level, the Canadian Women and Sport organization (2022) has reported that women currently hold only 3% of head coaching roles for men's teams, 18% of head coaching roles in mixed sport, and 26% of head coaching roles for women's

teams. To address the gender gap, this dissertation aims to explore current institutional practices and processes organizing women coaches' working realities. The research question grounding this study is "how do institutional practices in Canadian university sport contribute to the gender gap in coaching?". Guided by the mode of inquiry for this study called "institutional ethnography" (IE) (Smith, 1987; 1990; 2005; 2006), current women coaches' knowledge provided insight into how organizational processes coordinate their work activities. Explicating individual experiences as they occur within social relations is the focus of IE and thus, proved to be an impactful mode of inquiry for this project.

Within the vast body of literature on gender, leadership, and sport (Burton, 2019; Ryan & Dickson, 2018; Sotiriadou & De Haan, 2019), there is a focus on individual barriers that women must overcome to achieve and sustain coaching positions (Burton, 2017; Carson, McCormack & Walsh, 2018; Maya & Uzman, 2019; Megheirkouni, 2018; Wasend & LaVoi, 2019). Furthermore, much of the literature is focused within the United States context (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Harvey, Voelker, Cope & Dieffencach, 2018; Kilty, 2006; Walker & Bopp, 2011), and the UK (Norman, 2008; 2010; 2013; Rankin-Wright, Hylton & Norman, 2019). On the contrary, my research sought out to explore Canadian university sport, given the limited research in this context.

Additionally, extensive research has been conducted to understand women's experiences as athletes. However, less research has been conducted on women as coaches (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Burton, 2015; Fink, 2015; Norman, 2014). It is imperative to have focused research on the limited number of women coaches, because if women's

leadership is missing from sport organizations, so are important role models.

Additionally, with women being largely marginalized from coaching positions, the normalization of a lack of diversity persists within sport leadership positions (Wallick, 2018). Lastly, diversifying the faces of leadership can improve the overall culture of sport as varied perspectives can provide new insights, ideas, and skills (Mousa et al., 2021). Thus, a continued exploration of the gender gap in sports leadership is needed alongside evaluating the practices and processes that create and maintain this discrepancy.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will first clearly state the significance of the study, specific to its contribution to the gender, sport, and leadership scholarship. Then, I will provide the research problematic that the study has emerged from, which has been identified through personal experiences. Specifically, I will explain how the underrepresentation of women coaches arose as an issue because of my time as both an athlete and a coach. Following which, I will detail my location in the research, further reflecting not only on my athletic experiences but also on my upbringing and educational experiences more broadly. With my experiences and personal location in the research provided, I will then discuss my ontological and epistemological positions within the study. Once identified, a brief introduction to the mode of inquiry used in this research called institutional ethnography (IE), along with key terms specific to the study is included. To end the chapter, an outline of the dissertation structure is provided, including the main topics of each chapter.

## 1.1 Study Significance

This research contributes to the gender, sport, and leadership literature by addressing the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, particularly within the Canadian university coaching profession. The significance of this study is

demonstrated through its ability to better understand how institutions impact the working realities of coaches, to better support women in the field. Specifically, by listening and learning from the experiences of women coaches, insight into certain practices and processes that impact their leadership are illuminated. With the knowledge of how women's working realities are shaped by the structure of Canadian university sport, strategies that promote gender equity for future leadership roles are identified. Continued emphasis on the additional supports necessary for both current and aspiring women coaches is needed, so that other young female athletes can envision themselves in sport leadership roles in the future. The following section will discuss the research problematic of the study, that grounds and guides the exploration of women coaches' work in Canadian university sport.

## 1.2 Research Problematic

A "research problematic" is a term used in an IE study that is understood not as the research question to be answered but the territory to be discovered (Smith, 2005). The problematic can be pictured as a puzzle that emerges from experience and expresses possible question(s) (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). As Smith (1993) explains, "the idea is to develop an inquiry into the social relations in which that experience is embedded, making visible how it is organized in and by a larger complex of relations" (p. 184). Generally, people's experience of their everyday world sets the research problematic towards institutional relations that inform their daily lives (Smith, 2005). Institutional relations refer to socially organizing practices and processes that inform individual experiences (Devault, 2006). Through reflection and examination of my personal experience as an athlete and coach, I was able to identify the problematic guiding this research.

My interest in the lack of women in Canadian university sport coaching emerged from my personal experience as a varsity athlete and coach. During my time in both these positions, I noticed very few opportunities to witness and connect with women in head coaching and assistant coaching positions. This gender gap was essential to explore because I had a hard time envisioning myself pursuing a university coaching career, as I did not see myself reflected in most coaching positions. The lack of women coaching in Canadian university sport is the problem that grounds this IE study, and my personal location in the research will be further discussed in the following section.

### 1.3 Locating Myself in the Research

I acknowledge that I occupy a privileged space in society, as a white, heterosexual woman who has had access to education throughout my lifetime. I come from a middle-class family, who has supported my academic and extracurricular endeavours. My family's ability to fund my education alleviated financial stress and increased my access to attend a post-secondary institution. After completing high school, I started my post-secondary education at York University in Toronto, Ontario, where I received a Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology and a Bachelor of Education degree.

During my time as an undergrad student, I was a varsity athlete and played basketball for all four years. Participating in university athletics helped to subsidize my education costs further. It led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about the experiences of women coaches. Initially, I desired to become a high school teacher once I graduated, however, my experience as an athlete shifted my focus. During my time playing basketball, I recognized that there were so few women who held coaching positions. I grappled with why there were so few and as a result, I felt compelled to pursue the profession and become a university basketball coach myself.



Upon graduation, I moved home to London, Ontario, to attend Western University. I was enrolled in and eventually completed my Masters of Coaching. Initially, I intended to graduate with the degree and become a university basketball coach. However, my experience in the program heightened my awareness of how few women basketball coaches there were, and how few women held leadership positions more generally across Canadian university sport. For example, I was one of only two women in a class of twenty getting the degree, and three out of my four professors were male. I was also the first woman in the program's history to request to work with a male varsity team. The presence of women coaches and leaders during my time as both an athlete and a student would have provided me with positive role models and supported my impression that these positions are achievable in the future.

Alongside a lack of role models, I was faced with various gender-specific barriers. For example, during my time as the assistant coach for the male team, all the players and coaches decided that a weekend team bonding trip was necessary before the start of the season. However, being the only female coaching staff member, I was not invited to attend. The rationale provided was that I would require my own room because I am a woman, and the program did not want to pay more money than they had to. I also did not receive team gear because they had to order it in women's sizing. I left the experience feeling compelled to help support current and future women in coaching positions. I decided to further my understanding as to why there are so few women who coach at Canadian universities, and if others have had similar experiences to mine.

My time as an athlete and a coach has compelled me to do this research, and these experiences have provided me with the requisite knowledge that there are challenges

associated with both obtaining and maintaining coaching positions. In pursuit of my doctoral research, I wanted to illuminate women's diverse challenges in everyday work practices and coaching activities. Pursuing this research assists me in learning, contributing to, and advocating for the development of this professional field with which I identify. While my personal experiences have provided me with insight into Canadian university sport and the lack of women in coaching, I recognize that these experiences have shaped my understanding of why there are so few women coaches within this context. Therefore, I will remain reflexive because it is crucial to acknowledge that my past has shaped and informed my beliefs, judgments, and assumptions specific to the research (Altheide & Johnson, 2011). Part of the reflexivity process is identifying and stating my ontological and epistemological positions, which are outlined in the following section.

## 1.4 Ontology and Epistemology

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) define an “ontological position as an assumption about reality and the nature of things” (p. 3). Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, which are understood as the ways of researching and inquiring into reality and the nature of things (Cohen, et al., 2007). Once outlined, epistemological and ontological assumptions can help identify methodological considerations and data collection methods within a research study. Thus, first reflecting on and identifying these positions is a key aspect of the research process.

### *Ontology*

This study takes the ontological position of institutional ethnography (IE) to understand the organization of social relations. IE requires a move in thinking towards what Dorothy Smith (2005) has called "the ontology of the social," meaning that

whatever is happening can be discovered and thus be explored and explicated" (p. 21). The ontology of the social is defined as individuals, plus their doings, plus coordination (Smith, 1997). Thus, working from this understanding requires the inquiry for my study to begin with individuals and their actual lived experiences. Then, the study extends beyond to uncover how those everyday experiences and interactions are coordinated and socially organized. This was done by starting with individual interviews, moving to text analysis, and then mapping the social relations.

Smith (2005) recognizes individuals as they are "in their bodies, they are active; and what they're doing is coordinated with the doings of others" (p. 59). As a result, pursuing an IE study is a commitment to an ontological position that rejects abstract ways of knowing and "transfers agency away from concepts, back to the embodied knower" (DeVault, 2013, p. 5). Thus, starting with individuals is foundational to an institutional ethnographic project. Yet, while this research emerges from individual experience, I recognize that social relations and social reality are not necessarily of one's own making. Instead, this research acknowledges that individual experiences are situated, contextualized, and informed by social relations (Brown & Strega, 2015; McCoy, 2021; Mojab & Carpenter, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of my study is to show how women coaches working realities are informed by practices and processes within the university.

### ***Epistemology***

Epistemological assumptions of IE studies understand knowledge as being socially constructed by and in the interest of dominant society (Brown & Strega, 2015). By understanding knowledge as socially constituted, the recognition of how social relations organize what people do can be uncovered (Smith, 2005). IE recognizes

knowledge as being “socially constructed by and in the interest of dominant society” (Moosa-Mitha, 2015, p. 74). As a result, knowledge is understood as having an ideological function, used to create a dominant view of reality that produces social relations (Moosa-Mitha, 2015).

With an understanding of the epistemological and ontological underpinning of the research, this study will work from a perspective grounded in critiquing the status quo and creating social change (DeVault, 2006). The research has emerged from a gender gap in Canadian university coaching whereby men occupy most of the coaching positions. Yet, instead of explaining certain institutional struggles women in coaching face, this research is interested in identifying what people are doing and how work is organized to illuminate practices that maintain the underrepresentation of women in coaching positions. Grounded in the ontological and epistemological assumptions highlighted above, Canadian university sport served as the context for this research.

## 1.5 Introduction to IE

In the early stages of my doctoral studies, I struggled to find a theory, methodology, and conceptual framework that captured my research goals. I often felt I needed to confine myself to either exploring individual experiences or institutional practices. The divide between research that explores individual versus institutional practices was further perpetuated in the gender, sport and leadership literature. Studies have taken an “either or” approach, which was a problem because I aspired to connect the two areas of exploration. Specifically, I recognize individuals and institutions being very much connected, with institutional practices informing and impacting individual experiences. Eventually, I discovered Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith's mode of inquiry called institutional ethnography (IE), which allowed me to connect personal

experience and institutional practices. IE was exciting to me because the research approach acknowledges the complexity of everyday life and how people and their activities are coordinated (Smith, 2005). While IE research starts from individual experiences, it extends beyond to uncover the organizing social relations that shape individual experiences.

The undertaking of my IE research project involved three main tasks:

1. An examination of work activities by learning from women coaches' experiences.
2. An analysis of the practices within the university that are informed by institutional texts.
3. Uncovering the organizing relations within the university.

The IE research process provided me with a mode of inquiry to explore how the activities of women coaches are coordinated within Canadian university sport.

### **Table 1**

#### *Key Terms and Definitions*

Term	Definition
Gender Equality	The process of allocating resources, programs and decision making so that all genders have the same access (Canadian Women and Sport, 2021).
Gender Equity	The process of allocating resources, programs, and decision making fairly to all genders without any discrimination based on gender and addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to people of different genders (Canadian Women and Sport, 2021).

Institution	Institutions refer to the organization of practices and activities around a distinctive function such as health care, mothering, or education (Smith, 1987; 2005).
Organization	The setting where institutional power is expressed, made sense of, and enacted by the individuals within it (Rankin, 2017).
Ontology of the Social	Attends to the ongoing activities of people by looking specifically at how things are coordinated, with the understanding that people enact social life (Smith, 2006).
Problematic	The problematic is the area to be discovered in institutional ethnography, that surfaces from individual experience(s). "The problematic of the everyday world arises precisely at the juncture of particular experience, with generalizing and abstracted forms of social relations" (Smith, 1987, p. 187).
Relations of Ruling	The social relations that work to coordinate the activities of people, whose consciousness is shaped by these relations. The relations of ruling remain invisible until subjected to inquiry (Smith, 2005).
Standpoint	Standpoint refers to an individual's particular location within institutional practices. The use of standpoint positions participants as the "expert knowers" of their situated work. Institutional ethnographers begin their inquiry from the standpoint of individuals in their daily lives, to explore the actualities of others' experiences (Smith, 1997).

Texts	Texts are replicable and mediate action within organizations. They are recognized as any kind of document, photograph, drawing, or video. Texts have a standardizing role within the relations of ruling, as they organize the actions and mediate knowledge of individuals (Smith, 1987; 2005).
Work	Work encompasses any activity that people do that requires time and effort and has intent (Smith, 2006).

What makes IE unique to other qualitative research approaches such as case study or phenomenology is a recognition of the mediating role that texts have in the coordination of peoples' work. In IE, texts are recognized as being the key juncture between everyday realities and how the everyday is organized (Smith 2005; 2006). Thus, when exploring what people are doing and experiencing, texts allow the exploration to extend beyond individual accounts towards the social relations informing experience. Additionally, IE is unique in that it does not prescribe any preconceived theoretical categories or approaches. Instead, the problematic(s) that emerge in peoples experience grounds the research. It is through these key aspects of an IE project that distinguishes it from other research approaches.

## 1.6 Study Structure

I have organized my dissertation into eight distinct chapters. Chapter One is the introduction that lays out the foundations of the research. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the gender, sport, and leadership literature following the introductory chapter. My specific focus is on women in coaching within the Canadian context. An outline of the significant barriers highlighted in the current literature is

provided, including self-efficacy, work-life balance, hiring practices, the gendered nature of sport organizations, and the impact of hegemonic masculinity. I then discuss research opportunities based on the current literature to situate my project.

Following Chapter Two, Chapter Three is dedicated to introducing my mode of inquiry for this research called institutional ethnography (IE). IE was applied as a mode of inquiry in this project, revealing the organizing practices that define, support, or limit women's leadership in Canadian university sport. To start, Chapter Two describes IE's history and founder, Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith. Additionally, key terms such as standpoint and the relations of ruling are discussed.

Chapter Four outlines my formal research design, which includes data collection, analysis, and mapping of the results. The methods used for this study include interviews, textual analysis, and mapping. Interviews provided insight into actors and operations of institutions, while textual analysis and mapping helped reveal the active social relations embedded within the university. Three distinct phases were employed to conduct the research. First, interviews were held with current head and assistant coaches at one Canadian university. Second, a textual analysis was completed focused on women's work schedules and two gender equity policies. Lastly, mapping was conducted to reveal the relations of ruling informing women coaches' working realities. Once the research process is outlined, I discuss the findings in the following chapter.

In Chapter Five, I share my interview findings highlighting key themes from my discussions with the women coaches who participated in the study. Interviews with eight women head and assistant coaches from one university were conducted to understand their working realities. Interviews provided the chance to engage with current practices



and processes shaping women's experiences, through a better understanding of their day-to-day activities. The data collected from the interviews were coded for themes, which included support or lack thereof, the hierarchy of sport, education, community, opportunity, fund development and allocation, and unseen/ unrecognized work.

Chapter Six focuses exclusively on presenting the text analysis findings from three documents: *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, the *U Sports Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules. The goal of the text analysis was to understand how the relations of ruling, as reflected in institutional texts affect and inform women coaches' working experiences. By evaluating each policy, I was able to illuminate how they operate to sustain a gendered culture within the university. What was revealed was a critical disjuncture between the equity policies and the daily working realities highlighted in both women coaches' work schedules and the interviews. For example, women coaches expressed a lack of leadership development opportunities and take on several responsibilities outside of coaching their respective teams.

Chapter Seven provides an extended discussion of my overall findings and their interconnections. Specifically, the chapter is focused on highlighting the gaps between the stated institutional support within the policies versus women coaches' daily experiences—illustrating how certain institutional practices are acting as barriers to women's leadership. I showcase and describe a map representing the relations of ruling active within the university, sustaining specific barriers. Each of the relations of ruling present in the map is examined, detailing impacts on women in coaching.

Recommendations based on the research findings are then provided, which include

community building, coaching education that reflects current working realities, and action-based gender equity policies.

In Chapter Eight, I conclude my dissertation with a summary of my learning and significant takeaways from the project. This study addresses the gender gap in coaching by challenging the current practices and processes of university sport and provides strategies to promote gender equity for future leadership roles in Canadian university sport. Areas for future research and limitations of the study such as a limited number of participants are also discussed. I call for Canadian universities to challenge the common, taken for granted practices within sport. Moving forward, there is a need to further interrogate how the social organization of Canadian university sport continues to maintain and perpetuate inequities for women in coaching positions.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

In this chapter, I situate my research within the gender, leadership, and sports field, providing an overview of the current literature. Locating my research in this space is essential because my project is focused on addressing the underrepresentation of women coaches in Canadian university sport. To begin, I will first outline women's current representation in sport leadership, specifically within the Canadian university context. Second, an overview of the identified barriers to women's leadership in sport within current gender, leadership, and sport literature is provided. Key themes include self-efficacy, work-life balance, hiring practices, the gendered nature of sport organizations, and hegemonic masculinity. Then, current strategies that are working to close the gender gap are discussed, followed by an argument for research on organizational practices and processes. To conclude, opportunities for further research are highlighted.

Burton's (2015) article "Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research" provides a sweeping overview of the women in sport leadership literature, specifically focused on barriers, and the challenges women in sport face. The review structure organizes the scholarship into distinct sections, including macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level analysis. Despite the large quantity and depth of scholarship that is highlighted, women remain underrepresented in sports leadership. Furthermore, based on the literature, a more complex examination of how gender operates within Canadian sport organizations is needed, as much of the focus is on the United States. Thus, further research that contributes to the understanding of why there are so few

women who hold sport leadership positions is needed, specifically in the Canadian context.

When women experience challenges entering or moving through an organization, there is an opportunity to examine how specific conditions impede advancement (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Wallace and Wallin's (2018) book titled *Transforming conversations: feminism and education in Canada since 1970* discusses women's experiences in educational administration and leadership in higher education. Although not focused on coaching or sport, it is evident that the conditions/situations for women in sport are similar in both contexts. For example, Wallace and Wallin (2018) note that women's rank in higher education is still disproportionately lower than men's, despite increased representation in Ph.D. programs and tenure-track positions. As well, women's representation decreases as position rank increases.

Canadian university statistics reflect the gender gap in upper-level leadership positions, with 29% of full professor positions and 26% of president positions held by women (Universities Canada, 2019). Thus, power and authority in educational institutions are not distributed proportionally, and the experiences of women who attain these positions are highly gendered (Wallace & Wallin, 2018). If this sets the context for higher education more broadly, it is not surprising that university sport also reflects a gender gap in particular leadership positions such as coaching. The underrepresentation of women in sports leadership will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.1 Women's Underrepresentation in Sport Organizations

While we witness young girls and women participating in a variety of sport activities, the decisions about what happens in sport are predominantly made by white, heterosexual men (Shaw, 2006). In Canada, women are continuously underrepresented in

leadership positions across sports organizations. For example, in Canadian national and multi-sport organizations, only 38% of senior staff and 29% of board members are female (Canadian Women and Sport, 2020). In Canadian university sport, only 24% of athletic directors are women, and there continues to be even less female representation across national teams and Olympic coaches (Canadian Women and Sport, 2020). This gender gap in leadership is alarming, given that women are playing sport at each level. Thus, women should lead and be recognized as leaders within sports organizations. These statistics align with the Canadian workforce more broadly, with research showing that women hold 25% of vice president positions and just 15% of CEO positions (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2021).

While a gender gap is present in various sports leadership positions, the area with the most significant gender imbalance is coaching (Burton, 2015; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Kidd, 2013; Norman, 2010). In Canada, the percentage of women coaches in universities is declining (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001; Theberge, 1993), from 60% in the 1960s to 16% in 2021 (USport, 2021). The decline of women coaches is surprising given that, within Canadian University Sport, there is continued interest and involvement of women participating (Burton 2015; Hargreaves, 2002; Kidd, 2013; Pike et al., 2018). For example, previously within Canadian universities, there were only four national championships for female university athletes, including gymnastics, basketball, swimming, volleyball, and diving, in the 1970s (Keyes, 1989). Currently however, there are ten national championships for women (basketball, cross-country running, field hockey, ice hockey, rugby, soccer, swimming, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling). In fact, women have one additional championship opportunity than men (Hoerber, 2007;

Kidd, 2013). Despite the increased participation opportunities for women that have been highlighted, women are still not equally represented in coaching positions (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Burton, 2015; Norman, 2014; Pauline, 2012; Walker & Bopp, 2011).

The lack of women in coaching is not limited to the Canadian context. For example, Acosta and Carpenter (2014) have found that in the United States, only 43.4% of female collegiate teams are coached by women, whereas 98% of men's teams are coached by men. Similarly, in the UK, the current number of women coaches is low. UK statistics reveal the number of men who hold coaching positions is increasing, up to 69% in 2011 compared to 62% in 2006 (Norman, 2010). Given that this issue is seen in a variety of settings, it is crucial to consider the factors that create and sustain the gender gap.

Research that challenges the under-representation of women coaches in Canadian university sports is needed for several reasons. One reason being that the gender gap persists despite the initiatives currently in place. Additionally, young females deserve the opportunity to envision themselves in sport leadership positions. A study conducted by Lockwood (2006) explored the importance of women having same-sex role models during school. While not specific to sport, the research highlights the impact same-sex role models have on young women. Participants in the study were asked to think about a person who has been a role model for them in their academic or career-related interests and describe them. Questions were then asked specific to gender, such as "is the gender of this role model important in determining how they motivate you? That is, does this person any more or less influence you because of their gender?" (p. 41). The study results suggest that same-sex role models are significant for women, however gender had a

limited impact on male students. Lockwood expects this may be because women anticipate facing gender-related obstacles in their careers, making it vital to know that another woman in their field has been successful. Furthermore, these young women said that seeing another women's success in a male-dominated field was motivating for them.

Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, the CEO of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport, echoes the importance of having same-sex role models in sport leadership positions, stating:

Increasing the representation of women in sport leadership is critical for achieving equity for women and girls in sport. It is also key to building a stronger sport system. Girls' and boys' benefit from having female role models that they can look up to, and sport is enriched by the talents, contributions, and diverse perspectives that women bring. (2018)

Many scholars have worked to illuminate the choices and challenges faced by women seeking to achieve upper-level leadership positions in sport (Hancock & Walker, 2018; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Schull, 2017). Perception of gendered opportunities, male-exclusive social networks, and pressures to overcompensate for being a woman are all identified as negative influences on women to sustain and pursue careers in sports leadership (Burton, 2015; Walker & Bopp, 2008). For example, women have reported feeling a sense of urgency to prove themselves as effective and "successful" coaches to their male colleagues (Norman, 2010). The desire to stand out reflects the lower status and support offered to women in sport organizations (Burton, 2015; Norman 2010). Indeed, men also feel pressure to be successful; however, it is important to recognize the

pressure on women to succeed and stand out because so few hold leadership positions in sport.

In this section, the underrepresentation of women in coaching has been highlighted. This gender gap is witnessed in Canada and globally across varied contexts and leadership positions within sport and higher education (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Schnackenberg & Simard, 2018; Schull, 2017). In the next section of this chapter, I will provide an overview of the current literature on gender, sport, and leadership. Specifically, I will highlight the barriers that have been identified as impacting women's leadership in sport organizations.

## 2.2 Barriers to Women's Leadership

Based on the current gender, sport, and leadership literature, five key themes have emerged through my review. These themes are self-efficacy, work-life balance, hiring practices, the gendered nature of sport organizations, and hegemonic masculinity. Each theme has been highlighted in the scholarship as significant factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women coaches. In the following section of this review, I will discuss each theme in detail, describing the impact on women's leadership in sport.

### *Self-Efficacy*

A critical focus of the current gender, leadership, and sport literature has been on individual factors and personal barriers that impact women's leadership. These barriers include women's lack of confidence, assertiveness, and the ability to self-promote (Burton, 2015; Kark & Eagly, 2010; Kay & Shipman, 2014; O'Neil & Hopkins, 2015). For example, a study by Banwell and Kerr (2016) found that the Canadian university female athletes they interviewed as part of their study did not consider coaching as a career. While the sample size was relatively small, including just nine current and



recently retired varsity athletes, certain insights on perceived benefits and challenges of pursuing coaching were illuminated. The participants stated that they did not feel coaching was a career they could pursue because it is not a traditional path, is dominated by men, and does not pay well. Each of these identified barriers provided insight into how and why women athletes may not be pursuing coaching as a career. Specifically, the results indicate that this may be because participants did not perceive coaching opportunities to be available, accessible, or viable.

While women's intention to pursue a coaching career remains a challenge, one of the most significant personal barriers identified in the literature is women's self-efficacy (Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities", which determine how they "feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p. 2). Compared to men, women have reported having lower self-efficacy and more negative outcome expectations in Canadian and American university sports leadership contexts (Cunningham et al., 2003; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007). Norman (2010) found that women fail to view themselves as suitable leaders in higher-level sport leadership positions, including head coaches and administration. The struggle for women to view themselves as qualified leaders is comparative to other women in careers characterized as "superior, involving authority, and commanding higher pay" (Dickerson & Taylor, 2000, p. 193), for example women leaders in higher education (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016).

Cunningham and Sagas (2003) conducted a study specifically focused on self-efficacy and coaching. The researchers examined the relationship between coaching self-efficacy, desire to become a head coach, and intention to leave the profession among

assistant coaches of women's teams. Based on survey results, male assistant coaches showed more intentions to become head coaches than women in the same position. The study concluded that one explanation for the gender differences could be female assistant coaches' self-limiting behaviour, resulting from lower self-efficacy.

The indication that women coaches' have low self-efficacy (Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Cunningham & Sagas, 2003; Cunningham and Sagas, 2008; Norman, 2010) could be a factor in sustaining the disproportionate gender ratio in coaching. Reade, Rodgers, and Norman (2009) found that the number of female coaches participating in the first levels of the coach education program is not far below the number of males; however, there are disproportionately few women in high-level coaching positions. The findings demonstrate that even when women pursue coaching roles and education, they do not reach high level positions. As a result, most women coaches are found at the lowest levels of competition.

While each of the aforementioned studies conclude that self-efficacy may be preventing more women from applying to and therefore achieving head coaching positions, it places the responsibility on women for their advancement. The solution that is offered is to increase women's self-efficacy to address the gender gap, without a recognition of the complexities that impact individual experience. Thus, more nuanced investigations of why women's self-efficacy is low and the conditions that create and sustain this individual barrier to leadership are needed.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

The literature has highlighted that even when women successfully achieve a sports leadership position, barriers persist throughout their careers (Burton, 2015; 2017).

One of the major barriers include the struggle to achieve work life balance. For instance, athletic departments encourage coaches and administrators to spend most of their time working, whether that is time in the office, traveling with teams, or recruiting new athletes (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2021). These expectations and time commitments foster prioritizing work over other aspects of life (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Burton & Leberman, 2017; Dixon et al., 2008; Inglis et al., 2000).

A study by Bruening and Dixon (2008) highlighted the challenges women coaches face when achieving work and home life balance. The participants in the study included 17 NCAA Division I head coaches who were also mothers. The women coaches were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews, sharing their insights around questions specific to family history, current family dynamics, and factors they thought impacted their work and home life. Interviews revealed a need for additional support to continue coaching careers after women have children. Those who had help from their families and their athletic director stayed in coaching; however, those who did not find such support left their university or coaching altogether. While this study was conducted in the United States, it provides critical insights into the lack of supports available.

While Bruening and Dixon (2008) explored the experiences of women coaches specific to work-life balance, Pfister and Radtke (2009) investigated the experiences of both men and women. Their research found that, within German sports organizations, the demands placed on the sports leaders were better suited to the personal circumstances of men than the women in the study. Their mixed-methods investigation, which included a survey and interview, produced results that revealed significant gender differences in age, family situation and responsibilities, and career barriers. These findings are helpful for

understanding the literature because they accentuate gender-specific experiences within the organization. For example, compared to their male colleagues, women experienced greater responsibility when it came to family duties, which limited their ability to advance in the field. Having family responsibilities can make it challenging for women to advance, if the workplace does not recognize or support the time required. Thus, this study has highlighted the effects of family responsibility and balancing work inside and outside the home on women's careers.

### ***Hiring Practices***

Hiring practices are another barrier that has been identified in the literature for women's leadership in sport. Research on hiring practices has highlighted homologous reproduction as a barrier for women in sport organizations. Homologous reproduction refers to hiring people of the same gender, class, race, etc. (Lovett & Lowry 1994; Walker & Bopp, 2008; Whisenant, 2008). Several studies have supported homologous representation as a factor within sport organizations that works to sustain men as the dominant group in leadership positions (Aman, Yusof, Razali, & Omar, 2019; Darvin & Sagas, 2017; Sagas, Cunningham & Teed, 2006; Whisenant & Mullane, 2007). The studies suggest that women's underrepresentation may be partially caused by discriminatory hiring practices because those who are making the decisions (primarily men) are hiring individuals like themselves (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). Furthermore, women are not afforded the necessary social capital (such as same-sex social networks and mentors) to help make leadership opportunities available if homologous reproduction is present within a sport organization (Walker and Bopp, 2010).

It is important to consider if women, not just men, hire individuals similar to themselves. While the studies mentioned above have explored the hiring practices of men in sport leadership positions, Darvin and Lubke (2020) highlight homologous representation amongst women head coaches hiring assistant coaches in the NCAA. Darvin and Lubke's quantitative study investigated whether sports with lower proportions of women head coaches are practicing homologous reproduction, which is the act of hiring people of the same gender. The study results found that women head coaches engage in homologous reproduction at higher rates than their male counterparts. Additionally, men head coaches of women's programs have continued to decrease their homologous reproduction hiring practices. It is excellent that women assistant coaches are gaining entry-level experience, yet the results of this study indicate that women are still underrepresented in head coaching positions, despite their presence in entry-level coaching positions.

While the previous sections in this chapter have highlighted individual level barriers to women's leadership in sport, such as self-efficacy and homologous representation, reasons for the gender disparity in leadership are complex and multilayered (Ely et al., 2011). Therefore, we must also extend our inquiry beyond the individual level to uncover how organizational cultures and structures shape how female leaders are positioned (Blackmore, 2013). Specifically, it is vital to recognize how women's images and actions as leaders are informed by perceptions shaped by organizational expectations, norms, values, and assumptions (Blackmore, 2013; Smith, 2006). The following section will discuss the gendered nature of sports organizations and how this creates and sustains a culture that limits women's leadership.

### *Gendered Nature of Sport*

With men currently dominating key leadership positions in sport, the institutionalized gendered practices keeping them there can be upheld (Burton 2015; 2017; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). Gendered practices shape the possibilities and limitations of people's actions within an organization (Burton, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to situate sport as a gendered space so that discussions of women's leadership experiences in sport can include gender as a fundamental aspect of organizational and social processes (Burton, 2017). The following section focuses on the gendered nature of sport, and its impacts on women's leadership.

The organizational practices and processes in sport stem from its history, as women have not always been readily accepted. Previously, women have needed to fight for their ability to participate in sport, just as they have for the right to vote or the opportunity to receive an education (Aly & Breese, 2018). Specific to Canadian university sport, the origins of the USport organization started as the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU), and was founded in 1906 (USports, 2021). The CIAU continued to grow and develop into a large group of 19 member universities but eventually collapsed in 1944 due to lack of regulation across the member universities. It is important to note that no athletic competition during this time under the CIAU was offered to women in Ontario.

Yet, women's sport programs were still expanding, and did require further organization. The growth of women's sport prompted the creation of the Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Union (WIAU), which was founded in 1923. The WIAU provided athletic competition for female students in Ontario, and eventually emerged into

the Ontario Women's Interuniversity Athletic Union (OWIAA) in 1971 (USports, 2021). At the national level, the Western Canada Intercollegiate Athletic Association submitted a proposal to the National Committee on Interuniversity Competition, which was accepted, resulting in the formulation of the Canadian Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Union. The CWIA union was formed to organize national championships for women (USports, 2021). The first "unofficial" national championship sanctioned for women was volleyball played at the University of Waterloo in 1970.

The Ontario Women's Interuniversity Athletic Union (OWIAA) eventually merged with the Ontario University Athletic Association (OUAA) to form one organization, the Ontario University Athletics (OUA), in 1997. Across Canada, the modern Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) was changed in 1961 and was represented by the various universities from coast to coast (USports, 2021). Eventually, the CIA's name and logo were modernized to Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) in 2001, and USports in 2016. The description of the USports organization and how it came to be provides some background information about the social context shaping women coaches' experiences.

Due to USports past, certain leadership positions were exclusively held by men. Thus, over time, how men participate in sport and their representation in leadership positions is viewed as "normal" (Messer, 1988). Specifically, the gendering of sports organizations operates as an axis of power whereby "men and masculinity are afforded power over and above women, and through use of this power, women are marginalized from leadership roles or positions that wield such power" (Burton, 2017 p. 152). As a result, women are often positioned as the 'other,' making women leaders in the field of

certain sports a rarity (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011). For example, women in administration positions, officiating, and coaching are a rarity in some sport organizations (Demers, Lucie, Brière, & Culver, 2019). Since so few women are in strategic decision-making positions in Canadian university sport, the status quo can remain.

Research has illuminated and challenged the normalized gendered practices and processes in sports organizations (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010; Claringbould 2008; Pfister, 2006). For example, a critical study by Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) exposed the gendered nature of senior managerial work in Dutch national sport organizations. Specifically, how the organization worked to exclude women from leadership positions. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews that revealed discursive practices related to instrumentality, relationality, emotionality/ passion, and homogeneity. Each of these particular practices strengthens the gendered nature of senior managerial work in sport organizations. The results are significant because the study shows how gendered practices in sport organizations work to keep women out of leadership roles.

Similarly, Shaw and Hoerber (2003) analyzed the discourses influencing various employment roles in sports organizations. The researchers analyzed organizational documents and interview transcripts from employees within three national sport organizations in England. The results indicated that senior management roles are heavily dominated by masculine discourses and gendered practices, which establish high value for men in sports organizations. Specifically, the gendered practices present worked to "preserve, legitimize, and naturalize the power and privileges afforded to men within these organizations" (Shaw & Hoerber, 2003, p. 94). The power afforded to men within



sport is vital to recognize because, as the results of this study indicate, women and discourses of femininity are associated with undervalued employment positions.

Unfortunately, these research findings are not just specific to sport and extend beyond to many male-dominated areas of employment such as policing (Gibbs, 2019), health care (Bailey, 2020), and higher education (Jackson, 2019).

Each of the studies highlighted above have shown that despite increased participation opportunities for women in sport, leadership positions remain a male majority with little change over time. When focusing on the women in coaching literature specifically, some scholars have argued that gendered organizations have impacted women's ability to obtain and maintain coaching positions (Burton 2015, 2017). For example, women are often constrained to coaching only female athletes and teams. Currently, in Canada, no women hold the head coaching positions of a men's team in university sport (USport, 2021). Yet, it is essential to recognize that women are commonly found as leaders in sports deemed "feminine," including figure skating, tennis, cheerleading, and gymnastics (Fink, Parker, Cunningham, & Cuneen, 2012). Thus, while men can coach both genders, women are not afforded the same opportunities and consideration (Burton, 2015). The limited coaching opportunities further illustrate the gendered nature of sport organizations.

By acknowledging the gendered nature of sports organizations, we can begin to understand how the underrepresentation of women is maintained in coaching positions. However, this can be challenging because these gender ideologies have a "subtle taken for granted nature" in organizational structure, policies, and behaviours (Burton, 2017, p. 188). Therefore, when looking to address and or challenge gendered organizations of

sport, it is vital to recognize the power that has and continues to reside with men (Acker, 2009; Binns, 2010; Eagly and Carli, 2007; Ryan & Dixon, 2018; Sinclair, 2007).

Specifically, the interaction of privileged groups of men within sport organizations normalizes forms of masculinity and maintains limitations on women's leadership (Coston & Kimmel, 2012; Hearn, 2014; Ryan & Dixon, 2018). In the following section, the impact of masculinity, specifically hegemonic masculinity on women's leadership will be explored.

### ***Hegemonic Masculinity***

The value placed on masculinity in sport organizations serves to "maintain the status quo, privilege the elite, and "perpetuate assumed assessments of who looks like leadership material" (Sinclair, 2005, p. 50). How leadership is defined in sport works to provide specific individuals with advantages and opportunities over others, such as the chance to advance and feel supported (Ryan & Dickson, 2016). For example, individuals who exhibit masculine qualities are regarded as resilient, assertive, and physical leaders (Burton, 2015). Thus, women may be considered as having less suitable leadership qualities and characteristics (McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000; Stead & Elliott, 2009), resulting in the normalization of discrimination against women, patriarchal structures, and sexist practices within organizations (Burton, 2017; Cunningham, 2008).

Masculine practices also work to define and reinforce how leaders are recognized and rewarded. "Good leadership" in sport is acknowledged and defined as strong and aggressive. Specifically, sports leadership is viewed through a "winning at all costs" lens (Finn, Gardiner, & Bruijns, 2018). The focus on "winning at all costs" acts as a measure of successful leadership and serves to reinforce a particular type of masculinity called

hegemonic masculinity (Burton & Leberman, 2017). Hegemonic masculinity is recognized as meaning exclusively heterosexual and physically dominant (Anderson, 2009; Burton, 2015).

Hegemonic masculinity allows men to maintain power over women and creates inequalities between women and men within organizations (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Hoerber & Frisby, 2001; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004; Yiamouyiannis & Osborne, 2012). These inequalities include but are not limited to pay inequities, hiring practices, and promotion (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Sagas, 2007). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is problematic because it can create an environment that is only inclusive for a certain few (Burton & Leberman, 2017). For example, the priority placed on winning in sport encourages coaches and administrators to spend most of their time working, training, traveling, or recruiting. Only those that accept and thrive in this environment are considered to be "good leaders." It is naïve to assume that women do not also enjoy winning, however when success is only defined through the guise of masculinity, a broader understanding of leadership and what success looks like becomes undervalued.

The effects of the value sports organizations place on hegemonic masculinity, and its impact on women have been well documented in the literature. For example, Schull, Schull, Shaw, and Kihl (2013) found that university athletic departments indicated that hiring a male athletic director was essential to the organization's success. Burton et al. (2009) argued that this is because athletic director positions are often defined as requiring masculine qualities. Therefore, female applicants may be viewed as less capable of succeeding in this leadership position when hired.

Without women having access to and occupying sport leadership positions, men are afforded the power to define and decide which contexts and situations women's leadership is accepted. For example, a study by Shaw and Hoeber (2003) found that women are often matched for lower-level leadership roles in sports organizations in the English sport setting. Yet, on the contrary, men are more often afforded senior management roles. Furthermore, managers admitted to giving more challenging interviews to women during the hiring process, assuming that women would be less suited for the leadership position being offered (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003).

It is evident through the discussion of the literature that the value placed on hegemonic masculinity reinforces gendered practices that privilege men in sport. The privileging of men continues to act as a factor working to marginalize women's leadership (Burton, 2017; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Fink, 2008). The dominance of hegemonic masculinity in sport is particularly harmful because it can prevent dialogue about inequities, the need to address them, or new insights and approaches to achieving gender equity within organizations (Hoeber, 2007). Therefore, unless the gendered nature of sport is challenged, the masculine values it maintains will continue to act as a limiting factor for women's leadership and careers.

This section of the literature review has discussed the gendered nature of sport organizations, specifically the impact of the hegemonic masculine culture. Alongside the individual challenges women face, gendered practices are also working to limit women's leadership in sport, specifically in the field of coaching. When seeking to address the gendered barriers within university coaching, sports organizations have implemented several strategies with the intention of better supporting women and women's leadership.

The next section of this chapter will highlight the initiatives that have been put in place within the Canadian context.

### 2.3 Current Strategies for Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women Leaders in Sport

In this chapter so far, several barriers to women's leadership have been identified from the literature. Barriers range from individual challenges to how organizations impede women's leadership. As a result of the barriers women in sport leadership face, several initiatives by sport organizations in Canada have been put in place to better support women in the field. One of the first initiatives was Sport Canada introducing their Policy on Women in Sport in 1986. This policy aimed to support women financially in athletics and arrived during the passage of the Title IX legislation in the United States (Acosta & Carpenter 2014).

Title IX is a federal civil rights law in the United States which conditions that any program that receives federal funding cannot discriminate based on sex (Aly & Breese, 2018). The law was passed in 1972 and was implemented to address sex-based discrimination in education and has sought to provide equal sports participation opportunities for girls (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Until Title IX was passed in the United States, women had to raise their own funds to participate in sport, make their own uniforms, and have their sports accomplishments remain unrecognized comparatively to men (Winslow, 2009). However, since the passing of Title IX, several scholars have outlined the positive implications it has had on women in sport, specifically when it comes to increased participation (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Aly & Breese, 2018; Sparks, 2000). According to Kies (2014), the number of girls participating in sports from 1972 to present has grown from 300,000 to over 3 million in the United States.

While comparative national legislation to Title IX in Canada does not exist, the Sport Canada Policy has been replaced by *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* in 2009. This policy has worked to make the number of university teams for men and women equal. Nevertheless, this equal representation has not extended beyond participation opportunities, as women are still vastly underrepresented in sport leadership positions (Burton, 2015; 2017; Kidd, 2013). Specific to Canadian university sport, USports (the governing body of varsity athletics) created the *USports Equity Policy* that recognizes the need to better support athletes and women in leadership positions. Yet, there continues to be significant discrepancies in the gender ratios of head coaches, assistant coaches, and athletic directors (Kerr & Ali, 2012).

A biennial report called "Gender Equity in Canadian Interuniversity Sport" conducted by Donnelly, Norman, and Kidd (2013) provides key insights into how the Canadian sport equity policies impact the gender gap in sport leadership positions. The report states several key issues, one being that there is no publicly available evidence that Canadian universities have been monitoring the advancement of policy goals. Specifically, continued tracking of the number of male and female head coaches. When this report was conducted in 2013, the data indicated that women held just 17% of head coaching positions across all university sport programs. Today, this number has decreased to 16% (USport, 2021). As a result, the researchers recommend that all Canadian university athletic departments revisit and re-evaluate their gender equity policies.

Alongside policy implementation, Canada has developed other initiatives to address the gender gap in sports leadership. In 2019, the Government of Canada

announced its goal to achieve gender equity across all levels of sport by 2035 (Government of Canada, 2019). The commitment consisted of 30 million dollars over three years to support data and research. A \$75,000 fund from this initiative was awarded to Canadian university sport to support a mentorship and apprenticeship program for women coaches (USport, 2021). While it is evident that there is an awareness of the underrepresentation of women coaches, and certain strategies are in place to address it, mentorship programs fail to challenge the culture within the sport system. The culture of Canadian university sport continues to be a critical limiting factor to women's advancement. Thus, even if there are development opportunities available and women are successful in achieving coaching positions, the gendered structure of sports organizations will continue to act as a limiting factor throughout their careers.

Gender quotas have also been suggested as a strategy to address the underrepresentation of women in sports leadership (Kidd, 2013, USport, 2019). Gender quotas refer to a mandatory requirement of a minimum number/ percentage of women hired into organizations (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). Although effective when seeking to increase numbers, it is argued that quotas "undermine the principle of merit" (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014, p. 487), leaving women to report feeling like tokens when they are hired. Additionally, some research has shown that women have reported feeling stigmatized due to being hired through a gender quota (Schmitt, 2015). These issues have been a similar concern in fields such as business (Sotola, 2019) and politics (Xydias, 2008).

One of the significant critiques of gender quotas reflected in the literature is how this strategy does not continuously address and challenge inequitable cultures. Instead,

the perspective may be that women are given these positions not based on ability but policy measures (Burton & Leberman, 2017). Hence, quotas focus on women's disadvantages rather than addressing the advantages afforded to males in sport organizations (Sotiriadore & de Haan, 2019). Additionally, focusing on women's disadvantages perpetuates gender inequalities because men are not encouraged to create a more equitable organization (Sotiriadore & de Haan, 2019). As Burton and Leberman (2017) remind us, it is not enough to hire the right numbers because organizational culture also needs to be addressed. Thus, while hiring women in leadership positions is important, this alone does not tackle organizational inequities.

On the other hand, several scholars have argued the need for gender quotas. Mailloux and Navarro (2018) indicate that while the argument most used to oppose gender quotas is the assumption of women's incompetence, the same is not argued about men. If we believe that women are incompetent, we, by default, recognize men as competent. Thus, gender quotas can support women in sport leadership positions. Perhaps then, gender quotas need to work in conjunction with the adoption of gender equity practices within organizations to achieve equal access to opportunity, participation, and decision-making.

Alongside policy, financial support, and gender quotas, sports organizations in Canada have prioritized leadership opportunities for women to recruit and retain women in coaching. Currently, there are several leadership programs and resources that are available for women coaches. For example, the Coaching Association of Canada's Female Coach Mentorship Program and the many workshops the Canadian Women and Sports Foundation provides, which include (but is not limited to); "Effective



Communication," "Conflict Resolution," and "Effecting Change" (Canadian Women and Sports Foundation, 2020). Having these varied leadership opportunities is essential because of their potential implications for women, for instance, their training and development as leaders in the field (Callahan, Whitener, & Sandlin, 2007; Sugiyama et al., 2016).

However, the notion that women need specific skills to be successful in sport leadership, such as effective communication, perpetuates the idea that women and women as leaders need "fixing" (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ryan & Dickson, 2016; Sinclair, 2013). While we all can benefit from leadership training, the way it is framed as a gender issue rather than a structural problem is particularly problematic. Many of these initiatives and programs are focused on women improving their coaching skills. While this works to enhance individual abilities, women are going back to work and coach within a system that remains unchallenged and unchanged (Demers, Din & Werthner, 2021). Rather than asking how women can fit within the male-dominated landscape of Canadian university sport, we need questions that ask how our assumptions about gender limit the potential of women obtaining and maintaining coaching positions. Thus, while leadership development for women is important, we also need to reflect on how these programs may maintain women's marginalization in sports leadership.

Despite the varied challenges, research must continue to address the gender gap in sports leadership. By exploring why and how women's underrepresentation in coaching exists, the hope is to move towards a culture where women coaches' identities as women become less important and instead, they are seen for their competencies (Eagly & Carli, 2007). There is a need to broaden our understanding of the measures of successful

leadership and how we recognize leadership within sport organizations to develop effective training and development. To do this, we need to understand how university sport shapes the working realities for women and ensure that all women can envision themselves, obtain, and maintain head coaching positions in the future.

## 2.4 Gender, Sport and Leadership Scholarship Gaps

The gender, leadership, and sport literature previously discussed has highlighted the varied factors that have prevented women from gaining access to coaching opportunities and maintaining coaching positions. Quantitative approaches and research-based in the United States have dominated the literature. These studies have explained that the underrepresentation of women coaches is due to less intention, lower self-efficacy, and their inability to balance coaching demands alongside family responsibilities (Cunningham and Sagas, 2003; Burton, 2015). Qualitative studies have added insight by illuminating gendered structural factors within sport organizations, including fewer opportunities, demanding work conditions, the "othering" of women, and undervaluing women's leadership (Allen & Shaw, 2013; Kilty, 2006; Norman, 2010; 2012).

There is a gap in the literature exploring factors influencing and impacting women inside sports organizations (Burton, 2015; 2017; Megheirkouni & Roomi, 2017). Based on the previous literature, we need to ask new questions about the organizations and structures that drive our understanding of sport leadership, rather than what women can do themselves (Leberman & Burton, 2017). Additionally, the Canadian university sport context is an area of limited exploration in the literature. Given that much has been written about the personal challenges women face in sports leadership and the gender gap

in Canadian university sports coaching persists, it is important to expand exploration towards the institutional responsibility of supporting women's leadership.

Additionally, little research has been done that looks at the responses of female coaches because of institutional pressures, despite literature that describes how certain organizational environments constrain the behaviour of female coaches (Cunningham, 2008; Cunningham, Sagas & Ashley, 2001). The everyday working realities of the women in coaching and sport leadership more broadly has been overlooked. Furthermore, research has focused on women's leadership styles relative to men's leadership styles in the sports leadership field (Burton 2015; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Norman, 2010). This research seeks to learn from women's experiences about the practices and processes within Canadian university sport. These insights can hopefully identify specific organizational supports needed, alongside barriers that need to be addressed (Blackmore, 2006; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

What has been revealed in the literature is a highly gendered system that privileges men and functions to keep them in positions of power (LaVoi et al., 2019). To address the underrepresentation of women's leadership in sport, current scholarship has highlighted the need for key stakeholders to implement better supports specific to funding, mentorship opportunities, and promotion of work life balance for women (Carson, McCormack & Walsh, 2018; Krahn, 2019). However, each of these recommendations fail to address or challenge the current sport culture. For example, while increased funding for women may allow them to support themselves financially when coaching, it fails to address any structural barriers. Thus, continued research and initiatives are needed in Canada to challenge the normalized male-dominated sport

system. If not, Canadian university sport may likely continue to perpetuate gender bias in leadership.

Addressing gender disparity in sports leadership, specifically coaching, is vital because it limits the perception of leadership by supporting the notion that head coaching positions should and can only be occupied by men. In turn, meaningful role models for girls and women who participate in sport are not provided (Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007). Young female athletes deserve the opportunity to envision themselves in those leadership positions. Furthermore, there are many organizational benefits to having diversity in leadership positions. Anderson (2009) has shown that through equity in sports leadership, gendered practices that reinforce hegemonic masculinity and the winning at all costs mentality can be challenged. By doing so, the rules and culture of sport can include the other qualities that women bring to leadership (Stempel, Rigotti & Mohr, 2015). By exploring and learning from the leadership experiences of women coaches, I hope to offer specific strategies to support future diversity, development, and the number of female coaches in Canadian universities.

This literature review captures the scholarly research that discusses and investigates the underrepresentation of women's leadership in sport. Specifically, this chapter has highlighted the coaching gender gap within the Canadian university context. When looking to address the lack of women coaches at Canadian universities, this study adds to the literature that has outlined the importance of having women leaders in sport and higher education settings. My research builds on the prior literature that has exposed barriers and supports that affect women's experiences as leaders within sport organizations. Through the scholarly discussions that explore women's leadership in

university sport, a clearer picture that highlights how women are being supported and where the current gaps exist within organizations can be identified.

In the following chapter, I will introduce institutional ethnography as the mode of inquiry guiding this research, focusing on why exploring organizational practices can offer new insight into how women are both challenged and supported within sport organizations. Specifically, I will draw on the work of Dorothy Smith (1987) to discuss how institutional ethnography can provide new insights into women's underrepresentation in coaching. Finally, I highlight how this approach uniquely addresses several gaps within the literature, including focusing on the organization instead of individual barriers, exploring the gender gap in the Canadian university context, and the rare application of institutional ethnography in gender, sport, and leadership scholarship.

## Chapter 3

### 3 An Introduction to Institutional Ethnography

In the previous chapter, I learned that much of the focus of prior research on women in sport leadership has been rooted in women's experience (Cunningham et al., 2003; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Satore & Cunningham, 2007; Walker and Bopp, 2011). By contrast, I will expand beyond that individual experience to uncover the institutional practices and processes shaping women coaches' everyday realities. My research will use institutional ethnography (IE) as a framework for investigation. By exploring the organizational practices that govern and coordinate women coaches' experiences using IE, challenges and adequate supports within institutions are identified.

This chapter will identify IE as the mode of inquiry for my research and provide a discussion around IE's implications for addressing the underrepresentation of women in coaching. An IE study is focused on learning from people's experiences within an organization about how they do their work (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006). This particular research seeks to uncover how women coaches' experiences are coordinated by institutional processes within the university where they work. By doing so, the relations of ruling extending beyond the research participants' everyday realities are revealed (Rankin, 2017).

To begin, institutional ethnography will be defined, and an outline on how it is used within my study will be provided. Despite its diverse applications, IE will be used as a mode of inquiry in this project. IE as a mode of inquiry can be understood as a guide to explore how daily life is coordinated, rather than a methodology that explains human behaviour, or a theory. Then, two key features of an IE study will be summarized,

including women's standpoint and the conceptualization of the relations of ruling. Both play a role in exploring women's underrepresentation in coaching, and reveal the organizing practices that define, support, or limit leadership in Canadian university sport.

### 3.1 Defining Institutional Ethnography: A Mode of Inquiry

Scholars have defined institutional ethnography in various ways, including as a methodology, a guiding framework or foundation, or in combination with other methods (Malachowski, Skorobohacz & Stasiulis, 2017; Tummons, 2010). Further, scholars have applied IE differently across research practice, ranging from direct and close adherence, to drawing on it as inspiration, or simply borrowing a specific element (such as a particular concept) (Malachowski, Skorobohacz & Stasiulis, 2017). The varied applications have resulted in continued questioning around whether IE should be classified and used as a theoretical perspective or a methodology. Considering these debates, I will classify and use IE as a mode of inquiry, instead of taking an “either or” approach. This will be explained in greater detail as this chapter progresses.

One application of IE in the literature has been as a theoretical approach to a research project. From this perspective, projects are based on the understanding that IE is a social theory that attends to the actualities of people’s daily lives (Kushner 2006). Specifically, IE offers a way of thinking about aspects of everyday life, work, and experience, and how each are organized at a social level (Tummons, 2017). From a theoretical perspective, IE ascribes to the notion that fieldwork and analysis should be completed without any prior interpretive commitment (Tummons, 2017; Stanley, 2018), meaning, that theories are not employed before hearing and learning from the participants in the study. Ultimately, it is the research process and practice that works to reveal the theoretical perspective of the project.

While some scholars have applied institutional ethnography as a theory, others recognize it strictly as a methodology for research practice (Medves & Davies 2005; Parada, Barnoff, & Coleman, 2007; Rankin 2003). As a methodology, institutional ethnography helps explore people's diverse relationships with institutional practices and how they interact with one another. It "takes divergence as a starting point" (LaFrance, 2016, p. 2) and asks what is problematic in participants' work (Smith, 1990; Stanley, 2018). The focus on people's everyday experiences and knowledge allows researchers to gain an understanding of how these experiences are coordinated. Specifically, how institutional practices and processes inform working realities, which are not always recognizable to individuals in practice.

After reviewing the varied ways IE is recognized and applied, I realized defining IE as a theory or a methodology is not needed for my project, because I do not want to prescribe to an either-or understanding of IE. Instead, a justification for why I have explained and used institutional ethnography in my project is necessary. I aimed to link, describe, and explicate tensions embedded in people's practices, not to theorize them in this study (Rankin, 2017). Smith (2005) herself states that institutional ethnography should not be defined as a theory or methodology, but rather should be understood and applied as a mode of inquiry.

The understanding and application of IE as a mode of inquiry avoids theorizing or to re-conceptualize people's experiences (Rankin, 2014). Instead, it describes and tracks experience to discover how work is coordinated across different social positions (Rankin, 2014; Smith, 2006). Avoiding the application of IE as strictly a theory or methodology is done with the intention to avoid the disconnect between the world known, lived, and



acted in as individuals are expert knowers of their own experience (Smith, 1990; Campbell, 2003). Recognizing IE as a mode of inquiry also keeps women's experiences at the forefront. Therefore, I do not ascribe my own theoretical perspectives or methodology practices before listening and learning from the women coaches because each of them are expert knowers of their working realities, and the institution from which they are situated. Therefore, I situate IE as a strategy for understanding problems that exist in everyday life, through my commitment to exploration and discovery throughout the research practice (Smith, 2006).

### 3.2 History of Dorothy Smith and Institutional Ethnography

IE was named and developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith in the early 1980s (Earles & Crawley, 2020; Gardiner, 2002). In this section, I will discuss the career of Dorothy Smith, and how she brought IE into research practice. Smith took her first degree in social anthropology at the London School of Economics. Once completed, she enrolled in a Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley (Campbell, 2003). As a PhD student, Smith's thesis supervisor, Erving Goffman, illuminated the everyday world through a focus on what people are doing in ordinary interactions (Campbell, 2003). Through her learning with Goffman, Smith became interested in making sense of the ordinary, everyday interactions of individuals (Campbell, 2003).

After completing her doctorate, Smith then worked as a lecturer for several years at Berkley and then the University of Essex (Campbell, 2003). Following, Smith moved on to become an associate professor and then professor at the University of British Columbia (UBC) (Carroll, 2010). She remained a faculty member at UBC from 1968-

1997, and then moved onto the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), in the department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, in Toronto, Canada (Campbell, 2003). Smith worked at OISE until her retirement from the department in 2000 (Carroll, 2010).

Throughout her career, Smith has published several notable articles and books, including *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (1987), *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (1990), and *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005). Yet, she is arguably best known for her creation of institutional ethnography (IE), a mode of inquiry she originally characterized as a “sociology for women” (Smith, 1987, p. 46). IE began when Smith noticed tensions within sociology, specifically that women's experiences were "ignored, obscured, distorted, or misnamed in the knowledge of the time" (DeVault, 2021, p. 18).

It is important to note that Smith was particularly interested in women's everyday lives and experiences during the development of IE due to her involvement with the second-wave women's movement. The women's movement in the 1970's profoundly impacted her conceptualization because the experience taught her that she was "not bound to observe the conventions laid down by men" (Smith, 1987, p. 46). The 1970's were an era when women were identifying various limiting conditions in society, such as the conceptualization of sociology as a male activity (Campbell, 2003). The dominant experience during this time was the male experience, leaving women's experiences excluded.

In an interview with Carroll (2010), Smith highlights the impact that the women's movement had on the development of a sociology for women, stating:

I had learned from the women's movement that I was not bound to observe the conventions laid down by men that constricted the relevances of my thinking. I understood therefore that I could move from what was going on around me to the world of theory and back. This lesson as well as these topics went into the making of a sociology for women (p. 52).

Men's ideas, Smith claimed, carried authority, an observation that was the starting point for Smith's work toward a different sociology for women (Carroll, 2010). The sociology for women allowed Smith to critique and challenge conditions for women and recognize their experiences as a source of knowledge (Smith, 1991). Specifically, Smith argued that sociology's theory and practice "depended upon certain conditions for achievement that men, but not women, could take for granted" (Campbell, 2003, p. 7). For example, women's domestic work provided men with freedom of specific responsibilities (such as food, cleaning, clothing, etc.), while women were expected to take on those responsibilities. Extending to her academic work, Smith began to question how men's ideas carried authority in sociology. Through the questioning of common practices, a critique of male-centered bias in knowledge and culture and its consequences for women was developed (DeVault, 2021).

Yet, as the conceptualization of IE advanced, Smith shifted from defining it as a "sociology for women" to a "sociology for people" (Carroll, 2010; Smith, 2005). The change came from Smith's desire to create an inclusive sociology that is not limited to a particular group, but is rather concerned with exploring daily activities and the social

relations. Thus, ordinary daily activity and what is going on with people becomes the site for an investigation to examine institutions (Smith, 2005). Specifically, how people navigate their realities and how individual activities are produced (DeVault, 2021). This grounds institutional ethnography, as it seeks to uncover the social organization of knowledge to discover what happens to people.

When put into practice, Smith believes that inquiry with IE must always begin with individuals and their actual experiences (Carpenter & Mojab, 2008). Pursuing this research is a commitment to an ontological position that rejects abstract and speculative ways of knowing, such as the application of theoretical rather than experiential knowledge. Doing so transfers agency away from concepts back to the embodied knower, recognizing individual experience as valid and informative (DeVault, 2006). Therefore, the application of IE requires a move in thinking towards what Smith (2005) has called "the ontology of the social," first introduced in Chapter One. The ontology of the social means that whatever is happening can be discovered and thus be explored and explicated.

Prioritizing individual experience is a strength of IE, as it situates research participants as subjects of research rather than objects (Smith, 2005; Campbell, 2016). Yet, although institutional ethnography starts with the experiences of individuals, it does not end with an exploration of individual subjectivities (Neitz, 2014), making it different from research approaches like narrative and autoethnography. Instead, it goes beyond personal experiences to explore how institutions engage in processes that structure and inform experiences (Neitz, 2014; Smith, 2006). For example, institutional practices including hours of work and job requirements and responsibilities.

While IE was conceptualized initially by Smith (1987), it has continued to be developed by other social scientists (e.g., Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Devault, 2006; Turner, 2006). Currently, IE research is particularly prominent in the fields of nursing and healthcare (Kearney et al., 2019; Mykhalovski & McCoy, 2002; Rankin, 2017; Winkelman & Halifax, 2007), education (Bradley et al., 2017; Spina, 2017; Winton, 2019), and social work (Billo & Mountz, 2016; DeVault, 2006; Kuronen, 2020; Leigh et al., 2021). These projects contribute to a larger picture of the variety of ways and contexts in which Smith's IE can be taken up. However, very few sport leadership researchers have explored the potential of, or included institutional ethnography in their work (Atkinson, 2012). Furthermore, while ethnographies have been conducted to examine the culture of organizations (Howe & Silva, 2021; Mead, Gilson & Henning, 2017; Skrubbeltrang, 2019), IE as an alternative can further highlight interactions and practices which have been institutionalized. Thus, IE has the potential of enriching the field of sport leadership, specifically concerning the structures, practices, and processes impacting Canadian women coaches' careers.

### 3.3 Institutional Ethnography in Practice

When deciding how to approach my research project, I was inspired by Griffith and Smith's (1987) article titled "Constructing cultural knowledge: Mothering as discourse". The study began from the example of single mothers within the schooling system and sought to uncover how the "relations of ruling" work to depict single mothers as outside the norm in this context. The study illuminated how institutional actors are caught up in the production of dominant narratives and practices within institutions (Billo & Mountz, 2015; DeVault, 2013) and illuminated the institutional practices that discriminate against single mothers in these organizations (Griffith & Smith, 1987). The

study sparked my interest in Smith's work and its potential to address the underrepresentation of women in sport. For me, it demonstrated the value of shifting the analytic gaze from women coaches to the institutional forces impacting their experiences.

The undertaking of an IE project involves three main tasks. The first task is to examine the everyday work activities of people within an organization. In my study, I focused on head and assistant women coaches at one Canadian university. The second task is an analysis of the practices and processes involved in institutional work. The analysis in this study was completed by exploring texts that inform the experience of those working within the institution. The third task involves analyzing how both experience and institutional processes are connected and operate as a part of an extended set of social relations (Smith, 1987). I will outline the specific components of IE as a research practice that assist in the transition from individual experience to explore institutional practices. The intention is to show how university sport organizes and regulates the affairs of women coaches.

Applying institutional ethnography to explore the working realities of women coaches can help address the gender discrepancy in sport by uncovering how their daily lives are organized at the institutional level (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). It is important to note that Smith (2005) recognizes "work" as everything people do, which takes time, effort, and emotions. It is important to have a broad understanding of work because it provides a lens from which to explore not only activities specific to a job description, but the extra responsibilities that individuals take on to access and maintain positions. Additionally, work experiences can illuminate how individuals reproduce or resist institutional orders. By starting with experience and recognizing participants as expert

knowers, relevant practices and processes can be explicated through women's actual work knowledge (Campbell et al., 2006; Lund, 2021).

As a mode of inquiry, IE "offers a place to start in the everyday as people experience it and explore the relevant dimensions of institutions" (Smith, 2006, p. 8). Then, IE extends beyond individual experience to try and make visible the hidden practices within the organization that impact the experiences of those who are locally situated (Eveline, Bacchi & Binns, 2009). Smith (2005) has articulated that her focus with IE is to guide exploration towards the actual ongoing social processes in real-time and place. Hence, IE provides researchers with the opportunity to explicate the social organization of knowledge by making the often-invisible work of people visible (Malachowski, Skorobohacz & Stasiulis, 2017).

Smith (1994) outlines three distinct characteristics of IE within her work. First, it offers a critical interrogation of the relationship between knowledge and institutionalized forms of power. Second, IE critiques gender biases within the establishment of sociology. Lastly, IE inquiries into daily life practices (Gardiner, 2002; Smith, 1994). When put into practice, it seeks to discover beyond any one individual's experience how people's activities are coordinated (Smith 1997, 2006). Therefore, the design of an IE research project must ensure that people remain the subjects, the knowers, or potential knowers of what is discovered (Smith, 2005). This is done by first starting with the standpoint of the knower, which will be explained in the following section.

### ***Women's Standpoint: The Starting Point of IE Research***

As aforementioned, IE prioritizes experience and therefore, standpoint is the starting point of my research. A standpoint in the research provides insight into how

people are positioned within social relations (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006). Smith (2005) defines standpoint as individuals' bodily experiences in everyday life as these experiences occur in actual time and actual place. By beginning with standpoint as the point of entry to the study, researchers can explore how concepts, theory, and discourse are engrained in the actualities of individual activities (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, standpoint reflects Smith's (1997) understanding of the social, as the social exists "in and only in actual people's actual activities and practices" (Smith, 1987, p. 123).

The early stages of theorizing about standpoint included work by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (1986), Donna Haraway (1988, 1997), Sandra Harding (1997), Hilary Rose (1991), and Dorothy Smith (1987). However, these scholars used the term "feminist standpoint", a term first coined by Nancy Hartsock in 1983. Feminist standpoint was developed from a women's understanding of experience in the world around her and is used to re-examine and critique patriarchal theories (Hartsock, 1983). Mainly, Hartsock (1983) wanted to "explore the Marxian argument that socially mediated interaction shapes both human beings and theories of knowledge" (p. 283). She argued that feminist standpoint can help us understand patriarchal institutions and ideologies, because learning from women's lives illuminates possibilities for dismantling oppression and can contribute to different visions of society (Hartsock, 1998; Wood, 2005).

Feminist standpoint acknowledges that certain 'outsider' groups can offer knowledge-based upon their experiences and insights. This insider knowledge can help shift processes affecting marginalized people and communities (Hartsock, 1998). Throughout the development of feminist standpoint, its application has been shaped by two central understandings. The first is that knowledge is situated and perspectival. The



second is that there are multiple standpoints from which knowledge is produced (Heckman, 1997).

One of the earliest areas of exploration that feminist standpoint theorists began analyzing was the field of science (Harding, 1997). Many theorists began asking whose interests and agendas were being served through the construction and development of scientific knowledge (Harding, 1997; hooks, 1992; Smith, 1992). In many cases, the successes of the sciences had been credited to white males, which came at a high cost to the other races, classes, and genders whose labour and suffering have made possible these benefits (Harding, 1997).

To address issues of exclusion and misrepresentation, a more diverse range of human experiences needed to be integrated into scientific knowledge and practice. A diversified science would be inclusive of, and responsive to, a broader range of social needs and problems. Extending beyond the field of science, others have used feminist standpoint to explore various institutions which historically have been controlled by men (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1992; Hartsock, 1997; Heckman, 1997; Hill Collins, 1997; Smith, 1997). They have done so intending to understand how women perceive their reality (Harding, 2004). More specifically, these theorists sought to investigate how patriarchy, the system through which historically men have controlled public life, had impacted both the way women perceive reality and how reality itself is perceived (Mosedale, 2014).

It was the recognition of male dominance in society that motivated Smith to create a space for the absent subject and value the missing experiences of women (Smith, 1992; Stanley, 2018). In her early work, Smith (1987) found that the theories and

methods being taught did not reflect what was happening in the lives of her female students as they experienced it. After listening and learning from her students, Smith began recognizing and exploring their experiences as part of her work. She states, "there are and must be different experiences of the world and different bases of experience [and] we must not do away with them" (Smith, 1972, p. 23). In turn, she created what she called an alternative sociology for women and referred to feminist standpoint as "women's standpoint" (Smith, 1987).

Smith's stance and application of women's standpoint evolved, and eventually changed to "standpoint". The shift was noted after an article by Susan Hekman (1997) critiqued the work of Smith and others including Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, and Patricia Hill Collins. As aforementioned, Smith originally identified standpoint in her work as women's standpoint". Hekman critiqued Smith's understanding and application, stating that through Smith's privileging of women's experience, she failed to recognize difference. Yet, Smith (1997) objected to this argument by stating that she departs from the idea that all women share a collective identity. Instead, Smith is focused on local actualities and embodied experiences of individuals.

Essentially, Smith does not propose a "feminist standpoint" at all and argues that what she has developed "has nothing to do with justifying feminist knowledge" (Smith, 1991, p. 267). On the contrary, Smith's standpoint is rooted in an individual's everyday reality. Unlike her peers, Smith's standpoint is "empty," in the sense that she understands it as a position to start from (Smith, 2006; Stanley, 2018). As a result, she avoids imposing a conceptual framework or theory to research (Smith, 2005). Instead, IE derives

knowledge from participant experience, regarding individuals as expert knowers of their personal realities and the institutions from which they work.

While the standpoint in an IE study works to learn from women's collective experiences, it does not seek to generalize experience. The recognition of diverse knowledge and experiences can shed light on varied oppressive social practices, as Collins (1986) and hooks (1992) remind us. Women possess various dimensions of identity, such as race and class, which also shape their experiences alongside gender (Blackmore, 2006; Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991). By recognizing these social differences, the knowledge people have based on their experiences can provide more detailed insight into the local practices of our everyday world (Smith, 1997). Thus, standpoint can facilitate an understanding in the hopes of contesting the structural disadvantage of marginalized groups (Harding, 2004).

Research in sport needs to recognize and value women's experiences because women's diverse perspectives are currently marginalized. Male dominated contexts such as sport are recognized by Harding (2004) as the "richest and primary entry point toward understanding the whole" (p. 48). Brooks (2007) echoes this point, stating that standpoint "challenges us to see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women, and we must work to apply the knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change" (p. 55). Therefore, IE is an appropriate mode of inquiry for this research because it captures the unique, lived experiences of people with multiple identities (e.g., multiple diversity dimensions), who are currently underrepresented in an organization (Melton & Bryant, 2017). If we are to expose practices of domination and certain privileges that result from the oppression of others,

we must explore differently situated knowledge. Due to the lack of women in sport leadership, listening and learning from women in sport leadership positions is particularly important.

In this section, I have highlighted how Smith's application of standpoint offers an entry point to exploring the actualities of people's lives by gathering accounts from those involved in the setting daily (Smith, 2006; Stanley, 2018). The IE researcher must stay grounded in descriptions of things happening and the observed tensions and contradictions that arise for people (Rankin, 2017). By doing so there can be an insight into practices of power because, without collective knowledge, not all the social relations informing experience can be made visible (Harding, 2004; Smith, 2006). Thus, while this research begins with situated knowledges of women in daily life, IE extends beyond experience to explore relations in which these experiences are embedded, called the relations of ruling.

### ***The Relations of Ruling***

As the previous section has highlighted, IE allows the researcher to unpack particularities of an everyday world by maintaining that individual experience is the foundation of knowledge (Rankin, 2017; Smith, 2006; Stanley; 2018). Social relations inform the everyday world that Smith has titled "the relations of ruling." Smith's relations of ruling offer a conceptual framework to this research that focuses on individuals' experiences and addresses underlying organizational inequities. The relations of ruling refer to interactions between individuals, institutions, and society in a particular place and time (Mykhalovskiy & McCoy, 2002).

Smith (2005) defines the relations of ruling as "distinctive modes of organizing society" (p. 13). These relations name the socially organized exercises of power that shape people's actions and lives, including work, schools, and governments (DeVault & McCoy, 2012). Individuals experience the relations of ruling as "objective processes, distinct from the personal exercise of power" (Lehnert, Craft, Singh, & Park, 2016, p. 500). The term "objective processes" means that the relations of ruling are external to one's everyday life yet shape individual experiences within the institution. Therefore, the relations of ruling are not to be understood as abstract or existing "out there," but instead recognized as coordinating the activities of individuals in everyday life (Smith, 1999).

In institutions where individuals, such as women, are underrepresented, the relations of ruling offer a guide to understanding how these institutions limit leadership through control, coordination, and regulation. As a result, women can find themselves on the outside or subordinate (Smith, 1990; 2006). The relations of ruling, when revealed, can help the researcher to analyze the structures that work to maintain inequalities that exist in the workplace to challenge and change them (Nyhlén & Nygren, 2019; Smith, 2005). Through an understanding of how the organization coordinates experiences, practical strategies can be developed that work to better support those faced with discouraging institutional practices and processes.

Research that accounts for the relations of ruling, undertaken from the standpoint of those within organizations, seeks to identify how individuals are coordinated in the everyday operation of their work (Campbell & Kim, 2018; Smith, 2005). With standpoint identified as the guide for exploration, the relations of ruling concept can help understand the structures, power, and privileges that inform an individual's experience within a

specific field (Smith, 2005). These ruling relations can be found in government, professions, education, and textually mediated discourses that coordinate action (Mykhalovskiy and McCoy, 2002). Thus, it is through people's work with texts, the ruling relations can govern and shape experience (Smith, 2005).

Texts have an organizing power, and IE helps to make visible how texts coordinate activities and actions in local settings (Lund, 2012; Smith, 2006). Smith (2005) defines texts as all words, images, and sounds that can be transferred to material form and which can be read, seen, or heard by any person at any time in any place. People's use of texts in everyday practice gives the relations of ruling a material form that can be used to investigate how working realities are socially organized (Rankin, 2017). Thus, while the starting point of IE begins with individual experience, the use of texts helps to extend beyond to uncover the social relations that shape everyday realities.

Specific to this research, I explore university sport organizational norms and assumptions while focusing on the way people, and institutions exist in relation to one another. By linking women's everyday experiences to organizational practices and texts, I contend it is possible to uncover how the relations of ruling privilege particular subjectivities and experiences, while erasing others (Smith, 2005). I hope to develop practical strategies to better support women coaches faced with discouraging or unrecognized institutional practices that limit leadership. The following section will highlight IE's potential in addressing women's underrepresentation in Canadian university sport.

### 3.4 The Potential of Institutional Ethnography to Address Women Coaches Underrepresentation in Canadian University Sport

The purpose of my study is to gain a greater understanding of the working realities of women coaches in the hopes of identifying the institutional practices and processes that shape their daily experiences. By doing so, this study seeks to determine why there is such a gender discrepancy in Canadian university coaching. As a mode of inquiry, IE can help illuminate hidden practices and make them visible (Smith, 1992, 1997; Harding, 2004). Problem areas and barriers to leadership may be exposed and thus provide the knowledge to current and future women coaches to create a social change in university sport.

The strength of IE for this research is its combination of concepts, theory, and discourse, highlighting the actuality of people's activities. Furthermore, because IE develops research anchored in, but not confined by, people's everyday experiences, this allows for a greater understanding of peoples' working realities (Smith, 2006). It is in "how people talk, the categories they use, the relations among them, and in what is taken for granted in their talk, as well as in what they can talk about" (Smith, 1997, p. 32). Grounding research in experience offers a starting point to explore the taken for granted nature of organizations.

To understand the underrepresentation of women head coaches, the previous research discussed in Chapter Two has employed theories such as human capital theory (Cunningham & Sagas, 2002; Cunningham et al., 2003; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007), homologous reproduction (Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Walker & Bopp, 2008; Whisenant & Mullane, 2007), and hegemonic masculinity (Whisenant, Pedersen, &

Obenour, 2002). However, these concepts already position researchers as knowing what is causing a gender gap (Turner, 2003). Since few studies have asked women directly why they left coaching or about their everyday experiences, more research is needed to confirm these findings. Therefore, exploring the complexity of women's roles in the historically male domain of sport needs to be further examined. My research sought to address this gap in the gender, sport, and leadership literature.

I explored university sport's organizational norms and assumptions while focusing on the way people, institutions, and practices exist in relation to one another. By focusing on the perspectives, interests, and knowledges of people, how they do their work, why they do it, and how they feel about it were uncovered. Personal insights led to an investigation of how women coaches' working realities are coordinated with others within the organization. By linking women coaches' everyday work experiences to the organizational practices of Canadian university sport, it was possible in this project to uncover how the relations of ruling privilege particular subjectivities and experiences over others (Smith, 2005).

The uniqueness of my study was found in the priority given to women coaches' individual experiences. As discussed in the previous chapter, university sports have historically been developed for and centered around men, thus serving male interests and ideas. Women have been excluded from the making of the ideology, knowledge, and culture of sport. As a result, diverse interests, and ways of knowing the world have not been represented within the organization (Smith, 1987; 2006). Consequences from this exclusion include silence and absence of women's leadership within this space (Smith, 2006). Therefore, what sport is understood to be and how it is spoken about and written



about lacks women's perspective. In turn, Smith (1987) reminds us that what is treated as general, universal, and unrelated to a particular position or a particular sex, is in fact, "partial, limited, located in a particular position, and permeated by special interests and concerns" (p. 20).

While this study does start with individual experiences, it is important to recognize that my intention is not to universalize a particular experience. Knowledge is complicated, contradictory, and contingent based on social and historical context (Harding, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2014), and different women are oppressed in different ways. Thus, each woman develops "unique insights about systems of social relations in which their oppression is a feature" (Harding, 2004, p. 9). I therefore acknowledge that women coaches' work experiences are informed and influenced not just by their gender, but also by other aspects of their identity.

Recognizing these intersecting identities helped uncover certain barriers and privileges (Hill Collins, 2015). Specifically, women coaches' individualized experiences illuminated varied challenges that shape their working realities. The multiple, unique, individualized experiences within the same organization are accounted for, by learning from women who speak of and in the actualities of their individual, everyday world (Smith, 2006). Additionally, the knowledge, networks, and opportunities that the women have had to obtain these leadership positions over other women were also shown because of this research (Kokushkin, 2014).

As this chapter has described, I use IE as a mode of inquiry to investigate why there continues to be an underrepresentation of women coaches in Canadian university sport. To do so, I put individual experience at the forefront to uncover barriers and

supports within the institution. Women's coaching experiences provided insight into the organizational practices and processes that inform their leadership. In this study, IE offered a unique research mode of inquiry when applied to women in coaching, adding to the gender sport and leadership scholarship. The following chapter will outline the specific methods used within an IE study, showcasing the move from framework to research practice.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Institutional Ethnography Study Design

In the previous chapter, I outlined IE as the mode of inquiry guiding this research. IE studies examine work practices, to uncover how individual experiences are coordinated (DeVault, 2021). This chapter will detail my research process, clarifying the three key phases of the research which included interviewing, text analysis, and mapping. Each of these distinct phases helped illuminate the relations of ruling present that inform women coaches' experiences and working realities.

The IE research process can be pictured as a funnel, starting more broadly and eventually narrowing (Townsend, 1996). The image Figure 1: *Institutional Ethnography Research Process* depicts institutional ethnography's methods and their connection to one another, highlighting the research progression. The methods used for conducting this study include interviews, textual analysis, and mapping. Interviews provide insight into actors and operations of institutions, while textual analysis and mapping reveal the active power relations embedded within institutions.

To begin, interviews were needed to gain insight into the working realities of women assistant and head coaches. Thus, interviews were the first phase of the research process. In this chapter, I will provide a description of the participant selection and interview activities. Additionally, I will discuss how participant anonymity was kept throughout the research process.

Interviews were followed by phase two of the research process, text analysis. During this phase I was dedicated to exploring how the organization shapes women's coaches' work. Text analysis included a critical assessment of the *Actively Engaged: A*

*Policy on Sport for Women and Girls, USport's Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules. These policy documents were chosen because they are specific to universities addressing the gender gap in sports leadership. The work schedules were chosen because they reflect the daily working realities of the women coaches. Drawing on each of these texts in the research processes allowed for a move beyond individual experience towards an examination of the descriptions and categories governing everyday practice, to determine how experiences are coordinated.

Following the text analysis section, an overview of how data was analyzed in this IE research project is provided. Data analysis was constant and continued throughout the research process (Smith, 2006) and I discuss why and how the interviews and texts were analyzed for key themes. Data analysis informed the final phase in the research, which was the mapping process. Mapping in this research was aimed at illuminating the relations of ruling that inform women coaches' working realities. Thus, I describe the mapping procedure, detailing how the visual representation of the relations of ruling was created. First, I connected the identified themes within the interviews and texts. Then, I highlighted key similarities and gaps between the two, revealing how women coaches' work is informed in both implicit and explicit ways. Lastly, I created a visual representation of my findings to showcase the relations of ruling.

Following a detailed description of the mapping processes, I conclude the chapter with a focus on the integrity of the research process and results. I discuss the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research. Ethical considerations included ensuring participant anonymity and making potential risks and benefits of the research

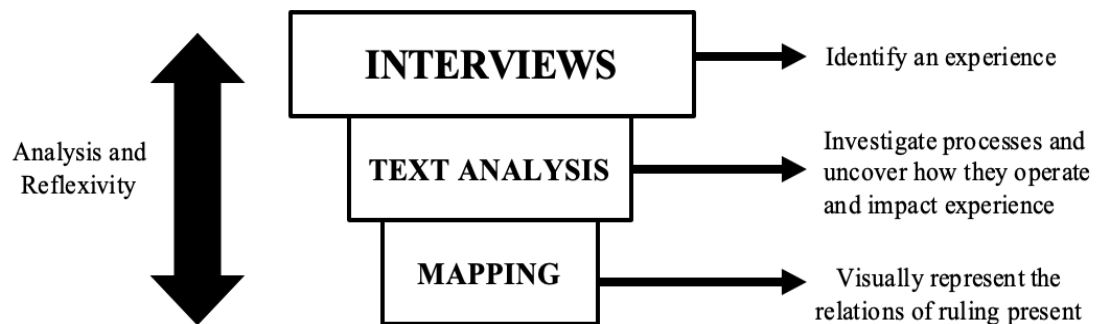
known to participants. Trustworthiness of the research was ensured through translation, member checking and reflexivity.

#### 4.1 Data Collection in IE

The data collection process of my study reflects DeVault and McCoy's (2003) sequence of IE research and followed three distinct phases. The first phase included interviews with both head and assistant women coaches. The second phase was a text analysis, and the third phase mapped the relations of ruling that were illuminated through the first two phases. During all three phases, I stayed reflexive and data analysis remained continuous. The image Figure 1: *Institutional Ethnography Research Process* depicts each phase of the IE research project, and their connection to one another.

**Figure 1**

*Institutional Ethnography Research Process*



As Figure 1 showcases, I started the research processes with interviews, collecting the experiences of women coaches, both in assistant and head coaching positions. The women were all located at one Canadian university, and their experiences were the point of entry for my study. Each of the individual narratives were collected through semi-

structured interviews. The second phase of the research focused on identifying the institutional processes that are shaping individual experiences. This was completed through textual analysis, specifically focused on women's work schedules and two gender equity policies. The analysis of texts allowed for an examination of the institutional work processes and the practices of knowledge that organize those work processes (Smith, 2006). Lastly, an investigation on those processes and describing how they operate was completed by mapping the institutional relations. The mapping process involved connecting the experiences to the textual analysis to reveal the relations of ruling informing the working realities of women coaches.

## 4.2 Interviews

The point of entry for this research was interviewing women coaches at a Canadian university. Interviews offered insight into current working realities, by pairing the "common sense nature" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 53) of organizational practices with individual experience. During the interview process, the focus was not just to explore subjectivity or agency, but also explicate the relations of ruling through the use of "the subjective as a point of entry into the social" (Smith, 2003, p. 160). Specific attention was given to how women coaches described their work, and how institutional practices coordinate action.

Interviewing in an IE study is described and recognized as a fully reflective process. Thus, during the interview process both the participant and the interviewer "construct knowledge together" (Kinsman & Gentile, 1998, p. 58). This is because the interviewer recognizes the participant as the expert knower of their own experience, just as the interviewer is the expert knower of their own. Therefore the researcher recognizes participants as the experts of their own daily reality and lived experiences.

The interviews were conducted with current women head and assistant coaches at one Canadian university. During the interviews I looked for a detailed account of their activities and the daily practices of their work. I approached the interviews as an exploration of women coaches' work practices, to learn about what they do on the job. It was through the women's stories and descriptions that I sought to identify some of the relations, discourses, and institutional work processes that shape their everyday experiences.

### *Participant Selection*

My study begins and is informed by the experiences of eight women coaches at one Canadian university. As part of the participant selection process, each woman in the study currently worked as either a head coach or an assistant coach within the university. I emphasized quality over quantity in the selection process, focusing on depth of the experiences shared. It is important to highlight that I initially wanted to focus just on head coaches, however, not many women hold those positions. Expanding my participant selection to include both head and assistant coaches allowed for a broader representation of how institutional practices and processes are shaping the experiences of women in coaching.

Drawing on my own networks within university sport, as well as the public university website information, I reached out to potential participants via email. Head and assistant coaches were contacted using publicly available email addresses, following approval from the Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) at Western University. Research ethics approval needed to be completed before conducting the study because

human participants were involved. If a coach was interested in participating in the study, they responded with an email along with a signed Letter of Information (LOI).

As a previous varsity athlete and coach, myself, I had a pre-existing relationship with some of the participants. Specially, we have been involved in coaching together, passing each other at university sport events. One coach was also one of my former teammates' mother. This impacted my study because the participant may have felt more inclined to accept an interview because of our previous connection. For those I did not know, I first introduced myself and then invited them to participate in the study. In total, eight women coaches agreed to be participants in the research and interviews were set up. The following section highlights the process of learning from the women coaches, through the semi-structured interviews that were conducted.

### ***Interview Process***

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, which allowed participants to have the space to answer questions in their own terms (Evans, & Lewis, 2018). Specifically, the semi-structured interview format allowed participants to speak freely about their individual working realities. Furthermore, the structure allowed for the exploration of questions that come out of participant responses that may have not been considered before. Semi structured interviews proved to be particularly beneficial for the IE study because they prioritize learning from the participant rather than interviewing with a strict set of questions to follow.

To start each interview, I provided an overview of the LOI and asked if the participant had any questions or required further clarification. I also reminded each participant that the interview was going to be recorded, as stated in the LOI. Additionally,



I assured the women that all efforts to maintain confidentiality and anonymity in the study would be taken. Maintaining confidentiality was made a priority throughout the research process to protect participants and their careers.

Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes. The coaches discussed their daily activities and work specific requirements at the university. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility based on what the participant brought up in conversation. I worked under the assumption that research participants would provide insight into common barriers and supports within the institution they coach at.

Upon completion of each interview, I transcribed the audio recording verbatim. Participants were able to complete an optional member-check of the transcribed interview, in which they could provide feedback and make changes to the document if they chose to do so. Member checking as part of the research practice allows participants to validate their transcript, providing accuracy, and ensuring connection to their experiences (Harvey, 2015). Member checking also provided participants with authority over the description of their own experiences.

### ***Participant Anonymity***

As aforementioned, maintaining participants' anonymity was a priority throughout the research process. It was important to keep participants' anonymity because the study focused on women coaches' working realities, and thus identifying them could have negative impacts on their careers. Additionally, the women were all working within the same university and therefore running the risk of identifying one participant may, as a result, identify them all. Specific information including the name and location of the university, each participants' educational background, their

relationship status, and the specific team they coach was kept confidential. Further, I employed pseudonyms instead of offering individual profiles which are visible in the table below.

**Table 2**

*Study Participants*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Coaching Position</b>
Participant One	Head Coach
Participant Two	Head Coach
Participant Three	Head Coach
Participant Four	Assistant Coach
Participant Five	Assistant Coach
Participant Six	Head Coach
Participant Seven	Assistant Coach
Participant Eight	Assistant Coach

While anonymity was made a priority, there are some identifiers that do connect the coaches who participated in this study. All participants did identify as women and expressed that education was a priority. For example, many of the women coaches had completed additional schooling and received their master's degree or Bachelor of Education, and all completed their undergraduate degree. Additionally, each of the coaches were white women. Yet, participants varied in age, stage in life, and career progression (head coach or assistant coach). Some of the women were in paid coaching positions at the university, while others held coaching positions that received a small

stipend. As well, many of the women coaches expressed responsibilities outside of their position, including their work as mothers, grandmothers, and volunteer duties.

Once the interview and transcription processes were completed, the investigation shifted towards examining the institutional practices that were identified within the shared experiences. This is because the interview process of an IE project is not just a focus on the 'subjective state' of the interviewee (Smith, 2006). Instead, interviews are a means to move beyond experience in an ongoing process of inquiry to learn about the individual's location in the relations of ruling (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). While the starting point was from the perspective of women coaches, the purpose of the study was not to generalize. Rather, the goal was to understand the connections between people where institutional practices informed daily working realities. Thus, emphasis on social and organizational arrangements allowed the analysis process to stretch past individual accounts (Bisaillon & Rankin, 2013). Post interviews, the next step of the research processes focused on texts and text analysis.

### 4.3 Texts in IE

The investigation of everyday work through interviewing is the start towards illuminating an institution's social organization in an IE study. However, IE is designed to "reveal the organizing power of texts" to link local and extra-local activities (DeVault, 2006, p. 295). Therefore, the next step in the research was to move beyond experience and examine the descriptions and policies governing everyday practice, to determine how experiences are coordinated (Vaughan, 2017). Examining the social relations that extend beyond individual experience was completed through text analysis. Texts allow the researcher to "reach beyond the locally observable" (Smith, 2006, p. 65), to discover the social relations and how the institution is organized.

Smith (2005) identifies texts as an actor within the relations of an organization, as they work to shape the experiences of individuals within it. Institutional ethnography understands texts to be words, images, or sounds that are in material form, and therefore can be read, seen, or heard (Smith, 2006). Smith (2005) states that text should be seen as “occurring” and recognized as something that can “coordinate our activities” (p. 132). Thus, texts in this IE study were understood as actors that coordinate activity at the university. Texts that were critically assessed include *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, *USport’s Equity Policy*, and women coaches’ work schedules. The reason I chose these particular policy documents was because they detail why and how university sport is committed to achieving gender equity in sports leadership positions and participation opportunities. Further, the work schedules showcase women coaches’ daily responsibilities, that are both within and extend beyond their job requirements. Drawing on these texts as part of the scope of an IE investigation was an essential step in exploring how the organization shapes women’s work (Smith, 2005; 2006). Each of these texts, in some way, inform the influence and understanding of women’s job as a coach. The impact of each text is witnessed when the ways in which they frame the institutional vision are evaluated.

The analysis of each of the texts was completed as an exploration of how they coordinate and influence particular actions. Specifically, texts inform organizational practices through marginalization, the ideologies they contain, and how they govern social relations (Smith, 2005; Talbot, 2017; Turner, 2006). Texts can coordinate experiences within institutions because the readers activate and respond to the texts they encounter. The activation of texts by a reader “inserts the text’s message into a local

setting and the sequence of action in which it is read” (Smith, 2005, p 105). The activation of a text is a result of a conversation between the reader and the text, and the IE researcher can explore the text reader conversation as a process that translates the “actual into the institutional” (Smith, 2005, p 105).

There were two specific approaches applied when seeking to analyze texts in this IE study. The first was to investigate how each text coordinates action within the university. The second approach was to investigate an intertextual hierarchy, that is, how higher order or regulatory texts coordinate texts that directly enter the organization (Smith, 2006). Both approaches were used to gain an understanding of the textually mediated relations coordinating the work of women coaches. Texts were first identified as they were mentioned either explicitly or implicitly by informants throughout the interview process. For example, several of the participants alluded to conditions that are not supporting them in the workplace, like the policy documents. The explicit mentioned text was women’s work schedules. These schedules organized their daily activities, including work requirements (practices, games) and beyond (family responsibilities, volunteer commitments). Once identified, each text was then explored and analyzed.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in an IE study is constant, in that it begins during the first interview and continues all the way up to the write-up of the results (Bisalillon & Rankin, 2013; Smith, 2006). The goal is to describe and address the relations of ruling that are embedded in particular institutions. In this case, the institution to be analyzed is the university where the women coaches who participated in the study work. The aim was to uncover how women coaches working realities were organized within the university.

##### *Interview Analysis*

I began data analysis during the interview process and maintained analysis throughout the research project. I started by keeping a journal during the interviews, to write notes, key ideas, and questions that came up during each conversation. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, I began organizing the transcripts into themes. The organization of each participant's experience into distinct themes was completed in a four-step process.

The first step of analyzing the interviews involved open coding, which was employed to identify the main ideas and explanations within an interview. The open coding process consisted of highlighting any information that stood out as interesting, unique, or relevant to the interview questions. The second step was to shorten the explanations into keywords and phrases, which helped to illuminate both commonalities and differences across the interviews. The next step upon the completion of identifying key terms, was axial coding, which connected the phrases and words that came up in multiple interviews. Lastly, I identified themes that were common across the interviews. This process identified patterns and commonalties amongst the women coaches' individual experiences, as well as unique outlying perspectives and working realities.

The interview analysis proved to be an excellent entryway for exploration of the social relations, because key insights into women's working realities were discovered. Once themes in the interviews were identified, I extended my analysis beyond the experiences to analyze the key texts of the study. The key text explored included the *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, the *USports' Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules. Analysis of each text was focused on trying to understand how they are related and mediate women coaches' work.

### *Text Analysis*

The start of the text analysis process involved reviewing each text and identifying key themes present. Keeping in mind that texts are integrated into IE to discover how they coordinate what individuals do, the text analysis process required extended periods of reading, thinking, and reflecting (Townsend, 1998; Smith, 2005). Specifically, I focused on how each text related to the actual activities of women coaches, and how they may relate to the other texts (Turner, 2006). The processes of connecting texts to each other and women coaches' experiences led to the creation of an intertextual hierarchy (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six). This textual hierarchy illuminated a disjuncture between what the equity policies were promoting compared to what women coaches were experiencing in their daily activities. The gap between policy and experience was witnessed in not only how the women coaches talked about their jobs, but also the responsibilities and commitments identified in their work schedules.

Throughout the entire analysis I constantly reminded myself of the research problematic and my research question and posted it next to my transcripts and notes. This was very helpful in not deviating away from the data or interpreting it beyond the women coaches' working realities. Instead, I remained focused on women's experiences and how their activities are situated within the relations of ruling. By doing so, I was able to map the relations of ruling that are informing the university from which my research is situated. In the following section, I will discuss the mapping process, and how the data analysis informed this method within the research.

## 4.5 Mapping

The mapping process provided a visual representation of the relations of ruling that are acting to shape everyday practices. Maps are used in IE studies to showcase that

upon analysis, texts reach beyond the local into the translocal and coordinate action (Stanley, 2018). Smith (1999) contends that unlike maps of “seas, lands, or coasts, the maps that institutional ethnography provides showcase the relations in motion that are active within an institution” (p. 129). Furthermore, these maps are not about creating an organizational flow chart but instead are used to account for the day-to-day work and local practices that shape experiences (Stanley, 2018; Turner, 2006).

There are key connections between the mapping and data analysis process. It is through mapping that institutional ethnographers can put into context for people the practices and processes that are informing their experiences as they describe them. Furthermore, the IE map offers a visualization of the hidden practices within an organization. Mapping works to make visible the social world that texts inform. As previously stated, these hidden practices are what Smith (1999; 2005) calls the relations of ruling. In connection with my research, I was interested in uncovering how the relations of ruling within Canadian university sport influence and inform women coaches in particular ways. It is with IE that I was able to outline the embodied and relational experiences of women coaches as their work is organized by the institution and the individuals within it.

The map itself (Chapter Eight), starts from the position of an individual standpoint and moves beyond to showcase the relations of ruling that inform experience. To create the map, I first looked for commonalities and differences between the interviews and the texts, with specific focus on work practices in reality versus described in the policy. What was revealed was that the texts (both the policy documents and women’s work schedules) inform women coaches’ working realities in both implicit and



explicit ways. For example, women coaches;' work schedules revealed responsibilities outside of their job requirements. With an understanding of the everyday work of women coaches, and the organizing power institutional texts have specific to informing experiences, I was able to then create a visual representation of the relations of ruling.

## 4.6 Ethical Considerations

There were several ethical considerations for the study, the first being that women coaches' participation was voluntary. Those who were asked to partake in this study did so on a volunteer basis, thus no one was forced to participate. If a woman coach agreed to participate, they received a Letter of Information (LOI) that indicated that there are no known risks to the participants. Furthermore, the LOI stated that each participant had the opportunity to withdraw at any time during the study. Study methods were also outlined which included interviews and observations.

Since interviews were a study method, written consent was needed from all participants before scheduling the interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, participants had an opportunity to review the transcripts to verify their responses to the questions and notes taken by the researcher. This allowed participants to confirm what was said and make any changes they felt were necessary, increasing the reliability of the transcripts. Additionally, participants were able to correct any errors or add points of clarification. Two weeks were provided to the participants to make and communicate any changes to the transcripts they felt were necessary. After the two-week timeframe, if there were no changes received from participants, I assumed that the participants accepted the original transcription.

Confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study was another important ethical consideration for this project. This study did not use titles, names, or other identifying

information. Thus, any remarks in the interview that might have identified the participant were not used. Specifically, all transcripts remained anonymized and unidentified direct quotes were not used. Participants were informed that all their information was confidential which was explained before the interviews as well. If the results of the study are published, names and titles will be omitted.

There were no potential risks in participating in this study, however it was important to share with the participants the potential benefits of the research. While those who participated did not receive any compensation, the information gathered may illuminate the practices and processes that are shaping women head coaches' careers. Specifically, their knowledge provided insight into the working realities of being a university women coach.

#### 4.7 Covid-19 Impact on the Research

The recognition that this research was completed during a global pandemic is vital because certain changes and adjustments needed to be made to successfully accommodate what was happening in the world. For example, there were some challenges that arose during the participant selection process. Due to this research being conducted during the pandemic, the number of women coaches I was able to ask to be a part of the study became limited. The lockdown measures brought Canadian university sport to a halt, and several of the women coaches at the university ended up leaving their positions. Thus, since some women were no longer coaching, a more limited pool of participants could be asked to be a part of the study. Originally, I intended to interview twelve to fifteen participants, but ended up interviewing eight.

During the interviews, I originally intended to conduct them face-to-face with the women who agreed to be a part of the study. However, due to the lockdown mandate, I

needed to complete my interviews over Zoom. This did affect my interview process because I was not able to read full body language. However, several participants did appreciate the time flexibility that the Zoom interviews provided.

I was also not able to include participant observation as a method within my research. Initially, my intention for this study was to observe coaches completing daily tasks, to gain a better understanding of their working realities. Participant observation would have provided the opportunity to witness first-hand how women coaches perform, lead, and work within the university. Observation is important to an IE study because it can support our ability to recognize bodies, place, time, motion, how ruling relations work, and the social organization of institutions (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). When in combination with interviewing, participant observation can open up the research analysis away from individuals and move it towards the coordination of their "doings" (Smith, 2005).

In this research, participant observation may have helped further investigate how women's coaching has come to be influenced and informed by institutional practices and processes (Smith, 2006). By observing women coaching their teams, a more complete understanding of how the institution acts to influence women's work activities could have been illuminated. However, incorporating women's work schedules into my text analysis helped combat this drawback. The schedules revealed women coaches' daily work requirements, that although not witnessed through observation, I learned about through conversation with the women coaches.

Lastly, the pandemic also caused delays to the research process. For example, research ethics for my project needed to be submitted and approved by the board twice.

The second approval was necessary because my research ethics application needed to reflect the adjustments that had to be made to the project due to the pandemic, such as the change mentioned above to Zoom interviews from the intended face to face. I was required to discuss in detail the changes that were made, despite having been approved by ethics before the lockdown order. Despite the challenges, the study was adjusted to reflect the necessary changes and requirements. The following section of this chapter will discuss the trustworthiness of the research.

## 4.8 Trustworthiness

Within a research project, there are methods to ensure trustworthiness of a study. Strategies in qualitative data could include the triangulation of the data, generalizability, and saturation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In this IE study, specific action was taken to increase the trustworthiness of the research process and its findings. Three different methods were employed, including translation, member checking, and reflexivity.

### *Translation*

One of the methods that determines trustworthiness in an IE study is the successful translation of the mode of inquiry into the research design and analytical description (Townsend, 1998). Translation occurs through the mapping process, as maps are developed to reflect the social relations present within an institution (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Rankin & Campbell, 2006). I established trustworthiness through the analytical description and translation of what is actually happening for women coaches within their everyday working realities. Specifically, the descriptions and map are founded on the knowledge of what happens as described by women coaches themselves.

### ***Member-Checking***

I conducted member checking with all participants upon completion of the interview transcripts. This further helped establish trustworthiness because I was able to state that the transcripts reflected the participant's knowledge and understanding of their working realities, due to their confirmed responses to each question. I sent completed transcripts to each participant through the university password protected platform and provided two weeks for changes to be made. Upon review, no participants made any changes, additions, or alterations.

### ***Reflexivity***

Reflexivity is required within an IE study, and it is one of the most powerful tools in warranting trustworthiness of the research (DeVault, 1999; Naples, 2007; Smith, 2006; Stanley, 2018). For example, it allowed me to critically interrogate my own biases, perceptions, and interests. I identified some preconceived notions I had about women's working realities, which were not discussed or identified by the women themselves. For example, I thought the biggest struggle would be travel commitments as a university coach. However, my assumptions were confronted when not one of the women identified travel as a challenge or work barrier in their coaching career.

Smith (2006) contends that the researcher must be located in the research and that their experience should be privileged in the research as well. How people talk, the categories they use, what is taken for granted in their talk, and what they can talk about all can illuminate the actuality of individual experience (Smith, 1997). Therefore, in her work, Smith begins from and identifies her own knowledge and position through reflexivity. When completed reflexivity helps combat the research power dynamic

(researcher's power over the participants). Specifically, the women coaches in this study were considered expert knowers of their own experience, and I constantly strived to recognize my feelings, concerns, and ideas throughout the process. To do so, I kept a research journal throughout the study.

The journaling process provided the space for me to actively seek to understand myself as part of or influencing the research. An understanding of my bias during the research process has helped develop both my understanding of IE and my influence on the study and the findings. It was vital for me to remain reflexive during the research process because research is not a neutral activity, and I am not neutral as a researcher. I bring my own values, biases, and world views to the project, all of which are lenses through which I look at and interpret the data and conduct the analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The value of the journaling process was witnessed during the interview analysis. Upon interrogation, I noticed that I was taking the details and insights women coaches were sharing as the sole reflection of the working realities, instead of questioning why they may be sharing certain experiences and details. While the women coaches highlighted various barriers and challenges within their current careers, I was failing to see the privilege that they had to achieve and maintain their coaching position in the first place. Through continuous reflection on the interviews and my own beliefs about women in coaching, I was able to further recognize the relations of ruling that inform and shape experience. Specifically, which voices, and experiences were excluded entirely within the institution.

Ultimately, it was the journaling process that helped bring my attention inward towards my own practices and beliefs, and then outward towards how that impacts my research (Larrivee, 2008). It was apparent that journaling provided a useful medium from which I could think about key concepts and ideas and reflect on my personal decision making. Additionally, the journaling practice also provided me with the opportunity to witness how my thoughts around gender, leadership, and sport developed throughout the research journey.

In this chapter I have provided an overview of my study design, including the methods and data analysis process. The key phases of the research were discussed, which included a description of the interview, text analysis, and mapping process. Each of these distinct phases have helped illuminate the relations of ruling that inform women coaches' working realities within Canadian university sport. Additionally, key ethical considerations were highlighted, alongside impacts of Covid-19 on the research and the trustworthiness of the study. The following chapter will highlight my findings that resulted from the semi-structured interviews with eight women coaches at one Canadian university. The findings from the interviews are grouped into themes that have appeared because of the conversations with the women coaches.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Interview Findings

In the preceding chapter, the study design of this IE study was outlined. Three distinct phases of research were highlighted, including interviews, text analysis, and mapping. In the following section, key themes that have emerged from the interview process are discussed, including support, a hierarchy of sport, education, community, opportunity, and experience. Interviews with eight participants from one university were conducted to understand the working realities specific to their experiences as coaches. The interviews provided the chance to uncover the daily activities of assistant and head women coaches. The data was coded for themes that reflect current workplace opportunities, support, and requirements. The findings from these interviews are grouped into themes that have appeared because of the conversations that have taken place with study participants.

#### 5.1 Support or Lack Thereof

Support was a common theme throughout all the interviews and was described in a variety of ways. Some of the head coaches stated that support came from their athletes, like Participant One who described feeling supported when her athletes thanked her at the end of their season. Alternatively, the assistant coaches who participated in the study almost all referenced the head coach that they worked with as being their primary source of support. For example, one participant detailed how she and the head coach have connected throughout their time working with one another stating that the head coach “has been incredibly supportive. I usually like to touch base with her before practice, like just grab two minutes of her time and run through what I’m planning to do” (Participant Five). Participant Seven, another assistant coach, indicated how the head coach she works



with had made her commitments to the team more manageable. Manageable commitments have allowed her to remain involved and maintain her assistant coaching position stating that “everything is laid out for me, and that is because of the head coach and the resources they have provided” (Participant Seven).

The assistant coaches described support from the head coaches they work with not only in the form of time and resources provided, but also in the form of opportunities. For example, Participant Four described her experience being invited to sit in on meetings with the head coach she was working with. She states the impact this had on her, noting that “not many head coaches bring their assistant coaches to conferences or meetings before competitions. So, it’s really nice knowing that he wanted me there to see everything” (Participant Four). This quote is significant because it highlights the responsibility placed on head coaches to ensure assistant coaches are involved and engaged within the institution. Otherwise, assistant coaches may not have the opportunity to sit in on and participate in meetings and conferences.

While the assistant coaches made it clear that support was coming from the head coach, some head coaches indicated that they also felt supported by their assistant coaches. For example, Participant Two states:

I know when my assistant coaches can be there for longer than just practice, and we can do meetings and player meetings as a staff, and as a crew, it’s so valuable for me just to hear their opinions and kind of get that interaction and feedback as well. (Participant Two)

While head coaches and assistant coaches found support from one another, my interviews also illuminated a lack of institutional support. Resulting from limited funding in

particular, head coaches often take on extra responsibilities because their assistant coaches cannot afford to make the same time commitments. One head coach discussed her frustration during our interview stating:

It's usually just me, and my other two assistants are part-time, and all are fully employed outside the university. So, it's usually me going to tournaments on weekends and then kind of just filling them in on who I like and who I didn't. Then from there, it's pretty much planning weekends, game prep, any player, individual meetings. (Participant Two)

This quote identifies specific work practices for the head coach, such as taking extra time during the workday to keep their assistant coach informed. Similarly, another head coach took it upon herself to support her assistant coaches so that they would be able to remain involved and available to the team:

I had some women that were coaching and young parents as well, and I used to pay them through our fundraising account, a childcare subsidy. There have been times when we would compete and I would pay for my assistant coach's hotel room for his family. I think that this is needed and is important to keep people coaching. (Participant One)

Alongside a lack of financial support, it was highlighted by one participant that the university did a poor job of emotionally supporting her through a difficult situation that involved another coach. She describes her experience stating:

So last year, there was an incident that happened with one of my fellow coaches at the university. He was trashing me and the team publicly on Facebook on multiple occasions. I told athletics, and the response I got was, 'we talked to him; he's

taking the post down and will apologize.’ In my opinion, that’s not a way to handle that situation. There were no repercussions for his actions, but he’s also a man that’s won many, many championships and has been coaching for a very long time. (Participant 4).

This story, along with the other discussions, illuminated a lack of various support methods from the institution. While coaches are finding support within their coaching staff, their narratives suggest that support is missing from the university. Furthermore, it became clear that some individuals/sports receive certain privileges while others do not. A lack of support has specific implications on women coaches’ working realities. For example, financial stability or as mentioned above, proper recourse to ensure a safe work environment. The privileging of certain sports over others leads to the next identified theme, a hierarchy of sport.

## 5.2 Hierarchy of Sport

When asked about what the daily work life of an assistant coach or head coach, a hierarchy of sport was a theme that emerged across all the conversations with participants. The hierarchy of sport reflects the notion that some sports in the university are privileged over others, for example, how much money a team is provided from the university to fund their program. One participant spoke to the hierarchy directly stating that “there is a hierarchy that works in athletics that is not talked about. The standard of performance, or the standard that we have to abide by, is far above what the compensation is” (Participant Six). This quote highlights a standard of performance that impacts how teams and programs are supported within the university. It became evident that some sports receive certain privileges based on their success, while others feel like they are an “afterthought” within the university.

One woman reflected on the decreasing support from the university she has felt throughout her time as a head coach, indicating that during her first year, her team's budget "was about forty-two thousand dollars" (Participant Three). Yet, the past five years they have had to pay for everything, including paying for the gym by the hour. Not only were coaches indicating that gym space is not always provided, one participant discussed how her team is forced to leave their changeroom before games for the football team. She describes her experience stating:

I just feel like we're second fiddle to football, even something as simple as our field is located right by the football field. And we share the changing room. If there is a football home game and we have a home game, we get kicked out, and we have to change across the road. I don't think the university gives two hoots about our program, and I hope that will change. (Participant Five)

As my interviews continued, different types of inequities were brought to light that are currently impacting women coaches' work. Two participants highlighted how their teams do not have the same access to training as other teams within the university do.

Participant Five describes:

Yeah, I mean, even the strength and conditioning program, you know, as an athlete and seeing it as a coach, I see it when we are in there. If there was a football player or male hockey player, it was like we were invisible. The strength coaches would just have tunnel vision for hockey and football. They would help us if we had a question, but it's very much like answer the question then back to football. So that was frustrating. And like we also had such strict times to go get

our workout done and leave. Meanwhile, football basically lived there and just came in and out as they wanted. (Participant Five)

The strict times and priority given to certain teams over others impact work schedules. Specifically, how a day is shaped around access to activities like strength and conditioning. Those teams given priority times over others, would experience a different working reality than Participant Five. Similarly, Participant Three highlights how the hierarchy impacts her team's training sessions:

You know, our team, we can't go into the rec center even if there's a gym that isn't being used. We can't use it because it's for recreation and we're competition. Students go in as an individual student to join a class or to use the weights or whatever. That's okay, but we can't go in there as a team. (Participant Three)

With space and resources highlighted as lacking from the university based on a team's place in the hierarchy, Participant Five offered a unique perspective by reflecting on limited social media support. She stated:

I think just between, like promotion, even looking at social media, it's all I can notice now. Even at the end-of-year athletic banquet videos.... It's like, oh, there is a little flash of it, the women's team that they need to cover. Overall, I just feel like our women's team is such an afterthought, as well as I'm sure, a ton of other sports. (Participant Five)

This quote is significant because it showcases the widespread reach of the hierarchy of sport, specifically when it comes to the daily function of teams and programs. If a team is not getting promoted by university, it is challenging to get fans out and generate revenue, which in turn makes it harder to run the program due to lack of funds. Some of the

women coaches expressed feelings of frustration by the lack of support for their team in comparison to others. For example, Participant Three is quoted saying “we’re competing against other universities, just like every other team. And we’re bringing home medals like every other team”. Participant Six echoed this frustration, specifically in terms of the pay imbalances that are present. She detailed how she knows the men’s team coach within her sport does not put in the same amount of time that she does with her women’s team, yet he receives a higher salary stating, “his salary is higher than mine, but the time that he puts in is less than mine” (Participant Six).

The hierarchy of sport also impacts how teams can support themselves financially. Participant Six discussed her frustration around corporate sponsorship opportunities, stating that specific teams receive more backing than others:

I’ve asked what are the corporate sponsorship opportunities? If I’m going to go out to corporations and ask them for money, I need to be able to give them a package. The response I got back was for football, basketball, volleyball, and hockey, and I emailed back and said those are really great opportunities for those sports. But what are the opportunities for my team? And I got no response. I’m not getting any support from our corporate sponsors or committee. (Participant Six)

Another participant reflected on how the support has changed over the years, indicating that her team’s level of support is solely based on their success—specifically, wins and losses and a team’s ability to make money for the university. She described the value placed on success stating:

I feel like during these past two years, as our performance has gone down, the university has kind of been like, okay, we don't care. So, I didn't receive any compensation or anything for my time coaching this year. And overall, I constantly feel second fiddle to football and the sports that make money. I feel like as soon as you don't generate money, they don't pay attention to you.

(Participant Five)

The passage from Participant Five not only describes the impacts of the hierarchy of sport, but also illuminates how it changes based on team success. Despite at one time being a top program, when Participant Five's team's performance went down, so did financial support from the university. The contingency placed on support as it relates to wins and losses can further divide teams and continue to sustain the hierarchy present. It is easier to maintain success when resources are supplied by the university, whereas it is harder to rebuild a winning team and program if you are receiving limited institutional supports.

### 5.3 Education

The theme of education came to the forefront in various ways during the interviews, including its value, potential benefits, and the current lack of educational opportunities, such as leadership training for coaches. When reflecting on her personal experience, Participant One indicated that more educational opportunities would be meaningful when looking to better support women applying for coaching positions. She states:

There must be some work done to get them to apply. As I said before, a woman isn't necessarily going to apply for a job that they don't feel 100 percent qualified for. I wanted one of my post-collegiate athletes to apply for a manager position.

And she didn't apply because she said, I can't do all the things they listed in the job description. (Participant One)

In connection to Participant One's statement, Participant Two also expressed how she was unsure about her job requirements when she first started. Having access to an education around what was expected, she felt, would have been beneficial. Especially when it came to work-life balance and understanding what that looks like in practice:

The first time I was a head coach of my own program, I had to call a friend because I was leaving practice at five p.m., and I was like, can I do this? Can I leave? Because as an assistant coach, I would be there sometimes from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. or later. I've been burnt out, I don't know how many times, but I think it's that education process where it's like, yes, you can do this, you can balance both. I mean, I'm still learning. (Participant Two)

Participant Two further reflected on how the lack of education around work-life balance in a university coaching role has impacted her well-being. As a result, she indicated that she felt it was part of her job to educate her assistant coaches about work-life balance and how it looks in practice. She states:

I think that's part of my job, too, with, you know, having younger female coaches and having them as assistant coaches it's like hey, you need family time? Take your family time. That's fine. Go do it because it's important. (Participant Two)

The insight from Participant Two highlights the demanding schedule of coaching, but also the unseen/ unrecognized work women coaches take on as part of their job.

Participant Eight shared the same perspective, noting that there needs to be education around how the working requirements of coaching needs to change. Her reflection



extended beyond work-life balance to address the current coaching culture. She specified how education can help offer a different understanding of how university sport can operate:

I think there needs to be more education around how the landscape of sport is changing. There is a more male-dominated environment where it is more of a “rah-rah” like intensity and women didn’t really have a place in that. And I think because we see that athletes aren’t necessarily responding to that, nor are the power dynamics effective, and we see different types of abuse and mistreatment, I think it’s time women can step up and say this is not how sports should look. And we certainly have lots to offer in that case by making sure that it’s not just because we are women, but because we’re capable of being in those positions.

(Participant Eight)

The theme of education extended beyond working practice to professional development as well. Several of the assistant coaches and some of the head coaches described feeling that professional development was a responsibility of their own, and they were required to seek out those educational opportunities. Again, this insight highlights the extra responsibilities that are part of the job. Unfortunately, interviews revealed that access to educational opportunities is lacking at the university. No one currently at the university was helping coaches navigate participation in educational programs, and the university did not offer any internal opportunities. As Participant Four highlights:

Education is something that I have to go out and seek myself. I’m in two different programs now that are basically mentorship programs to develop my skills as a coach and get the experience from different coaches across the board so that I’m

not only learning about just my sport but also learning from other coaches because the skills that we have as coaches are transferable across sports. But yeah, I've done that on my own and pay for those things on my own. (Participant Four)

Despite a lack of access, several head coaches and assistant coaches saw benefits in continued education. Participant Eight described how education to her was a way to get involved, continue her career, and give back. She describes:

I think anything that you can really get involved with, especially coaching education programs and kind of looking at what's available within your provincial or federal organization, depending on the sport, I think the more good people that we have in there and learning and growing and being involved in volunteer, whatever it is, it doesn't have to be anything in particular. But it just adds to it. And I think there are so many great people that we have in sport that we want to be able to continue on and have those people give back. (Participant 8)

This section has highlighted women coaches' stances on education, as it has been identified as a key method to better supporting women in the field. However, currently there are no educational opportunities offered to them at the university, and therefore women must take on extra work outside of their coaching requirements. Specifically, women are seeking out educational opportunities themselves, to improve their knowledge and understanding of coaching. In the following section, I will discuss how community, specifically community building, reflects another strategy identified within the interviews to better support both head and assistant coaches at the university.

## 5.4 Community

Another central theme highlighted in the context of women coaches' working realities was the notion of community. This "community" was referenced and recognized as both inside the institution and beyond. Several women expressed a real lack of connection with other coaches across different teams. Participant Eight stated that this is because everyone is focused on their sport, and indicated that she hasn't had the opportunity to sit in on any meetings or connect with other coaches. Participant Seven further highlighted the lack of opportunity to connect with others, stating that she has been coaching for over 20 years and doesn't know some of the names of the other coaches. She states that "mostly we just say hello, but I don't know of any opportunities to connect" (Participant Seven). This quote indicates a siloing of programs at the university where Participant Seven works.

Participant One offered a unique perspective, discussing how the physical space from which she works impacts opportunity to engage as a coaching community. Where coaches are physically working, specifically their personal office space, proved to be a factor that hinders their ability to engage as a community. She describes, "where my offices are, I'm the only coach in there. From an administrative point of view, I love the people I am around. It's easy. But from a collaborative coaching perspective, it's not good" (Participant One).

The lack of connection creates barriers such as a knowledge of work practices, where to find support, or sharing work experiences. One participant indicated the benefits that she felt could be possible if there were more opportunities to engage as a coaching community within the university, stating:

I think anything that would bring coaches together, and you know, there are so many transferable skills and values that are across the programs in sports and for coaches to feed off one another and see what's working well. And I think that we need to see more for sure. (Participant Eight)

While some coaches stated that building community is missing at the university, two long-time head coaches said the opposite. Participant One indicated that she had been a part of a coaching meeting; however, it was limited to those who have achieved full-time head coaching positions. Furthermore, the meetings were very structured and lacked flexibility in terms of discussion. She states:

There is a coaching group, but it was more of the full-time coaches. And it was initiated by one head coach, and they would reach out and say, okay, what topics would you like? What should we cover this week? A couple of the other coaches and I wanted it a little bit more informally done. But you get some people that say, no, we're meeting to discuss this, and we're going to have someone come in and present this, whereas I feel like that stifles you...I would like to have a talk with our coaches on their fundraising practices or bits and pieces of different topics. (Participant One)

The other long-time head coach states that she received support from a coach of another sport when the university failed to offer her team gym space and time to practice.

Yeah, some things are really hard. We recently didn't have anywhere to train. It was a disaster. It was. It was really, really hard. But if it hadn't been for the wrestling coach, we wouldn't even have been able to practice on campus anywhere. They let us use their space. (Participant Three)

While community was referenced internal to the university, several participants also referred to a coaching community outside of the university. Often, the women head coaches described being isolated in collaborative spaces with other universities, as they were often the only female in the room. As Participant One explains:

I was coaching, and I was in a combined event room (with other university coaches). So, this is where all the athletes and their coaches and medical support staff will be in between events. So, it's like you have room to go and there's like two rooms that were quite big. So, we've got all these athletes, everyone around. And I remember another coach who was with us had looked around and said, you're the only woman in the room. And so that's not being not supportive, but it's just like, hey, that reflects the fact that there's a problem with why I am the only one right now? (Participant One)

Other coaches highlighted that while they may see women in these community spaces, they are often in assistant coaching roles. Participant Two states:

There weren't a ton of female coaches in the game. And if they were, they were all assistant coaches. And I feel as if you'll look back at it and the stats and how they were made up. It was like you were a token female on the staff. But I feel as if that is changing. But I don't think we're out of the woods yet. (Participant Two)

Due to the lack of women's representation in their own university and across university sport, several participants indicated why and how this could be detrimental to advancing women in the field. One participant in particular detailed her thoughts around the

importance of women's representation in coaching and questioned why it is still an issue when universities have equal athlete participation.

It's just that there aren't enough females to be there as mentors and role models ... And in terms of universities specifically...men and women don't have equal representation. Even though we do have lots of men's and women's sports... most men are coaching women's sports (Participant Eight).

Another participant reflected on her own experience growing up in sport, realizing that she had always seen males in coaching positions. Therefore, she wasn't surprised when she got to the university level and saw the same thing within the coaching community.

I didn't have a female coach until I went to college. Before that, it was all dads. And some had no idea what was going on. It was different for me, and it was an adjustment for me. I once heard a coach even say that females can't lead other females. So, it was kind of like one of those things where it's well, how do we do it the right way? We shouldn't have a female coach for the first time in college.

You need to get at the grassroots level and go from there. (Participant Two)

The stories from Participant Two and Participant Eight highlight the impact that a lack of women in coaching has on individuals. Without many women role models, it was challenging for both of them to navigate the career themselves. Additionally, the lack of women representation was witnessed throughout several contexts. This included both at the university and grassroots levels.

## 5.5 Coaching: Opportunity vs. Experience

When I asked the coaches their thoughts about supporting women in the coaching field, five of them highlighted the importance and impact of opportunity. Many discussed current issues around opportunities for women in coaching. For example, one participant

shared that women are often overlooked for coaching positions unless they have certain work specific experiences. She stated:

As far as the institution, we've been in a position where we could have hired women to coach, and we didn't. You know, I just sometimes think that these women don't necessarily get the experience because they don't have the opportunity in the first place. The other interesting thing to know is that some schools don't even interview men for a head coaching position of a women's team, which I thought was great. Because if you think about it, there are no women right now as a head coach of a male team. So, it's almost like they're getting double the opportunity. (Participant One)

In support of the need for more female representation in university sport, another participant highlighted how women are continuously overlooked due to a lack of experience they may not have the opportunity to get. For example, men apply to coach women's teams; however, women are not coaching male teams. Participant Two highlights her experience stating:

You get the males jumping over from the guys' game to the female side, and it's kind of like it's a systemic issue because they're coming from maybe teams that played 80 games in a season where you're only coaching 37. And it's like, well, you don't have the experience they have. They can get more experience because there are 80 games in their season. But you're limited to 37 coaching a woman's game. So, with them coming over, they already have more experience. And, you know, it's something I wrestle with. (Participant Two)

This quote highlights that even though women may have coaching experience, the way the institution has set up that experience (in this case, number of games), already puts male coaches at an advantage. The importance of winning experience to access coaching opportunities was also described when Participant Two reflected on a previous coaching position she did not receive.

So, when the job opened up, this was a school that I wanted to be a part of. I just know some jobs don't come open very often. So, I was like, okay, no other jobs are going to open again. Like, I got to go for this. I got to go hard. And I didn't get it. I knew based on how they talked to me on the phone. I asked for feedback. What was I lacking? And their response was OUA (Ontario University Athletics) winning experience. I'm like, well, I can't get that. (Participant Two)

This quote is significant because it reflects the value placed on winning, specifically winning experience. Yet, if women coaches are not provided access to these opportunities in the first place, it is very hard to advance in their careers. If winning is the singular form of recognized experience, it makes it challenging to achieve coaching positions if other aspects of leadership are not recognized. Additionally, as a result of experience being at the forefront of what universities are looking for when hiring coaches, many of the women I interviewed discussed a feeling of inadequacy. Some even described feeling unworthy of their current positions and the opportunity they have been given to coach. Participant Three illuminated her feelings of inadequacy, stating:

You know, coaches of the university teams like, have gone to the Olympics. You know, I went to the Nationals a couple of times and I'm not one of the big



players. I wasn't Olympian or anything like that. So, I didn't feel like I shouldn't be the one doing this. You have the wrong person for this job. (Participant Three)

One participant reflected on how institutional expectations can feel limiting, despite there being a push for more women coaches in sport.

There is a discrepancy, and there are also definitely lines in terms of where you are situated. And although there seems to be a push for more female coaches in sport, I think it's a very defined kind of role that they want us to see us in. And I think sometimes those expectations feel more limiting than kind of this opportunity of like what we have to offer. Rather, they seem to be more talking about five or six things that you can contribute to the team rather than saying you can offer anything that we could as well as male coaches. (Participant Eight).

Based on the varied challenges described by the women, each participant highlighted specific strategies that the university could employ to address the current lack of opportunity for women in coaching. One way was to expand the understanding of what experience is and what "counts" as experience when deciding whether to give women a coaching opportunity. Similarly, to Participant Three's insights on experience, Participant Seven was very passionate about promoting a new understanding of what experience looks like and means. She states:

Many of them don't have a lot of experience, and they're figuring it out as they go. And so, I think that's something that can be added to supporting women in coaching is to draw on different experiences. You don't have to have been an Olympian or, you know, had lots of coaching, education, or whatever. I mean, you could get those things along the way just to draw on some of the things that

you do know, whether it's being a parent. I mean, some parents would make great coaches because they know how kids operate and, you know, other people don't necessarily. And we've certainly seen that. I think about some coaches that my son had. These people didn't have kids themselves. And some of the things they would do him like, oh, yeah, I know that's not going to work with the eight-year-old or the 14-year-old or even the 17-year-old. So, you know, people can draw on different experiences for that. (Participant Seven)

This quote expresses why Participant Seven believes universities need to be open to different ways to coach and provide opportunities to support varied approaches. Otherwise, women will continue to be limited in these spaces, which she further highlights:

There are lots of different paths and lots of different stories. And we really have to be open to that. And women have to be open to there being lots of different ways of coaching and make sure that we're not just assuming that there's a set model because, in that model, the women will be the assistant coaches. They will just be on the bench. They will barely be the assistant coaches because it'll be assumed that they don't know, or that they don't have the time, etc. So, to have a bigger perspective on what women are doing with women in sport and what they're interested in doing. We are talking about breaking the mold. I think that would be a good thing to do. (Participant Seven)

Participant Seven's call to broaden our understanding of women's leadership in sport is significant because it recognizes the need for institutions to understand and accept

coaching experience beyond just wins and losses. As aforementioned, this is a limiting factor to women's leadership, as expressed by the participants in this study.

## 5.6 Fund Development and Allocation of Resources

While experience may be limiting factor for career advancement, challenges persist even when women do achieve coaching positions. For example, several participants discussed how fund development and allocation have come to the forefront of their positions in various ways. The area of most importance is fundraising, which was highlighted as a big part of their day-to-day working reality. Participant One described the time required to fundraise as part of her job stating:

Fundraising has become what has filled part of my day. So, for example, just before this call, I was talking to our fund development officer in athletics, and we've got four different alumni donation types of strategies that we're working on. So that becomes part of your day. (Participant One)

One head coach discussed how fundraising is an area of her job that is not well known or understood. She highlighted how her job requires much more than just winning games and attending practices. She states that she knew for a long time she would have to explain that she doesn't just focus on her team, because "you really are acting like the GM, head coach, player development, and fundraiser" (Participant Two).

This quote, along with others illuminated how the women were partaking in activities and developing skills that extended beyond practices and games. Specifically, coaches are required to fundraise as part of their job to maintain their programs. As Participant Six states, "I, like the other coaches I've talked to, have stated that they don't receive any funding from the university, and they have to fundraise. That ends up being their budget for the year to offer scholarships from" (Participant Six).

For some, the fundraising process is particularly stressful. Since coaches are not receiving funding from the university, they are completely reliant on fundraising.

Participant One detailed the stress fundraising causes, constantly asking herself “what are we going to do to bring in new money?” (Participant One). The worry and questioning allude to the added stress and the responsibility fundraising places on coaches.

You only have as much money as you’re able to fundraise. And you’re doing that on top of trying to coach your way on the weekends, playing games. You have practices like there’s just all these different moving parts that I don’t think are recognized all the time (Participant Six).

One participant highlighted her frustration with the fundraising requirements, stating, “it just feels like I’m always asking for money” (Participant Three). She went on to describe her experience with fundraising initiatives:

I tried doing something at homecoming. We didn’t make any money. It ended up costing money. I’m the worst fundraiser ever; my fundraisers seldom break even. I usually go in the hole whenever I do a fundraiser. I’ve tried doing all sorts of fundraising for the team. It’s a lot. I’ve tried letters and mailing letters. I’ve tried emails, you know, all of this stuff. (Participant Three).

It is important to note that a coach hasn’t always been responsible for fundraising to support their team. There was a previous model in place that has since been changed. Participants indicated that the university used to charge an athletic fee for students, which drastically offset the pressure to fundraise. Now, however, the university they work at no longer does this. Participant Three has been coaching at the university for many years and reflected on the past where students were asked to pay in support of varsity athletics. She

indicated that recently, athletics asked for five dollars a student, however it was turned down.

Alongside the stress of fundraising for the team, coaches are then required to manage their budget. One head coach discussed the struggles associated with allocating the funds she could raise through her fundraising efforts:

So, your travel, your budgeting, we give athletic scholarships... It's like managing that budget, which is, to me, not one of my strengths. And it's not an easy thing to do because I probably have twenty athletes that get athletic scholarship money at various levels. And then, you know, in the recruiting process, I have to offer new recruits athletic scholarships at certain levels to get them, right? You know, especially the top kids that possibly go to a top NCAA school. (Participant One)

Even when coaches fundraise for their program, university athletics can allocate the funds (when it is a donation) where they see fit. Participant Three describes the allocation of money in detail, reflecting on her experience with an alumni donation to her program:

Alumni support is tough. To make matters worse, we had one of our former athletes come back to offer assistance for the team, which was really good. Well, he's in banking, so we asked for a donation for our team, and he called me up and said to look for this money; it's coming through. That money ended up going to advertisements in the hockey rink. The university athletic department took our money. They can do that apparently. (Participant Three)

As a result of being dependent on fundraising, access to funds proved particularly problematic for many coaches. The lack of funding and pay made it challenging for them

to remain in their coaching positions. One participant described her experience of having to get another job to support her coaching pursuits:

I knew I was in the right spot, and I was doing the thing I needed to be doing to make myself happy, but it was financially unsustainable. I picked up a teaching job, go figure, in the second half of the season. (Participant Two)

Additionally, one of the women I interviewed outlined how she currently is working three jobs to coach. She states that if she could, she would “pick coaching and just do that and have the appropriate compensation, but it pays pennies” (Participant Six).

The low compensation for coaching does limit who can access and sustain coaching positions. Participant Three discussed the challenge she is facing finding a successor due to a lack of pay from the university. She has recognized that she can take on a coaching role because of the flexibility in her schedule, however many others are not in the same position making it hard to find a replacement. While she has advocated for funds, it is a minimal amount that she is receiving from the university. In turn, she has been saving money to pay the next coach that comes in. For her, coaches must be supported financially:

You know, nobody wants the job. Who can afford it? I want to be able to hire a coach and what I thought would be important is for my assistant coach and me to get paid. So again, I insist that we get a thousand dollars a year. As coach honorarium, they give us a T4 slip for that. We have to pay tax on that thousand dollars at our tax rate. And the money goes back to the team anyway. When I finally get enough money to get a coach, I want them to be paid. It doesn't matter how much; it is a matter of is the coach getting paid. (Participant Three)

Several participants also recognized the importance of having access to funding for women specifically, as it continues to be a barrier to the advancement of women in coaching. As Participant Eight described:

It really comes down to the finance piece. I think having resources in place that makes it feasible and then removing as much bias, and prejudice, and boxes as possible that women feel like they are only accepted or hired or positions are available because they're women, but instead making it more of an even playing field where they feel like this is an equal career opportunity. (Participant Eight)

The assistant coaches that have been able to receive funding highlighted the immense benefits it has had on their ability to remain involved with the team and their professional development opportunities. Due to a grant that one assistant coach sought out from an organization outside of the university, she is able to partake in some extra coach training.

Participant 8 highlights how the grant has helped, stating:

I'm currently looking into doing more and keeping training as part of my own program. But I reached out to the head coach, and they were really excited about that. I'll be able to complete modules and do that at no cost, just at my personal expense, I guess, which is great. I think usually support comes in the way of finances because it seems like everything is either at costs, or you have to get somewhere, whatever it be. So just having funding in place to be able to do any sort of educational piece is awesome. (Participant 8)

The grant while beneficial, was achieved through an application process. The time to submit an application is an activity that occurs outside of coaching a team but requires work. Yet, the application processes proved necessary if Participant Eight was going to continue coaching. For others, the need for funding may not be necessary based on their level of pay at the university. Thus, it is important to recognize the impacts that a lack of funding has on some assistant coaches, as they try to get into paid positions. The following section will discuss other instances of the unseen and unrecognized work of the women coaches' who participated in the study.

### 5.7 Unseen/ Unrecognized Work

The final and most predominant theme illuminated through the interview process was the notion of women coaches' unseen/ unrecognized work. Alongside their coaching requirements, the women opened up about their work outside of their job requirements. Volunteering proved to be one of the significant areas of unseen/ unrecognized work completed by almost all the women coaches. Whether the coaches were recognized as head coaches or assistant coaches, both volunteer in some capacity.

Head coaches described volunteer initiatives that were taking place outside of the university. Several indicated its importance to grow their sport. One participant discussed how she has stressed the importance of volunteering to her athletes. She states:

I've been on boards and helped out with various charities to fundraise for that and for, again, other grants that players can apply to help offset costs and stay in the game. And then also being role models for younger players that are out there currently. So usually, I'm coaching all summer. I think our ability to give back to the sport that has given us so much is very important. And I try and get that through to all our players. (Participant Two)



When it came to the assistant coaches, they considered how volunteering had affected their ability to stay involved, as not all of them have enough money to support themselves through coaching alone. Participant Four described how she understood volunteering to be a steppingstone in her career:

I was a volunteer for the first two years, and then they are like, hey, we'll pay you some money. It's good they support me, but it isn't a full salary. I have taken on a little bit less responsibility because I did start a new job last year. So, I am not as involved. But I'm still an assistant coach and I still go to all the meets. I'm holding all my designations and ensuring that I'm still keeping up with everything as I, again, am transitioning out of the coaching role. I think it's because I know in the position can't support myself and my family. (Participant Four)

When conversations about how to keep women in coaching happen, this quote alludes to the challenge that comes with a lack of pay and the time required to remain in coaching positions. One participant offered insight into why she believes more women will coach in her particular sport, being that she falls lower on the aforementioned "hierarchy of sport." Thus, there are not many paid positions for both head coaches and assistant coaches. She states:

When there's more money, the men are going to take those jobs. So, more women are going to be there (lower levels of the hierarchy). There are more and more women coaches than there ever were before because there's no money. It's not a paid position. It's frustrating because I was expected to take all the same coaching courses that the other varsity coaches are also expected to complete as well (Participant Three).

Alongside volunteer work, some participants discussed how they have taken on the responsibility of supporting athletes beyond practice and game times. For example, one participant depicted the feeling of responsibility she has towards supporting student-athletes academically:

You know, I'll get their marks, and then, you know, you reach out, and you might start dealing with those. But basically, I'm informed of what their marks are, and then I'll have to work with the individuals that might have a concern that needs to be dealt with. For example, when we get students' marks at the end of this school year, there might be one or two red flags where they've either lost their scholarship, or they're looking like they're academically ineligible. So, they need to take a summer course or two, so I'm the one that will reach out to them and talk to them about that. (Participant One)

Participant One went on to describe a specific situation where she had to support an athlete through a difficult time:

One of the things that you don't necessarily know is that a coach would deal with the mental health concerns our student-athletes have, or maybe nowadays more people would think that. But that's something that actually takes a tremendous amount of time. For example, I remember having a conversation with an athlete at practice, and the athlete told me that they were not doing very well mentally. And if I didn't do anything and something happened, then it's hard to live with yourself. (Participant One)

Not only were these women committed to their athletes and coaching responsibilities, but almost all the women I interviewed identified struggles they have experienced balancing

their work-life with their home life. Achieving this balance remained unrecognized and therefore unsupported by the university. As one participant described, “You know, it’s tough to have a work-life balance. That’s probably the number one...family life. If you’re planning on having a family, I think that’s where the biggest obstacles fall...with women that have kids” (Participant One).

Participant Two echoed this sentiment, stating that she believes there are a lot of women want to be coaching, but once they realize the time commitment, they are unable to pursue the position. She highlights her struggles, stating:

I mean, last summer, out of 13 weeks, I was on the road for 10 of those 13. On the outside, it looks great. But once people start to realize how much work is involved in coaching during the off-hours, it’s hard to shut it off. And that’s something I’ve had to practice because it’s like you can go all day, every day. (Participant Two)

This quote provides insight into the demanding schedules women coaches’ take on in order to pursue the career. Participant Four also described the challenge of achieving work and home life balance, stating:

I feel like it’s a job that not a lot of women want to pursue because it’s a lot of time and preparation and going to the practices. It pulls you away from a lot during times when potentially your spouse is home. So, unless both people are in it, I think it’s not an ideal situation. Does it take a toll on a person? It has taken a toll on me to the point where I’m like, okay, you know what, I need to take a step back. (Participant Four)

In this quote, Participant Four has highlighted the need for support at home, not just financially but also the recognition of how big of a time commitment coaching is.

Participant Seven had to leave coaching while her kids were young, because the balance between work and home life was not working. She states:

I think that family is a big issue in lifestyle coaching is. When kids are home, when family expects the woman to be home, there are exceptions to this. Our head coach is certainly an example of somebody who made this work for their family situation. Still, I ultimately left from even assistant coaching the first time because my husband finally said, okay, enough is enough. You're looking after these athletes, and maybe you should be looking after the kids at home.

(Participant Seven)

Another coach echoed needing to take a step back to be available for her family and save her marriage. Her experience further highlighted the emotional labour that women coaches take on resulting from the job expectations:

I took a leave from being the head coach, and that was at a time...that actually came after my daughter told me, mommy, you missed everybody's birthday this year, including your own, because of coaching. Around that time, it was like, you know, the kids are little and you're coaching through the dinner hour, and you're away all weekends...After my leave, I decided not to apply for any more national team appointments and just keep coaching at the university level. I remember taking that leave gave me a reset, and I figured out that I had to make a change to stay in coaching and keep my family together. (Participant One)

Alongside commitments to athletes and their families, coaches identified other “work” that they were unaware would be a part of their position. As a result of lack of funding and support from the university, one coach took on the responsibility of washing all her athletes’ jerseys so they would have clean clothes to participate in:

The crazy thing was the space at the university that we had; there was no storage. So, for every practice and I talked my husband into coaching with me. So, we were coaching Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Our tournaments were on the weekends. So, for each of those, every evening, we would have to pack up everything, load the equipment into the car, drive to the university, and pay five dollars a night for parking. Twenty-five dollars a week in parking that we have to pay as a coach. So, then we loaded into the gym and spread it out so the kids could get their stuff. At the end of the practice, half an hour back in the bags. Take it back to the car. Drive home and unpack the car to our basement. Wash the equipment. It was so much time. (Participant Three)

Another participant described how she was required to teach and also coach when she first started at the university:

The dean at the time had the idea to have these superwomen who would teach and do research and coach, and it just was not possible at all. There were a few other women who did coaching and teaching. There was one woman who did was doing research, working on her Ph.D. But the others said, no, I’m not going to do it. And they left the university because they said, I can’t do all these things. (Participant Seven)

It was evident through the experiences highlighted in this chapter that the work of coaches is not limited to just practice and games. Instead, the women who are part of this study have illuminated a broader idea of what “work” is and how it impacts their ability to meet their job requirements. Specifically, the eight women provided insight into their working realities as head and assistant coaches within the Canadian university they are in—learning, reflecting, and engaging with each individual experience allowed for seven key themes to emerge. These themes included support or lack thereof, the hierarchy of sport, education, community, opportunity, fund development and allocation, and unseen/unrecognized work. Keeping in mind that we are “ruled by forms or organization vested in and mediated by texts and documents” (Smith, 2006, p. 81), we can move beyond individual experiences and start to uncover how they are shaped by common practices and processes. With the insight into women coaches’ working realities, the next chapter will review critical texts informing these individual experiences.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Text Analysis

The previous chapter provided insight into women's working realities as coaches. Specifically, the emergence of seven key themes through the interview process, including support or lack thereof, the hierarchy of sport, education, community, opportunity, fund development and allocation, and unseen/ unrecognized work. This chapter will focus on text analysis to extend beyond experience to uncover the relations of ruling that shape individual realities. Incorporating texts into institutional ethnographic practice is an essential step in the research process because it enables the researcher to go beyond the locally observable into the "social relations and organization that permeate and control the local" (Smith, 2006, p. 65). The three critical texts included in this chapter are *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, the *U Sports Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules. Each of the texts inform the work within the university and helped recognize what relations are shaping women coaches' experiences.

My IE study is oriented around the research problematic of a lack of women's leadership within Canadian university sport, specifically coaching. Keeping this problematic at the forefront allowed me to focus my text analysis on how specific sport equity documents mediate and regulate women coaches' work. I questioned how each text's discourse around gender, equity, and leadership works to create and maintain specific institutional processes that impact women coaches' experiences. Smith (1987) defines discourse as the working language that coordinates action. The term does not just refer to the "texts" or "words within them," but also to how people organize their activities in relation to them (Griffith & Smith, 1987).

Text analysis in IE is not a prescribed approach because according to Smith (2005), the purpose of the analysis is to illuminate how work is socially organized. By uncovering how work is organized, we can begin to see and understand the relations of ruling, as they are reflected in institutional texts (e.g., policies, schedules). My text analysis included two policy documents and women coaches' work schedules. Each informs the culture of university athletics, especially around gender, leadership, and sport.

The policy documents define equity and highlight strategies for addressing the gender gap in coaching, for example, providing women with more substantial sport experiences. The first policy document is called *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*. The policy is endorsed by all Canadian Federal-Provincial/ Territorial governments to promote and develop a strengthened sport system in Canada, where "women and girls are full, active, and valued participants as leaders, experiencing quality sport and equitable support" (p. 1). The second policy I analyzed is the *USports Equity Policy*. USports is the governing body of Canadian university athletics. The policy reflects USports' commitment to "accept the principles of equity and equality and ensure that these principles are adhered to in all its activities" (80.80.1, 2018).

Alongside the policy documents, I also analyzed women coaches' work schedules. The work schedules provided by the women coaches reflect their everyday realities, and include activities such as practice times, games and competitions, and athlete meetings. The schedules were an important text for my IE study because they provided insight into job requirements, and also daily activities that extended beyond coaching requirements. For example, the time coaches take to write reference letters for

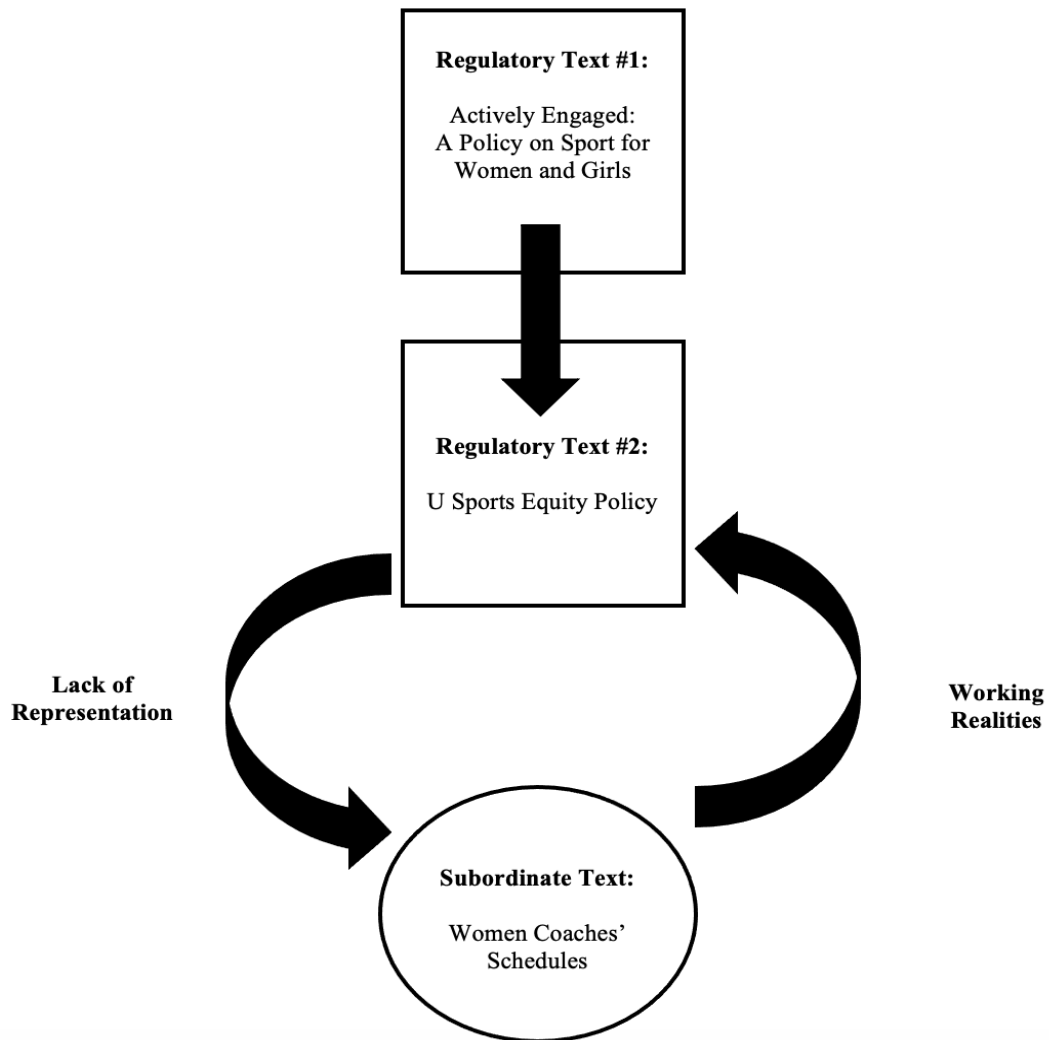


their athletes outside of working hours. Additionally, the schedules provided an increased awareness of how the discourse in the policy documents shape and inform women coaches' work.

To explore each of the texts, I focused on three distinct levels of text analysis developed by Dorothy Smith (2005; 2006). First, I mapped the intertextual hierarchy present within university sport. Mapping the hierarchy helped me identify the three texts mentioned above as key documents shaping women coaches' experiences within the university. Once these three key documents were identified and mapped as an intertextual hierarchy (Smith, 2005), I moved on to provide context and background information for each individual text. Doing so allowed me to discuss how the document came into the organization and its intended impact. Lastly, I interpreted the documents using an IE approach to discourse as outlined by Smith (2005), which illuminated how each document works to inform the working realities of women coaches.

## 6.1 Intertextual Hierarchy

Within an IE study, researchers need to realize that institutions are standardized and regulated by texts to extend research towards uncovering social relations informing experience (Stanley, 2018). To discover how texts are informing institutional processes, Smith (2005; 2006) offers intertextual hierarchies as a useful analytic tool. Intertextual hierarchies show how texts inform one another, highlighting the actions, practices, and processes within institutions (Smith, 2006). By understanding texts as a hierarchy, people's doings become "interpretable as expressions of a higher source of organization" (Smith, 2006, p. 82). By creating the hierarchy, I made visible how specific equity

**Figure 2***Intertextual Hierarchy*

policies operate to produce the working realities for women coaches within one Canadian university.

After researching the institution of Canadian university sport, I identified three texts that inform the action and knowledge around gender equity at the university. The first is *Actively Engaged, A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, labeled as a “regulatory text” within the created hierarchy. Regulatory texts help establish concepts and categories regarding what is done and are recognized as an instance or expression of

procedure (Smith, 2006). The Actively Engaged document was chosen as the first regulatory text because it is the “starting point” of gender equity advancement in Canadian sport. The Actively Engaged policy then led to the *USport Equity Policy*. However, unlike the Actively Engaged policy, which is more widely encompassing, the *USport Equity Policy* is specific to Canadian university sport. Lastly, I included women coaches’ work schedules. These schedules are identified as a “subordinate text,” which are defined as the texts under the regulatory authority (Smith, 2005).

Each of the texts mentioned above and shown in the figure are significant because they illuminate how the policy documents inform women’s working realities. Through evaluation, women coaches’ work schedules helped show how the higher-level texts (equity documents) produce specific organizational processes, informing the actions within women’s daily work responsibilities. Ultimately, what occurs in women’s schedules can be related to the policy documents within the intertextual hierarchy. Since this study is focused on women coaches’ working realities, it is essential to connect their everyday lives to the equity policies created with the intention of supporting women’s leadership.

Once regulatory and subordinate texts were identified, and the intertextual hierarchy was mapped out, I followed Smith’s (2005; 2006) recommendation to uncover the social organization of each text. To do this, I needed to provide some context to each text and identify its origin (Smith, 2006). Thus, I have outlined how the *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* and the *U Sports Equity Policy* came to be. Following, I then provide an overview of women coaches’ work schedules.

## 6.2 Context

### *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*

In 1982, Canada developed provisions to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Two of the conditions were specific to gender equality and stated:

- Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.
- (b) Subsection (a) does not preclude any law, program, or activity that has as its object amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups, including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982).

Each provision clarifies that equality is a right in Canada, which eventually led to the movement for policy related to gender equity in sport. Discrimination on any grounds related to gender, laws, or programming within sport is not acceptable. Due to the provisions to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canada's first Women in Sport Policy was developed in 1986 by Sport Canada called *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport*. The policy's stated intent was "to establish the federal government's position on women in sport and, further, to state a direction for action that will improve the current status of women in sport" (Sport Canada, 1986, p. 5). Thus, there was a distinct focus to improve conditions for women both participating and leading within sport organizations in Canada.

From 1986-2009 the *Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport* provided direction for sport organizations to better support women's leadership and participation opportunities. It wasn't until 2009 that a new policy emerged, replacing the *1986 Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport*. This new document *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* (2009) was created to promote and develop "a strengthened sport system where women and girls are full, active and valued participants and leaders, experiencing quality sport and equitable support" (p. 3). The idea was that when women and young girls have leadership opportunities in sport, their engagement as sport participants and knowledge development increases. The policy's three tenets are as follows:

1. Women and girls are actively engaged within Canadian sport as athlete participants, from playground to podium;
2. Women are actively engaged within Canadian sport as coaches, technical leaders, and officials and are also supported to progress within international organizations as technical leaders and officials;
3. Women are actively engaged as governance leaders (essential volunteers and senior administrative staff) of Canadian sport organizations and are also supported to progress within international sport organizations.

Currently, this policy encourages sport organizations to commit to achieving a balanced representation of gender in sport.

### ***U Sports Equity Policy***

As a result of the *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, Canadian sport programs and organizations were required to advance their equity

initiatives, which also included university sport programs. The governing body of university sport in Canada is the USports organization, which oversees 56 universities and four regional conferences (USports, 2021). When it came to addressing issues of gender inequality, the USports Committee on Equity (known as EQT) assisted in developing policies and plans that identify barriers related to leadership and participation (USport, 2020). The result was a document titled *Equity Policy* (2018) that showcased USports' commitment to ensuring that principles of equity and equality are adhered to.

Created in 2004 and then updated in 2018, the *Equity Policy* states that “U Sports staff, in conjunction with the Equity Committee and Board of Directors as required, shall be responsible for the administration, application and interpretation of this policy” (80.80.7.1). The policy goals specific to gender and leadership reflect an intention to address the underrepresentation of women’s leadership, which is highlighted in the following section:

- U SPORTS be sensitive to and seek out opportunities for gender balance when identifying members for committees to reach an objective of no less than 40% representation of any one gender.
- U SPORTS increase the marketability and profile of women’s programs and ensure financial resources are available for this purpose.
- U SPORTS promotes member institutions to assume a leadership role in their local and regional communities to encourage young women to pursue sport as a career option.
- U SPORTS continue to participate in and lead the development and perpetuation of women in coaching initiatives at the post-secondary level.

It is important to note that the update mentioned above to the *Equity Policy* in 2018 was not specific to addressing women's underrepresentation in leadership positions. Instead, the update focused on creating more equitable participation opportunities for student-athletes, stating that student-athletes will be eligible to compete on a team that corresponds with either their sex assigned at birth or their gender identity (U Sports, 2018). The updated policy was developed by the USports Equity Committee, in consultation with the broader USports membership, and approved by the U Sports Board of Directors (USports, 2018).

### ***Women Coaches Work Schedules***

The final documents included in the text analysis are women coaches' monthly work schedules. These individual schedules reflected each coach's work commitments throughout the month, including times and places of practices, meetings, fundraising initiatives, administrative duties, and games/competitions. The schedules provided were set during the coaches' competitive season to maintain consistency across participants. The work schedules were important to the study because they showcased the daily responsibilities of women coaches, to gain a better understanding of current working realities.

## **6.3 Interpreting the Text**

Following the discussion specific to the context and origin of each document, the final step of my text analysis was focused on how people are positioned by the textual hierarchy. Smith's (2005; 2006) description of interpreting texts was used to discover how people are placed within the order. Smith (2005) does not theorize texts but instead describes them according to their material properties that enable the replication of what is written. She distinguishes this approach, stating that "institutional ethnography

recognizes texts, not as a discrete topic, but as they enter into and coordinate people's doings" (p. 230). Analyzing each text in this way helped identify how discourse mediated through a text presents itself as "knowledge," which determines how people and actions are viewed (Burstow, 2016). Smith acknowledges discourse as a social organization of authority, regulating whose voices count in institutions (Smith, 1999).

When conducting the analysis from an IE perspective, it was essential to understand that these policies are structured through a complexity of organized practices called the relations of ruling (Smith, 2005). As mentioned in Chapter Three, the relations of ruling provide society with "a specialization of organization, control, and initiative" (Smith, 1990, p. 6). Essentially, the relations of ruling work to inform individual experience. Recognizing the dominant discourses within the *Actively Engaged Policy*, the *USports Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules illuminated how these documents impact their working realities in particular ways. Together, these texts establish the context for how women coaches experience their jobs and see themselves within a hierarchy. Specifically, the texts highlight the critical juncture between people's local settings and the relations of ruling (Smith, 2005).

Throughout my analysis, I paid attention to how texts work together to produce and maintain a culture that impacts women's working realities. Specifically, I focused on how each text "created conditions for thought, communication, and action" (Stanley, 2018, p. 82). As Smith (2005) states, there are links between discursive, textual practices and their actual presence in people's everyday lives and activities, including coordination at local and institutional levels. Therefore, it was important to analyze texts that inform women coaches' daily practice and those organizing their work experiences at an



institutional level. This perspective was particularly beneficial for my research because while gender equity policies may promote an inclusive culture, the reality within institutions can be very different. Specifically, the women's schedules helped to highlight gaps between policy goals and working realities.

#### 6.4 Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls

By uncovering the dominant discourses embedded in the policy documents, I sought to expose how these discursive practices naturalize and legitimize gender inequality (Liasidou, 2008). Upon completing the textual analysis, this section presents three significant representations of the problem of "gender equity" present in the *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* document. The first is deficient framing, that is, a lack of engagement of women in sport. Second, a lack of equitable support, and lastly, a lack of quality sport experiences.

##### *Lack of Engagement of Women*

The first identified problem present in the document is the perceived lack of engagement of women. Lack of engagement was referenced throughout the document, as "there are persistent concerns that women and girls are continuing to participate in sport at a lower rate than their male counterparts" (p. 11). As a result, the policy seeks to "promote and develop a strengthened sport system where women and girls are full, active, and valued participants as leaders, experiencing quality sport and equitable support" (p. 6). What is apparent is that the policy places value on individuals and experience to address the gender disparity in sports leadership. Specifically, these phrases frame women's lack of engagement as a barrier, and with increased engagement, women will have greater access to leadership positions. Framing the lack of women in leadership this way is a problem because if the solution is to increase women's participation and

engagement in sport, there is no challenging of the current practices and processes that sustain the gender gap.

### ***Lack of Equitable Support***

The second identified problem in the document is a lack of equitable support for women. Specifically, the policy states that there need to be more efforts made to improve conditions for women in sport by identifying “family responsibilities, as a key factor”, as women have “less time for participation in sport in all roles” (p. 17). While some organizations have initiatives to offset domestic costs (ex., childcare at competitions), there are few systematic measures to counteract these needs, and facilitate the ongoing involvement of women in sport. The discourse around equitable support states that the main barrier to women’s sports leadership is family responsibilities. This reinforces gender norms, precisely the notion that the responsibility of children and raising a family fall on women. It also creates a distinct binary between men and women within the policy.

### ***Lack of Quality Sport Experiences***

The third identified problem present in the document is that women and girls do not have quality sport experiences. The policy claims that with “program improvement, strategic leadership, awareness, and knowledgeable development, quality experiences for women and girls can be achieved” (p. 18). Addressing the lack of quality sport experiences is required because “women’s contributions to Canadian sport continue to be undervalued by women themselves, as well as their male counterparts” (p. 4). Yet, there is no supporting evidence coinciding with this statement in the document.

Additionally, the policy states that women may not have quality sport experiences because their ability to contribute to the sport system “tends to be constrained because of societal expectations on women to fulfill traditional domestic roles, including responsibility for domestic tasks to facilitate the contribution to sport by their male counterparts” (p. 5). Again, as mentioned above, the notion that the family responsibility falls on women continues to support a distinct binary between men and women, and frames women as already being at a disadvantage based on their gender. Furthermore, this discourse places the responsibility on women to have quality sport experiences to improve their leadership representation in sport.

Through the evaluation of the Actively Engaged policy document, the responsibility to succeed in sport is heavily placed on individuals rather than on addressing institutional practices and processes that limit women’s leadership. When institutional support is discussed, it is only viewed through the lens of family life being a barrier to women, for example “organizations need to have measures in place to facilitate career flexibility” (p. 5). However, not all women want to have families, yet they are still underrepresented in coaching. Gendered assumptions like women’s role and responsibilities in the family prove to be a severe gap in the way institutions currently approach gender equity in sport.

## 6.5 USports Equity Policy

The second policy analyzed in the research was the *USports Equity Policy*. While the document provides clear definitions for equity and equality, no concrete steps are provided to address the underrepresentation of women’s leadership. It is also apparent within the policy document that the discourse around achieving equity is heavily outcome-based rather than a commitment to a continuous process. Focusing on outcomes

fails to address structural barriers and instead places the responsibility on women to meet these prescribed goals.

### *Equity as an Outcome*

The *USports Equity Policy* outlines gender equity and equality goals, however, the text does not offer any specific strategies or examples to meet this goal. The lack of particular strategies is further reflected in statements including a commitment to “increase the marketability and profile of women’s programs and ensure financial resources are available for this purpose” (80.80.3.2, 2018), and that the organization will “safeguard the rights of its members and its employees to equal treatment without unlawful discrimination or harassment” (80.80.3.8, 2018). Again, no concrete strategies, groups, or specific processes are provided.

It is also important to note that the discourse around equity within the document reflects a focus on results and outcomes. Specifically, equity was described as a numerical goal related to representation, promotion, and participation. The policy states that “USports be sensitive to and seek out opportunities for gender balance when identifying members for committees to reach an objective of no less than 40% representation of anyone gender” (80.80.3.1, 2018). This statement highlights how gender equity is not a continuous process and commitment within the organization but instead viewed as an outcome.

## 6.6 Women Coaches’ Work Schedules

To help reveal how the policy documents inform women’s work experiences, the participant coaches in this study shared their daily schedules. The work schedules are the subordinate text within the aforementioned intertextual hierarchy. Upon review, the schedules showcase requirements and responsibilities that echo gendered practices. For

example, the schedules revealed several responsibilities women were taking on to support their athletes and programs. The work included supporting athletes' mental health and academic pursuits, volunteer initiatives, alumni engagement, fundraising initiatives, and family responsibilities. These activities are reflected in Figure 3: *Sample Work Schedule*.

**Figure 3**

*Sample Work Schedule*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Volunteering</li> </ul>	<b>8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tryout Meeting</li> <li>● Team Lift</li> <li>● Recruitment Visit</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>	<b>9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Captains Meeting</li> <li>● Practice</li> <li>● Time Management Athle...</li> </ul>	<b>10</b>
	9 AM	8 AM 12 PM 1 PM 4:30 PM	8 AM 12 PM 1 PM 4:30 PM	8 AM 4:30 PM 7:30 PM	
	<b>11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alumni Engagement Event</li> <li>● Team Meeting</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>	<b>12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nutrition Meeting</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>	<b>13</b>
	11 AM 6 PM 8 PM	10 AM 4:30 PM	10 AM 4:30 PM	4:30 PM	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Athlete Fitness Testing</li> <li>● Volunteering</li> <li>● Athlete Orientation</li> <li>● Sports Psychologist</li> </ul>	<b>15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fitness Testing</li> <li>● Athletic Director Meeting</li> <li>● Recruit Visit</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>	<b>16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fitness Testing</li> <li>● Practice</li> <li>● Academic Meeting</li> </ul>	<b>17</b>
	8 AM 10 AM 12 PM 6 PM	7:45 AM 9 AM 12 PM 4:30 PM	7:45 AM 9 AM 12 PM 4:30 PM	8 AM 4:30 PM 7 PM	
	<b>18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team Workout</li> <li>● Alumni Engagement</li> <li>● Recruit Visit</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>	<b>19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sponsorship Meeting</li> <li>● Fundraising Event</li> <li>● Practice</li> <li>● Film</li> </ul>	<b>20</b>
	8 AM 1:15 PM 3 PM 6:30 PM	9:30 AM 12 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM	9:30 AM 12 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM	8 AM 9 AM 8:30 AM 3 PM	

The schedule reflects the varied work activities and structure of the day, of one of the women coaches who participated in the study. What became clear through an evaluation of the schedules was that women coaches have job commitments and

requirements that extend beyond leading and coordinating practices and games. Since the policy documents do not recognize these requirements, they make invisible the entirety of women coaches' work in these positions. Revealing a broader understanding of the work women coaches do support the need for policies to consider the social relations and how these relations work to shape the actualities of everyday life. As the previous chapter highlighted, women coaches engage in activities beyond practices and games that require effort, specific skills, and time—for example, volunteering and fundraising. Therefore, gender equity policies should reflect this knowledge and apply supports that are specific to women's actual doings as coaches. Thus, it is evident that a broader understanding of women coaches' work is needed if the unseen work is to be reflected in the policy documents.

To address the lack of women in coaching, gender equity policies should reflect and recognize the various supports required instead of taking a “one size” fits all approach. While both the *Actively Engaged Policy* and the *U Sports Equity Policy* discuss equity initiatives that focus on support in terms of leadership opportunities and highlighting/ promoting team successes, there is a need to recognize barriers outside of equal opportunity and representation. It is evident here that a broader understanding of equity and addressing inequity is needed. Ultimately, the schedules have illuminated the needs of women coaches and the inaction resulting from the policies.

## 6.7 Analysis Findings

The text analysis process has revealed that both the *Actively Engaged* and *USports* policy are working to sustain certain hegemonic masculine discourses within the institution. For example, in *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, the responsibility is placed on women to gain experience and engage in leadership

opportunities to address the gender gap. Given the *Actively Engaged* document is the foundation of the *USports Equity Policy*, it is not surprising that women's leadership is also assessed through an individual lens in the USports' policy. Both documents do not evaluate the institutional impacts and responsibility pertaining to gender equity practices.

Additionally, the USports policy is results-based and fails to include specific structural and cultural changes to support women's leadership. Without concrete strategies and a plan for achieving and maintaining equity, structural inequalities are not addressed. Again, the responsibility is placed on women to overcome these barriers and meet the outcomes within the document. While the policy states that institutions need to create an equitable sport culture, it is evident that there is a lack of action towards this goal. Furthermore, there was no information on how plans are measured, sustained, or who is responsible for working towards the stated goals outside of women themselves.

The subordinate text (women coaches' schedules) provided insight into everyday working realities. While the equity policies advocate for institutions to address the underrepresentation of women coaches, women coaches' schedules reflected a lack of leadership opportunities provided by the institution. Specifically, they outline working responsibilities outside of coaching their respected team. For example, administrative meetings, fundraising initiatives, alumni engagement, and volunteer activities.

By analyzing each policy, I have been able to illuminate how the regulatory texts operate to produce particular actions or inaction to sustain a gendered culture reflected in the subordinate texts. The *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* dominant discourse reflects a responsibility on women to achieve leadership positions through continued engagement and quality experiences in sport. As a result, the *U Sport*

*Equity Policy* does not provide any concrete steps to achieve equity for women in coaching. Instead, the policy focuses strictly on results when it comes to equity initiatives in Canadian universities. In turn, the schedules of women coaches reflect long working hours and responsibilities outside of coaching their respective teams.

The main finding in this chapter has been the disjuncture between the supports described in the policy documents versus what women coaches' experience. It is evident through the analysis that the policy documents place the responsibility on women to address the gender gap in coaching. For example, by stating that women need to have more quality sport experiences to help foster more women in leadership positions. By placing the responsibility on women to advance their careers in sport, the current culture remains unchallenged and thus, unchanged. Therefore, it is not surprising that women's schedules reflect a working reality that includes long work hours, and responsibilities and activities beyond coaching requirements.

In the following chapter, I will discuss and connect the text analysis findings to the interview analysis. Through this connection, I will move beyond the individual experiences of women coaches towards the institutional practices and processes informing their experience. The goal is to illuminate the relations of ruling present that are maintaining certain barriers for women in coaching. By doing so, recommendations for improvement that are focused on addressing gendered institutional practices will be outlined.



## Chapter 7

### 7 Discussion

This chapter will connect the accounts of the women coaches who participated in this study and the textual analysis completed to illustrate the relations of ruling. The relations of ruling that are showcased through the map illuminates the ways women coaches' working realities are informed by a hegemonic masculine culture. To start, I will review Smith's (1993) relations of ruling (introduced in Chapter 3) and the concept's importance to the research. Next, I will showcase and describe a map (Figure 4: *The Relations of Ruling at a Canadian University*) that represents the active relations of ruling within the university from which this research is situated. The map was created to highlight the organizational structures and discourses informing women coaches' work experiences. I will then discuss the relations of ruling present in Figure 4: *The Relations of Ruling at a Canadian University*, detailing specific impacts on women in coaching. To conclude, specific recommendations to address the gender gap in coaching will be provided.

#### 7.1 The Relations of Ruling and Mapping the Social of Women Coaches

From the start, the central framing of this study has been focused on addressing the underrepresentation of women coaches in Canadian university sport. To do so, I gained insight from women who currently hold both head coaching and assistant coaching positions at one Canadian university. Institutional ethnography provided the tools for investigating the overarching structures that generate power and influence action within this context. Specifically, how, and why there are so few women coaches. The gender gap in coaching is alarming given that there are policies in place describing the

need for better support, funding, and opportunities for women's leadership and career advancement. What became clear was that women coaches are situated within varying relations of ruling, which indirectly and directly impact their work at the university.

The relations of ruling offered a way to move beyond individuals to the practices and processes that structure individual experiences. As stated in Chapter Three, the relations of ruling as a concept “grasps power, organization, direction, and regulation” (Smith, 2005, p. 3). Specifically, the relations of ruling help identify a complex of organized practices within institutions, bringing to view how they regulate experiences (Smith, 2005). The explication of the relations of ruling can illuminate how institutional practices and processes work to organize people in relation to others within a common set of social relations (Stanley, 2018). For my research, I was interested in exploring how the relations of ruling shape women coaches' working realities. Through this knowledge, a better understanding of how institutions maintain the gender gap was revealed.

In this study, explicating the relations of ruling helped conceptualize and connect the broad array of data, including the interview transcripts, equity policies, and women coaches' work schedules. Using the relations of ruling to organize the data resulted in the emergence of several themes (discussed in Chapters Five and Six). Each theme helped illuminate how particular practices and processes organize women coaches' experiences within the university. While every women coach described their own unique working experience, viewing these experiences through the lens of the relations of ruling brought to light the socially organized challenges in women coaches' work. These challenges, like long work hours, are considered common practice or may be taken for granted in the everyday. In addressing the research problematic of a lack of women coaches at Canadian

universities and how institutional practices and processes impact women, the following discussion explains the research results, highlighting the acting relations of ruling at the university.

**Figure 4**

*The Relations of Ruling at a Canadian University*

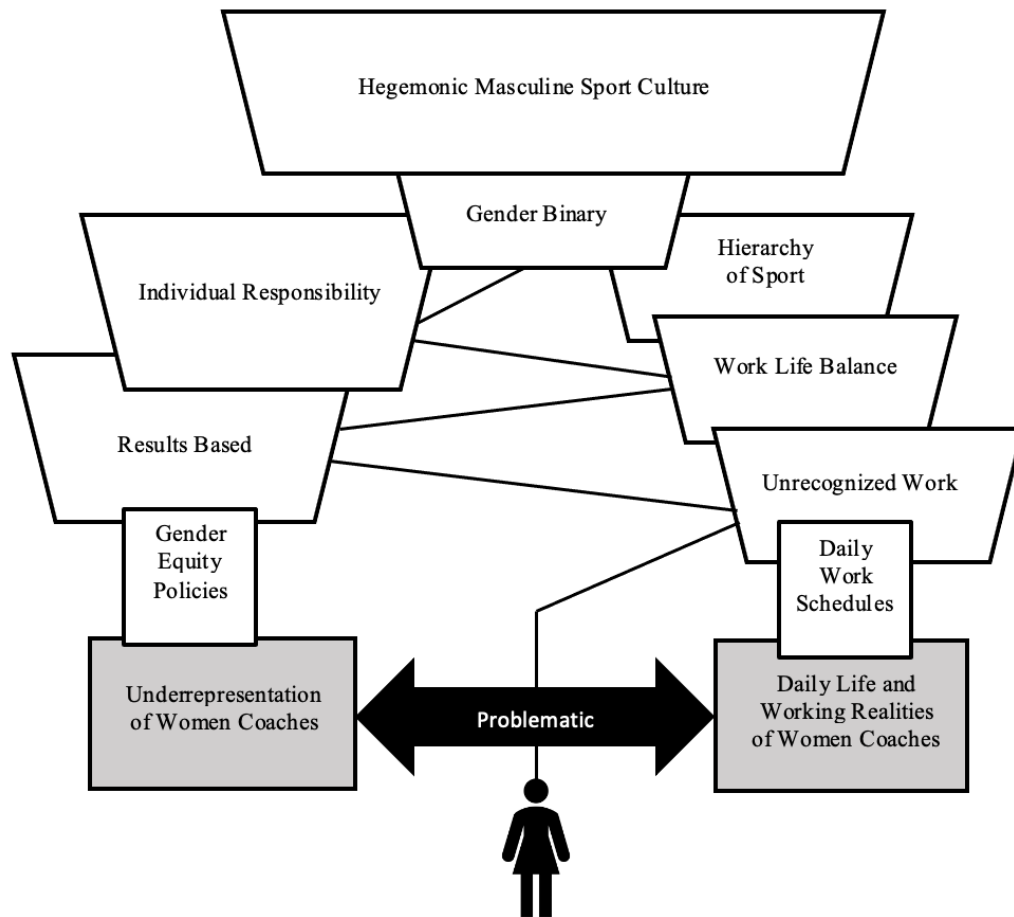


Figure 4: *The Relations of Ruling at a Canadian University* was inspired by Smith's work (Smith, 1987) and showcases the ruling relations that shape and inform women coaches' experiences. The map indicates that women coaches' working realities are embedded within an overarching hegemonic masculine sport culture. As a result, a distinct binary is created between men and women within the organization. The binary

between men and women is witnessed in a variety of settings and work, for example distinct change rooms, team classification (men's team, women's team), game and competition times (women's game times/ competitions are often first, and men's second) etc. This has implications for everyday realities, including unrecognized work, the challenges of achieving work-life balance, and the hierarchy of sport that sustain the binary and hegemonic masculine culture. Additionally, women coaches are expected to take on and handle all these requirements, like taking on varied responsibilities outside of their work requirements, which are just considered "part of the job".

While the women coaches highlighted their work practices within the university, specific texts in this study have also provided insight into the overarching hegemonic masculine culture and how it functions. The texts included the *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls*, the *USport's Equity Policy*, and women coaches' work schedules. The policies shaped how gender equity is understood in the organization and coordinate specific action or inaction towards addressing the gender gap. For example, when it comes to supporting women, the policies outlined the need for better family support. However, not all women choose to have families in these positions, which challenges the notion that women take on the primary family responsibilities. Thus, promoting a "one size fits all" solution like family support does not recognize the difference of individual experience, nor challenge the current culture of sport that continues to limit women's leadership.

The mapping process also revealed limited equity action within the university, despite the gender equity policies in place. Equity action within the policies is phrased as an individual responsibility, with no steps or concrete recommendations to keep

institutions accountable. For instance, women are responsible for their advancement, which is reflected in the demanding work schedules. This finding further highlights many requirements and responsibilities that remain unrecognized, unsupported, and unseen by the university.

Ultimately, the texts, connected to the shared lived experiences of women coaches, show the relations of ruling sustaining specific institutional practices that are acting as barriers to women in coaching. These barriers work to continue to limit leadership, specifically women in coaching, within Canadian university sport. The following sections of this chapter will discuss the relations of ruling in detail, outlining how they inform the participant's daily working lives. The underlying assumptions of Canadian university sport will be interrogated to illustrate the hegemonic masculine culture shaping women coaches' everyday working realities.

## 7.2 The Taken for Granted Nature of Canadian University Sport

Investigating women coaches' working realities with IE directed attention to the social organization of daily life rather than towards the individual. The goal in this process was not to connect the individual experiences of women coaches, but rather make visible how these experiences are connected to the extended relations of ruling (Smith, 2005). The recognition of the relations of ruling allowed for a critical examination of how institutional practices are shaping the experiences of women coaches, often in normalized or taken-for-granted ways (Smith, 2006). Through problematizing the norm in Canadian university sport, the organizational culture shaping women coaches' experiences was illuminated.

Mapping the relations of ruling revealed the organizational culture of university sport. Organizational culture in this research is recognized as a mediator of power, and is

understood as the set of shared, taken for granted assumptions that a group holds, which determines how they perceive, think about, and react within a specific environment (Lumby, 2012; Schein, 2007). The organizational culture of sport promotes practices that privilege males while marginalizing people, values, and behaviour that challenge the culture (Cunningham, 2008). Over time, dominant hegemonic masculine practices have become institutionalized and taken for granted. As a result, people unquestionably accept them as legitimate, or they remain unnoticed.

One implication of the taken-for-granted gendered nature of Canadian university sport has been women coaches' engagement in various activities both within and outside of their job. For example, several women discussed the challenge of coaching and supporting their families with the long and scattered working hours the job requires. As DeVault states (1990), the work of family life is often "unrecognized even by those who do it" (p. 228). Essentially, women take on the hectic coaching schedule, knowing the sacrifice they will need to make to achieve or stay in their position. The result is that long hours and the struggle to balance family life is normalized within the profession. Such a demanding schedule may not be feasible for women who have responsibilities outside of their work. Mapping the relations of ruling has helped to illustrate these assumptions and the accepted demanding nature of coaching.

What has become most clear from the map is that the university in my study is embedded within the hegemonic masculine culture of sport, which works to organize the daily experiences and working realities of women coaches. Recognition of the hegemonic masculine culture provided a gendered lens to reflect and challenge the university's underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs. The result is that the daily lives of women

coaches end up being characterized and shaped by certain hegemonic masculine ideals. The impact of the masculine ideals such as men's teams being prioritized over women's teams, can be witnessed in various activities and descriptions, including the work women coaches are required to complete (reflected in their schedules), their understanding of their position as a coach, and how gender equity is described in the policy documents.

The notion and impact of a hegemonic masculine culture is not new to the gender, sport, and leadership literature (English, 2017; Giazitzoglu, 2020). However, this IE study adds to the scholarship by contributing an alternative way to explore the impacts of this culture. To date, institutional ethnography has had limited use in the gender, sport, and leadership scholarship and therefore, can offer new insights into the underrepresentation of women coaches. Specifically, I have highlighted the gap between institutional policies and working realities with the intention of better supporting women and women's leadership. Additionally, current work practices that are taken for granted have been illuminated. It is evident based on the mapping process that institutions are failing to recognize the entirety of women coaches' work, and thus a broader understanding of what coaching positions entail is required. The following section will discuss in greater detail the impact of the overarching hegemonic masculine culture of sport and how it informs actions, activities, and discourse.

### ***The Hegemonic Masculine Culture of Sport***

Through the mapping process, it has become apparent that the relations of ruling favor a particular knowledge and understanding within the university. This knowledge can be referred to as an authoritative knowledge (Smith, 1990), which organizes the experiences of both men and women coaches. Authoritative knowledge is the dominant

understanding embedded within an institution that perpetuates specific values (Smith, 2005). In this research, the mapping process has shown that the authoritative organizing knowledge reflects a hegemonic masculine culture at the university, which closely links to male privilege (Ryan & Dixon, 2018). The hegemonic masculine culture is the authoritative knowledge because, as the map reflects, it informs the working realities and daily activities of women coaches. For example, despite the gender equity policies in place, women coaches' experiences and work schedules reveal a distinct binary that sustains inequities in the university. More specifically, as the hegemonic masculine culture has become institutionalized, it has supported and perpetuated norms, values, and behaviours that reinforce masculine forms of leadership and ideals. These ideals include competition, aggression, and winning at all costs (Cunningham, 2008; Mavin, 2009).

In practice, we can see the dominance of the aforementioned hegemonic masculine culture through its reflection in the structure that governs university sport and its participants. Canadian university sport is governed by USports, a recent rebranding from Canadian Interuniversity Sport in 2016. The rebranding reflected shift towards university sport running as a business. As Shoalts (2016) states, "the organization seeks to operate as a sports business rather than a governing association" (para. 2). As a result, the USports organization has increased its pursuit of media coverage and corporate sponsorships (Norman, Donnelly, & Kidd, 2021).

Before the rebranding, interuniversity sport followed an educational model. The educational model focused on providing opportunity and access to various sport programs, encouraging a balance between academic success and athletics (Norman, Donnelly & Kidd, 2020). However, the new USports model has shifted away from that



model and now reflects a high-performance, results-based organization. The shift has proved to be particularly harmful, as the work of Banwell and Kerr (2016) show, the rebranding accelerated a change in Canadian interuniversity sport towards a greater emphasis on commercial and competitive outcomes. Ultimately, the value placed on winning as success within the governing body of university sport echoes and perpetuates hegemonic masculine ideals and values through the normalization of competition, aggression, and performance (Burton, 2015; MacDonald, 2014).

The precedence that USports places on performance has had specific implications on the experiences of the women coaches interviewed. Explicit in this study, many coaches felt that the level of support in terms of funding and access to resources was based solely on their success and ability to win games and competitions, not on their impact as a leader. Research has shown that this can be harmful, as when more pressure is put on coaches to achieve success and win, fears of job insecurity can result (Banwell & Kerr, 2016). Success in the institution is defined and recognized as wins, and a team's ability to make money for the university. As one coach stated, "I feel like during these past two years, as our performance has gone down, the university has shown that they don't care. I didn't receive any compensation or anything for my time coaching this year" (Participant Four).

The understanding that sport celebrates and perpetuates hegemonic masculinity has provided insight into how this culture informs the experiences of the women coaches within this study. Specifically, institutionalized hegemonic masculinity has illuminated the gendered work of women coaches and how that impacts their everyday experiences. Current barriers have come to light through this process that will be discussed in the

following sections of this chapter. It is necessary to keep the hegemonic masculine culture of sport at the forefront to address gender inequities and develop strategies to better support women in this space.

### ***Gender Binary***

One organizing relation that results from the hegemonic masculine culture of sport is a distinct gender binary, which we see play out in various institutional processes. For example, the gender segregation of athletes, teams, and programs. Shaw and Frisby (2006) have shown that gender shapes identities within organizations and acts as an axis of power that plays an influential role in sports organizations' interactions, structures, and processes. Therefore, it is essential to recognize this impact within sport, as it is one of the remaining sites of gender segregation in Canadian society. As Hughes (2010) states,

While institutions like universities, professions, and even the police, the military and, to a lesser degree, the skilled trades, have become desegregated, sport institutions, funding models and event organizers have clung to strict gender segregation in almost all contexts. (p. 81)

Since university sport is gender-segregated, there is a responsibility to ensure that opportunities are equitably distributed between men and women (Hughes 2010).

However, upon review of current practices, this is not happening. Women currently hold 3% of head coaching roles for men's teams within U Sports (Canadian Women and Sport, 2021). At the university where my study was conducted at, there are no women who hold the position of head coach of a male team. The coaches in this study also highlighted how their teams are often underfunded compared to the male teams. Furthermore, the women's teams are always required to play their games/compete before the men's teams and often

do not receive the same media promotion/ attention. These are prime examples of how the gender binary has been institutionalized in Canadian university sport.

The distinct gender binary is also present in the equity policies that were analyzed. It is important to note that the binary between men and women is not a necessary organization but is constructed and has specific implications. For example, the *Actively Engaged Policy* document describes how women may not have quality sport experiences because their ability to contribute to the sport system "tends to be constrained because of societal expectations on women to fulfill traditional domestic roles, including responsibility for domestic tasks to facilitate the contribution to sport by their male counterparts" (p. 5). While this may be true for some, this discourse perpetuates a distinct binary between men and women and works to socially organize gender relations (Smith, 2006). Ultimately, it prescribes to a notion that women are already at a deficit when obtaining leadership positions, and that a one size fits all approach can address the gender gap in leadership. These expectations and assumptions reflected in the policy documents fail to recognize that this is not the case for all women, nor should it be a limiting factor.

It is also apparent that the women coaches have access to lead only in certain spaces. For example, the women who coached strictly female teams that I interviewed expressed no desire to coach a male team. As to why? A variety of reasons were provided, including limited access, lack of role models, limited support, and the feeling that they are doing a disservice to female athletes if they coach male teams. Men, however, are afforded the power and privilege that goes along with the notion that they have the necessary, normalized leadership skillset. Thus, they have access and opportunity to coach both genders. One participant provided personal insight into this

limitation, stating how she was once questioned about her ability to coach a male team because she has never played the "men's game." There was an assumption that because of this, she would be unfamiliar with the speed, intensity, etc., despite having years of experience as both an athlete and coach. Yet, if this argument were valid, men coaching female teams would not be so familiar, because men too, have never played the female game.

Walker, Schaeperkoetter, and Darvin (2017) warn us that the longer gendered practices take place in sport organizations, the more an organization will engrain and normalize gender bias in leadership. Therefore, the more women's sports have become part of the hegemonic masculine culture of sport; the more leadership positions are normalized by the belief that men should occupy leadership positions. The hegemonic masculine culture of sport has damaging effects, one of which is women's unrecognized university work. Anything that falls outside of the normalized leadership standards is therefore unseen and undervalued.

The distinct gender binary in university sport reflects the institutionalized hegemonic masculine culture at play. The binary represents an area of the institution that has become a normalized, rule-like fixture that solidifies the notion that men in sport must be distinct and separate from women. The result is that the institution already places women coaches at a deficit, impacting access to supports, positions, and opportunities. Another consequence of the gender binary is that it creates and sustains a hierarchy of sport within the institution. The following section will discuss the impacts of this hierarchy on women coaches working within the university.

### *Hierarchy of Sport*

In the university in which this research is situated, several women coaches highlight the impacts of what can be understood as a hierarchy of sport. As university sport has taken on a more business-like structure, the teams that can make the most money for the university are, in turn, the most supported. Support is recognized as financial support, access to space, or even media exposure. For example, Donnelly, Norman, and Kidd (2013) highlight how male student athletes receive a disproportional share of athletic scholarships compared to female student-athletes. Further, Beaubier et al. (2008) found that many female athletes at Canadian institutions may not receive equal consideration in other areas, not just financial athletic scholarships. Specific to coaching, gaps include practice schedules, facilities, and team promotion.

One woman coach identified her team's lack of support as a result of what she had called the "hierarchy of sport." As the women coaches both explicitly and implicitly detailed in the interviews, this hierarchy of sport is the institution's way of supporting specific teams over others, based on their ability to profit for the university. The most supported teams are male teams in particular sports, such as football, hockey, etc. Hoerber's (2007) research analyzed gender equity in four sports at a single university, finding that, compared to male athletes, women faced disadvantages in areas including roster size, number of games, publicity, and allocation of funds and space. While research has highlighted how the hierarchy of sport impacts athletes, little research has shown how this impacts women coaches in their work.

In the interviews I conducted, women coaches stated both implicitly and explicitly that they understand a hierarchy of sport exists, and they must navigate it to successfully

support their teams and maintain their positions. For example, one coach spoke about the lack of funding her team receives compared to others. The USports organization currently does not set limits on how Canadian universities allocate their funding. With no set limits, there are severe impacts on certain teams while, in turn, drastically setting others up for success (Norman, Donnelly & Kidd, 2021). For instance, one coach described that even though she achieved an alumni donation for her team that money went to advertisements in the hockey rink (Participant Four). Supporting one team over another works to maintain the hierarchy, limiting some while continuing to advertise and advance others based on the revenue they generate for the university.

Female coaches not only have to navigate the finances for their program, the hierarchy of sport also impacts their access to space, resources, and even the timing of their day. Highlighted in the interviews in combination with women's work schedules, practice times came to the forefront as something that specific teams get priority of over others. For example, access to space was challenging for some, as one women coach described how her team was forced to leave their changeroom before games if the football team needed it. Again, because the football team was higher up on the hierarchy, they received the ability to displace the women's team. Thus, the analysis shows how space works to organize women's daily coaching activities as well.

Coaches also described feelings of frustration from the lack of backing for their team in comparison to others. One participant pointed out her confusion, stating, "we're competing against other universities, just like every other team." Yet, the hierarchy is working within the institution to maintain inequities amongst teams. Women coaches are left to navigate these inequities while ensuring that their program is successful (success

measured in wins and losses). Striving for success proved quite challenging for some, especially those who fell lower on the sport hierarchy present within the institution. When looking to better support women in coaching, this proves to be a barrier that institutions need to address.

This section has highlighted how the taken-for-granted nature of university sport perpetuates specific assumptions and ideals, including a distinct gender binary and a hierarchy of sport. Both organizing relations have had impacts on women's daily work within the university. The following section will discuss in more detail women coaches' working realities shaped by these relations of ruling, including their demanding schedules, unseen/ unrecognized work, and their ability to achieve and maintain work-life balance.

### 7.3 Women Coaches' Working Realities

The gendered organization of university sport, including the distinct gender binary and the hierarchy of sport, has proven to shape and inform the working realities of women coaches. The impacts of gendered practices can be witnessed in women's working schedules, the unseen/ unrecognized requirements of their job, and their ability to achieve work-life balance. As highlighted in the previous section, university sport is embedded within a hegemonic masculine culture, with ideals such as winning, competitiveness, and performance measuring job success. In the following discussion, I will highlight the impact this has had on women and their daily experiences as coaches.

#### *Demanding Schedules*

To gain a better understanding of the work activities that women coaches participate in daily, several coaches shared their monthly schedules. What became clear was that these schedules were sporadic and showed long working hours. Between team

and administrative meetings, practices, games, travel, and recruiting efforts, early mornings and late nights appeared to be a working reality. Several of the coaches expressed the challenges that result from inconsistent, unpredictable at times, and highly demanding days. For example, Participant One, a head coach, discussed how she wouldn't work in her position unless she had the support and willingness from her husband to take on a more prominent family role.

The demanding schedules showed how women's work is constructed by and reinforce the relations of ruling. The schedules are constructed by the relations of ruling because they reflect the "winning at all costs" mentality. Wins and losses define Canadian university sport leadership success; therefore, women coaches must put in long working hours to achieve this specific definition of success in their positions. However, the schedules show work requirements that extend beyond practices and games. For example, the schedules highlighted fundraising initiatives, other jobs, and in some cases, family responsibilities. Although these are also working realities for men coaches, this research has chosen to focus on the experiences of women. As highlighted in Chapter Six, these gendered practices can prove challenging for women coaches as they described the hardships associated with fundraising and the struggle to achieve work-life balance.

It is crucial to note that women coaches' working realities require individuals to have certain privileges and advantages to do the job. Privileges include flexibility, a certain level of financial freedom, and support. For example, one of the head coaches described how she felt it was necessary to purchase a house close to the university so that she would be able to make it home for dinner more often. Conversely, another head



coach discussed how she can't put in as many hours as she would like to in her coaching role because she needs to work two other jobs to keep a roof over her head.

Women's work schedules have provided insight into women coaches' daily lives, illuminating the specific responsibilities, both inside and outside of their job requirements. While hours dedicated to team meetings, practices, and recruiting was expected, these schedules also illuminated the unseen/ unrecognized work women coaches are taking on in their roles. Work varied depending on their position (head coach or assistant coach) and family life (kids, single, married, etc.), yet there were consistencies throughout. The following section will discuss the unrecognized work of women coaches and the effects this has had on the participants in this study.

### ***Unseen/ Unrecognized Work***

As understood by institutional ethnographers, work is a powerful means to understand the situatedness of what individuals do in their daily lives (Smith, 2006). With a broad understanding of what work entails, insight into the many activities and responsibilities women coaches take on outside their job requirements became apparent. In other words, women coaches are needed to manage multiple work demands both within and beyond coaching responsibilities. For example, the women coaches in this study described specific work they complete that is not discussed or accounted for by the university, and tensions resulting from balancing "work" and "life" were illuminated. Compounded by lack of support, particular challenges arose because of unrealistic expectations and unrecognized work.

One woman coach described the harmful effects of the varied expectations placed on her. She felt she needed to be a "superwoman" to handle both personal and

professional responsibilities. The notion of "superwomen" and meeting vigorous job expectations is highly problematic and reflects masculine assumptions about what university coaching entails. To be successful in coaching positions, women must shoulder the responsibility and manage the to-dos of their job (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). By placing the burden on women, the workload remains unproblematized and therefore naturalized within the university. Furthermore, the notion of the "superwomen" can discourage some peoples' aspirations because they feel incapable of playing into that role (Blackmore, 2002).

When I asked participants about job requirements they did not expect, many head coaches highlighted fund development and allocation as unforeseen obligations. In terms of fund development, several coaches discussed how fundraising had become a big part of their day-to-day working reality. From conversations with the participants, it was made clear that head coaches are required to fundraise as part of their job to sustain their programs. The fundraising process is particularly stressful for some because their programs rely entirely on the money they can bring in.

Research shows that in some contexts, men can raise more than women in fundraising initiatives (Sampson & Moore, 2008). Gibelman (2000) states that this issue could be related to the fact that many female fundraisers must balance their paid work with family demands. In this research, fundraising was recognized as a large part of the coaching job that impacts women's ability to run their programs effectively. One significant barrier highlighted was some of the positions only being part-time. Part-time positions impacted women coaches' ability to effectively fundraise because they need to take on jobs outside of coaching to support themselves financially.

Another coach highlighted that she had found the alumni for her team do not donate back to the program as much as the men's team does. A study by Tsiotsou (2006) mirrors this insight, finding that regarding the annual contribution, females donated almost 3.5 times less than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the income of female donors was less than that of male athletic donors. Fewer donations impact how much women coaches can obtain to support their sport programs.

Norman, Donnell, and Kidd (2021) have highlighted research set in the United States that shows us male alumnus on average donate double the amount of money compared to women back to their college teams. However, the law mandates that educational institutions provide equal opportunities and a proportional level of funding for each gender. Yet, in Canada, no such law exists (Norman, Donnell & Kidd, 2021). With a notable move in Canadian university sport towards a reliance on private funding and market-driven programs (Lenskyi, 2015), the impact on women coaches' ability to support their athletes, their program, and even their ability to stay in their position is strained. For example, due to a lack of funding, one head coach had to take on the responsibility of washing all her athletes' jerseys so they would have clean clothes for their competitions. Thus, recognizing the gendered nature of fundraising and its impacts on women coaches is an important barrier to consider when addressing the gender gap.

Alongside fundraising, another example of the unrecognized work of many women coaches was volunteering in the community. Volunteering was discussed by both the assistant coaches and head coaches during interviews. Most of the head coaches volunteered outside of their work requirements, noting its benefits for "growing the game." For example, several coaches spoke to their volunteer engagement efforts and

assisting with community sport programs. They stated that their involvement was vital because they hoped that more women would maintain their sport participation in the future. Therefore, volunteering was viewed as a way to engage girls outside of their team and act as a role model for youth.

While the head coaches spoke about volunteering positively, the assistant coaches I interviewed had a different perspective. Given that their positions are volunteer based, they discussed how a lack of pay had affected their ability to stay involved in coaching. All the assistant coaches I talked to have a job outside of their university coaching position. Some were lucky enough to receive a small stipend for their time from the university or an outside organization. Yet, several assistant coaches highlighted how they have taken on less responsibility because they needed to find paid employment. When addressing the lack of women's involvement in coaching, limited financial support has indeed been understood as a significant barrier.

It was evident through the interviews with participants that coaching requires time and commitment that goes far beyond practices and games. These women have illuminated a broader understanding of what "work" actually is and how it impacts their ability to meet their job requirements and ultimately sustain their career in sport. However, it is important to recognize that one of the participants had a very different understanding of unseen and unrecognized work from her own experience. She decided to leave her position as a head coach at the university and come back as an assistant coach years later. Reflecting on this experience, she told me that her leaving was not adequately understood by many at the time. Several of her colleagues thought she stepped down from the position because she was starting a family when in reality, she had an

offer for a better, higher-paying position. She was adamant on making this clear, stating that she did not want to be remembered as another woman who left coaching because she couldn't handle the job requirements. Instead, she left coaching for a better job opportunity.

This outlier perspective provides insight into the unrecognized abilities of women to move on from coaching into something that they consider to be a better opportunity. Currently, this is not recognized in much of the gender, sport, and leadership literature (Burton, 2015; Weiner & Burton, 2016). Often, the discussion in the current scholarship revolves around women leaving coaching because they can't handle the work responsibilities, have family commitments, or experience bias and maltreatment (Burton, 2015). This account, although an outlier in my study, suggests we need a broader understanding of why some women leave the profession instead of keeping it unseen and unrecognized.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

With the explicit job responsibilities, paired with the implicit unrecognized work of coaching, it was not surprising that achieving work-life balance was a struggle for women coaches to navigate. The challenge of achieving work-life balance was a common theme in gender, sport, and leadership literature (Berry & Franks 2010; Burton, 2015; Hoerber & Frisby, 2001; Weiner & Burton, 2016). Organizational structures, policies, and procedures supported by sport organizations can affect women's everyday realities through job pressures and job stress, work requirements, and hours of scheduled work (Bruening & Dixon 2007). As a result, Dixon et al. (2008) pointed toward the need to

create structures that enable work-life balance to attract and keep more women in high-ranking positions such as coaching university sport.

In this study, *The Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* did discuss the importance of supporting the family life of women coaches and the current lack of funding and initiatives available. It reads, "while some organizations have initiatives to offset domestic costs (ex. childcare at competitions), there are few systematic measures in place to offset these needs and facilitate the ongoing involvement of women in sport" (p. 17). Yet, while this policy highlights the importance of supporting work-life balance to further women's career advancement, my research participants told a different story. Instead of viewing work-life balance as a positive measure allowing them to attend to both work and personal responsibilities, the participants highlighted that sustainable work-life balance comes at a professional cost. This insight provides a greater understanding of how women coaches perceive their job requirements and their acceptance of shouldering heavy workloads.

Furthermore, the discourse around equitable support embedded in the policy documents states that family responsibilities are a major barrier to women's leadership in sport. The notion that women need better support specific to family responsibilities reinforces gender norms between men and women. For example, the idea that the responsibility of children and raising a family fall on women. The work of Cheung and Halpern (2010) highlights how the presence of children for men results in the assumption that they are better workers, stable, and responsible. In the case of women, this has the opposite effect.

Additionally, it became clear that women coaches view the negative career consequences of having children due to individual personal choices. Precisely, if they had children, they understood that their career was going to be impacted. One coach described how she needed to take a step back in her career to be available for her family and ultimately save her marriage. This description exemplifies a woman who has placed the responsibility on herself regarding a lack of career progression. As a solution, the literature states that women can establish clear priorities, develop their communication skills, set limits, and learn to say "no" when needed (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Yet for the women I interviewed this was not disclosed as a viable option because of the demanding work schedules, and emphasis placed on winning. Additionally, this solution places the responsibility on women to challenge current work practices.

Each one of the aforementioned examples highlight how achieving a work-life balance is an individual responsibility within the university. Thus, there is less consideration and acknowledgment of how institutions can better support women coaches. Since the university influences the values, beliefs, behaviours, and expectations of people within the organization, the high demands of coaching are rewarded, recognized, and supported (Helgesen & Johnson, 2010). The women described weekends away, various practice times, long working hours, and unexpected responsibilities as accepted work practices that they knew they needed to take on to progress. Those who were unwilling or unable to do so discussed the limitation they feel in progressing in their coaching careers. With the understanding that sport coaching falls within a hegemonic masculine culture, these requirements and lack of institutional support influence issues of access and equity within the workplace.

## 7.4 Institutional Whiteness of University Coaching

The sections mentioned above highlight how women coaches' working realities can provide insight into specific institutional practices and processes that limit their access or advancement in sports leadership. While this IE study has considered women coaches' experiences, it is important to recognize that they are not a unified category. Instead, each experience is recognized as individual and unique. Women hold multiple compounding identities, further shaping their experiences within an organization.

IE and Smith's work has been critiqued for generalizing the experiences of women (Hartsock, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). However, Smith has responded by emphasizing how individual standpoints remain open to diversity in institutional contexts (Smith, 1993). IE is not solely about generalizing one women's experience, but rather to "develop inquiry into the social relations in which that experience is embedded, making visible how it is put together and organized in and by a larger complex of relations" (Smith 1993, p. 184). When reviewing the experiences of the women coaches in this study, it was evident that while there is a lack of women who hold these positions, the ones that do maintain certain privileges.

All the women in this study who hold coaching positions are white, have enough financial freedom to remain in coaching, and all but two had a spouse or support system at home. Privileges identified illuminated the underrepresentation of diverse women in coaching positions, further revealing how binaries rule sport. As Melton and Bryant (2021) so eloquently stated, "there is no space for the in-between. When you don't fit those rigid molds, you are confronted everywhere you go that there is no space for you" (p. 62). Thus, it may remain challenging for diverse women to obtain and maintain coaching positions.



Keeping the impact of societal binaries in mind, more research is needed that recognizes the challenges for women with marginalized identities, including race, sexuality, age, class, ability, parenthood, and ethnicity to achieve high level leadership positions in sport (LaVoi, 2016). The women who are a part of this study have undoubtedly experienced challenges within their work, but it is essential to recognize the certain privileges they share. Additionally, since the women in this study occupy a privileged space, there is a need to increase awareness of the missing and muted voices in coaching. Ultimately, this university has privileged certain identities over others, and therefore, it is important to recognize how this impacts the occupational outcomes of diverse women (Crenshaw, 1993; Owen, 2020).

There is a critical need for more support directed towards women coaches, specifically women who experience systemic marginalization based on their intersecting identities. Just because there are currently some women who hold coaching positions, it does not mean that it is an equitable experience for all women, or that all women have access to coaching opportunities. While IE was a valuable approach for conducting a study that attended to underrepresented voices, excluded voices are not present. Thus, while the women coaches in this study were able to provide insight into current barriers they experience within the job, their insights highlight a lack of diversity within the university.

It is crucial to address the lack of diversity witnessed in this study if the current culture of university sport is to be challenged and changed. As the work of Demers, Din, and Werthner (2021) highlights, having different people with unique backgrounds in leadership positions can help foster decisions that consider the varying needs of all

individuals. Diverse organizations ensure other talents, skills and experiences have a voice and can become more effective in the process. If diversity is embraced within sport leadership, specifically coaching, the culture of sport will be transformed and enriched. However, change does not happen unless the organization is intentional and specific supports are introduced (Demers, Lucie, Brière & Culver, 2019). What is evident is that currently, not all women are supported in pursuing coaching positions as particular privileges are required.

## 7.5 Working Towards Gender Equity

With the varied challenges and barriers discussed, it is important to recognize that Canadian universities have gender equity policies in place to address the underrepresentation of women coaches. As analyzed in Chapter Six, the two policies in this study included *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* and the *U Sports Equity Policy*. Although these policies were designed to address the gender inequity present in university sport, they reflect and perpetuate the hegemonic masculine culture. The hegemonic masculine culture is maintained in the way equity is framed and described in both policies, the lack of specific strategies, and limited institutional responsibility and accountability. Shaw and Penney (2003) state that most sport organizations do fail to address inequitable operational processes, despite these policies being in place. The findings witnessed in this study highlight how the gendered relations in university sport maintain inequalities, regardless of the policy measures implemented (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Organizations can commit to equality and fairness; however, invisible inequities tend to prevail and continue to re(produce) social relations based on gender (Acker, 2006).

IE and the relations of ruling were particularly useful in uncovering the issues mentioned above, as texts maintain the taken-for-granted nature of equity practices and women's leadership in university sport. Despite these policies, women continue to have the poorest facilities, the lowest funding, and the most inconvenient playing times (Norman, Donnelly, & Kidd, 2020). While these barriers are recognized in the current literature (Burton, 2017), this study has illuminated how institutional practices and processes maintain these barriers, through a lack of gender equity initiatives, education, and placing the responsibility of women's advancement on the individual rather than institutions. Additionally, through IE, we can see how each of the gender equity policies has contributed to the institutionalization of the gender binary. As a result, this study has moved beyond the policy using mapping to uncover the way activities are coordinated within the institution, and women coaches working realities.

One problem revealed through the mapping process is that these policies have described gender equity as a desired outcome rather than a continued commitment. For example, the *USports Equity Policy* highlighted that universities should reach no less than 40% representation of anyone gender. By striving for equity through the closing of this gap, both policies work to continue sustaining social relations based on gender (Knoppers, 2016). Furthermore, the policies do not identify any goals, steps, or propose concrete solutions to tackle the gender gap in coaching (Kidd, 2010). Norman, Donnell, and Kidd (2021) have further highlighted the limited attempts to monitor or implement any form of gender proportionality in Canadian university athletics, despite gender equity policies being in place. For example, a survey was carried out by the Canadian university

sport governing body in 2005 that looked at the number of men and women coaches; however, USports has not published any data since then.

In the absence of any specific strategies or institutional accountability, the policies place the responsibility on individual women to navigate the institution and achieve their success in leadership. The policies encourage women specifically to engage in educational opportunities, mentorship, and leadership development programs. Placing the responsibility on women is particularly problematic because the hegemonic masculine culture of sport remains unaddressed. Thus, there is a failure to disrupt the power dynamics that result from the value placed on hegemonic masculine ideals, which have been normalized.

As a result of the failure to effect structural change, there is a need to challenge the basic assumptions and culture that inform institutional practices within the university. By doing so, the hope is that institutions may recognize the support needed for both current and aspiring women coaches. Despite the current policies in place, they do not reflect what was happening in the lives of women coaches as they experience their work. The following section will consider how the practices and processes within Canadian university sport may be reimagined and organized differently, as a result from the current working realities of women coaches.

## 7.6 Reimagining Coaching: Doing Work Differently

This research has provided the opportunity to explore the working realities of women coaches, to better understand how individual realities are organized within the university. Upon review and reflection of the interviews and texts in this study, it is evident that the women coaches' work practices are organized by hegemonic masculine ideals. Yet, I am left wondering if university sport could be organized differently with the

intention of better supporting women. Specifically, how the everyday working practices of university sport can be reimagined.

For example, why do women's teams always play before the men's teams? Could this practice be changed? Why does the football team get priority over women's teams in terms of space? Could institutions ensure all teams have equal access to practice space? Why are teams separated by a distinct gender binary? What if there were co-ed teams for every sport? What if all university sport programs received the same amount of funding? Additionally, what potential do these changes have specific to addressing the gender gap in coaching?

Currently, the policies in place that aim to support women in coaching analyzed in this study appear disconnected from the everyday working realities of women. The policies reinforce women's individual responsibility advance in coaching, such as gaining more experience. Yet, this research has shown that women coaches' daily working realities may benefit from more community building opportunities. Thus, a reorganizing and reimagining the institutional practices of university sport requires a commitment to community-based approaches.

The university in this study provides little room for building community, as described by the women coaches during interviews. For example, they described their teams being isolated within the institution, with little opportunity to engage with other coaches, staff, or athletes. When seeking to address some of the barriers the women have highlighted, including work life balance, fundraising, demanding schedules, and the unrecognized work of coaching, a community focus could help further support women in

these positions. Specifically, restructuring the work environment to create the conditions for collaboration and connection.

For instance, currently the university sport structure is set up as each team having one head coach and one assistant coach. However, if this taken-for granted practice in university sport is reimagined, a co-coaching model could be beneficial. Specifically, having two head coaches for a program allows for more time to ensure a healthy work life balance because the work is divided. Thus, reimagining current institutional practices and processes could address specific challenges that have been put forth in the interviews.

When problematizing current institutional practices, the findings of this research have highlighted the power of sharing experience. Having coaches share, talk, and critically engage with their work practices offer the opportunity to learn from their own experiences and others. Thus, priority needs to be placed on collaboration opportunities between coaches, administration, and even athletes, to share work knowledge. By shifting away from the current siloed program structure, there is potential to connect experiences and create change. The recommendations in the following section have been derived with this focus in mind.

## 7.7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are stated to challenge the relations of ruling embedded within the university sport culture. With the knowledge of how these social relations work to inform the realities of women coaches' daily lives, it is necessary to identify supports that contest university sport's taken-for-granted nature, values, and beliefs. Community building, professional development, and action-oriented policies will be discussed as valuable methods of addressing the underrepresentation of women coaches.

### *Community Building*

Another central area of improvement that participants discussed was addressing the lack of connection to the coaching community at their university. The women coaches have described limited opportunities to engage with other coaches, teams, and staff members within their daily work practices. The only coaches who had access to collaboration opportunities were two head coaches who had been a part of the university for over five years. The limited engagement with other coaches proved detrimental, as the women expressed a real lack of connection to different individuals and the university as a whole. The siloing of their programs resulted in feelings of isolation, individual responsibility, and limited relationship building, as highlighted in the interviews.

For women to feel supported in navigating the relations of ruling, and for institutions to be held accountable, communities within university sport need to be established. Providing opportunities for diverse individuals in varied positions to engage, communicate, and support one another has the potential to create change. Women coaches could learn that they are not alone in their struggles while also sharing support, insights, and resources resulting from their work experiences. Through collective engagement, structural inequities can be learned and hopefully addressed.

Community building amongst coaches could also provide more insight into the hierarchy of sport and how it supports certain teams over others. With the opportunity to have these sorts of conversations, coaches will gain insight into how this specific institutional practice informs their working reality. For example, the space or funding they receive relative to others. Without the opportunity to engage as a coaching community, this insight would not be discussed, shared, and ultimately questioned.

Therefore, when seeking to problematize the current culture in university sport and create meaningful change, community-building opportunities need to be prioritized.

Culver, Trudel, and Werthner's (2009) work also highlight the positive possibilities for coaches to build community. Their study found that collaboration and interaction between coaches allowed for their learning to be very situated to their current experiences. Additionally, leadership and organizational support are important elements for sustaining the coaching community. However, there are challenges maintaining community given the competitive nature of sport. Coaching communities are rarely present because the competitive nature of sport constraints coaches from sharing their knowledge and experience. Additionally, since coaches are embedded within a hegemonic masculine culture, priority is placed on success and individual achievement rather than building and sustaining a sense of community.

Despite the challenge institutionalized hegemonic masculinity presents, coaching communities can offer the opportunity for individuals to share concerns, problems, passions and deepen their knowledge and expertise (Wenger, 2011). Therefore, collaboration opportunities amongst coaches within university sport are important, especially when seeking to address the relations of ruling. Suppose coaches remain siloed within a university to their individual sport programs. In that case, there will continue to be limited opportunities to engage in discussions focused on sport-specific strategies and how to navigate the coaching career.

### ***Professional Development***

During my interviews, the need for further education and an understanding of current work practices came to the forefront. The emphasis on education was not



surprising given it reflects the coaches' previous experiences. Six of the eight coaches I spoke to have a background in education, which varied from a professor, high school teachers, individuals who completed their Bachelor of Education, and one individual who was currently completing their Bachelor of Education. Thus, both the head and assistant coaches indicated that they valued the potential impact that education has on aspiring and current women coaches. Additionally, the women highlighted the lack of support that they were receiving from the institution in terms of professional development opportunities.

The consensus among head and assistant coaches was that more education, specifically professional development, needs to happen and be available to coaches. Yet, the kind of coaching education discussed in the interviews was not related to improving team success, gameplay strategies, or athlete support. Professional development for coaches has focused on providing individuals with certain skills, competencies or “best practices” (McDonald & Spence, 2016). However, the women coaches in this study advocated for advancing their knowledge around workplace practices, such as applying for coaching positions, job requirements, and achieving work-life balance. Most importantly, more education around fundraising strategies is required, as a program's ability to function depends on how much a coach can fundraise.

The need for coaching education to extend beyond a sport-specific focus stems from the women coaches' work knowledges. By voicing individual experience to reveal the relations of ruling, it is apparent from this study that additional supports specific to current working realities needs to be provided. For example, professional development that reflects a broader understanding of work to include fundraising knowledge can

inform both perspective and current coaches about institutional requirements. Therefore, to better support, prepare, and maintain women in coaching, education needs to reflect the entirety of work practices within Canadian university sport.

Additionally, a shift needs to be made from coaching education being an individual responsibility to a university provided opportunity. Many of the assistant coaches and head coaches described that they felt that professional development was their responsibility, and that they were seeking out those opportunities themselves from outside organizations. The university from which they worked did not ask any of them to participate in any educational programs or offer any educational opportunities. Despite a lack of access, many of the coaches saw benefit in continued coaching focused education and did take on the responsibility of seeking out these courses through outside organizations.

Overall, professional development for women in coaching needs to extend beyond gameplay and strategy. Instead, the results of this research call for a broader understanding of professional development and support through the recognition that coaches need to be better served in the advancement of skills and abilities that reflect their working realities, such as fundraising. By providing professional development opportunities that are reflective of work practices, women coaches will be better served in navigating the relations of ruling that are impacting their experiences and daily life, while also calling on institutions to address these gaps.

### ***Action-Oriented Policies***

The third and final recommendation is for USports to revisit their current gender equity policy, with the intention of making it more action oriented and reflective of

current work practices. Currently, equity is defined in terms of "proportional representation and participation opportunities" (USports, 2019). However, there have been no attempts to monitor or implement any form of proportionality (Norman, Donnelly & Kidd, 2020). Defining equity in terms of equal representation or equal opportunity fails to address any cultural components working to limit women in the institution. A focus on challenging the dominant and essentialist narratives that continue to limit women's leadership is needed (Demers, Din & Werthner, 2021).

Furthermore, the policies do not consider the various supports required. Instead, women are forced to assimilate to the culture to be accepted through a "one size fits all" approach to equity. In the research, this was witnessed in women's demanding schedules and the unrecognized work they took on. Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that gender equity policy development become more action oriented, and reflective of these work practices.

Yet, we must also recognize that policy alone doesn't create change; people do. Thus, institutions must have individuals or groups monitoring targets, tracking progress, and providing opportunities. Specifically, universities must commit to annual collection, collation, and sharing of gendered data (Demers, Din & Werthner, 2021). Furthermore, institutions must be held accountable for not meeting these requirements. Otherwise, the policy remains a guideline rather than a standard.

Each of the recommendations provided seek to address the relations of ruling through better supporting women in coaching, by recognizing current working realities. The recommendations call for a shift in the rhetoric that focuses on "fixing women" or providing them with skills rather than addressing the university sport culture

(Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Eagly & Carli, 2007). By highlighting how the ruling relations maintain women's underrepresentation, insight into how universities can better support women in these positions has been uncovered. In the final chapter, I will reiterate the impacts of this study, identifying key findings, what I have learned, and the research implications.

## Chapter 8

### 8 Conclusion

The aim of this concluding chapter is to revisit the research findings and reflect upon the insights and knowledge that was gained during this study. In the first section, I will provide a summary of the research process. Then, I will discuss what I have learned, reflecting on my past understanding and current engagement with gender, leadership, and sport. The limitations of the research will then be highlighted, followed by implications for future research. Specifically, I highlight key reflections on the research process and findings, institutional ethnography, and their implications for women coaches.

This study aimed to explore the working realities of women coaches at one Canadian university, to gain a better understanding of women's underrepresentation in coaching positions. Using institutional ethnography, I explored the problematic of the lack of women coaches by asking the following question:

- How do institutional practices in Canadian university sport maintain the gender gap in coaching?

The underrepresentation of women in coaching at Canadian universities is an issue that needs to be confronted and addressed. Without women in coaching positions, universities send a strong message regarding who and what is valued and respected in leadership. With sport being a prolific site of gender segregation and the gender gap in coaching persisting, it is essential that the barriers women experience are continuously illuminated, discussed, and challenged.

Not only has this study investigated the research question, but it has also addressed significant gaps in gender, sport, and leadership scholarship. Firstly, the study

has offered a unique approach to research in the gender, sport, and leadership field using IE as a mode of inquiry. Secondly, the study has provided a Canadian lens, a current rarity in the literature. Lastly, given that much has been written about women's personal challenges in sports leadership, this study expanded exploration towards institutional responsibility.

The first phase of the research process involved interviewing women coaches. Eight women shared their experiences as either a head coach or an assistant coach at one Canadian university. The standpoint of the women who participated in this research provided the point of entry into the social relations that I aimed to discover with this dissertation. Each one provided insight into the complexity of the women's coaching work, and their daily activities within the university.

Complementary to the insight each interview provided, the second phase of the research involved analyzing two gender equity policies and women's work schedules. Evaluating the gender equity policies allowed for an extension beyond individual experience toward the relations of ruling informing, shaping, and impacting the daily experiences highlighted in the interviews. The policies showcased the current support for women in coaching, and how gender equity is framed within Canadian university sport. Specifically, the policies suggested that it is women's individual responsibility to address the gender gap, citing a lack of quality sport experiences. Most notable was the disjuncture between how the policies framed support, and what the coaches were experiencing daily.

The work schedules highlighted activities such as fundraising, alumni engagement, and team meetings. These activities, specifically the unseen work of women

coaches, illuminated realities which are not currently recognized by the gender equity policies. The gap between women coaches' working realities and the gender equity policies showcase the influence of the relations of ruling. These social relations work to maintain and sustain gendered practices within the university.

The gendered practices that are present are a result of the hegemonic masculine culture that continues to privilege certain leadership ideals and values over others. It has become clear because of this research that women continue to face barriers once they are in coaching positions, due to normalized practices, expectations, and regulations. Furthermore, to obtain these positions in the first place, women must assimilate to hegemonic masculine ideas by prioritizing winning, taking on demanding work schedules, or figuring out how to achieve work-life balance. With gender equity policies that do not reflect current working realities, the gender gap is maintained, sustained, and remains unchallenged.

Findings from this study have encouraged a reimagining of current work practices and process, to better support women in the field and address the gender gap. Currently, women coaches are participating in various activities that extend beyond what supports are provided for women in coaching. Specific recommendations include community building, due to the siloing of programs within the university. Additionally, there is a need for more professional development and education not just around game strategy or player development, but instead coaching job requirements. Lastly, institutions need to be held accountable when it comes to addressing issues of gender inequity. For example, policies that provide concrete steps and strategies that work to address the hegemonic

masculine culture of sport. In the following section, I will highlight what I have learned because of the discussed research process.

## 8.1 What I Have Learned

While Canadian universities have policies that declare commitments to gender equity, the findings of this study have shown that different supports need to be in place to support women's leadership in sport. As of now, despite the gender equity policies, women continue to be underrepresented in coaching. It has become evident to me that without an acknowledgement and understanding of the work that coaching involves, gendered practices remain unchallenged and thus, unchanged. Unless current institutional practices and processes can be reimagined, the university in this study will fail to address a culture that continues to limit women's leadership in coaching.

The impacts of the lack of women coaching in Canadian university sport is something that I have witnessed first-hand. As a former varsity athlete, I had limited role models to look up to in coaching positions during my athletic career. Without female role models, I found it challenging to envision myself holding as a university coach one day. This experience grounded my research and sustained my continued interest in exploring this issue. Additionally, prior to conducting the research I was under the impression that all women were struggling in similar ways to me.

Yet, I was faced with the realization that despite the varied challenges women face in their daily activities as coaches, certain privileges are required to access coaching opportunities in the first place. Privileges identified in this research included a flexible schedule, specific supports (financial, home, etc.), and the possibility to envision coaching as a career option. This was a major learning for me, as I realized that I had never thought critically about my own experience as a coach, and who is currently



holding these positions. Although challenging, I need to recognize the power and privilege I and others possess, to have had the opportunity to coach in the first place.

The research process itself also required me to be highly adaptable and flexible. As a result of the varied ways that IE is understood and taken up, I was challenged to ensure my approaches were well supported and my decisions were rationalized. My project was also completed during the time of Covid-19, where access to face-to-face interactions was no longer a reality. I needed to adjust my project based on the lockdown mandate, taking out and changing certain expectations, intended progressions, and timelines. As a result, I have learned that the research process can evolve through what you discover and your circumstances, when I went into it thinking it would be a linear process.

Alongside the previous lessons, I will walk away from this project feeling more engaged, motivated, and supported in addressing the underrepresentation of women coaches. I have learned from the participants' described frustrations, and successes in their positions. Their stories have motivated me to continue to investigate, reflect, and ultimately work to develop this research further moving forward. The underrepresentation of women in coaching in Canada will remain an issue, until current workplace realities are challenged and one day, changed.

## 8.2 Limitations

The limitations of this study include the lack of generalizability and the small sample size. The study explored one university's women coaching staff, hearing from eight individuals. While the research provides insight into the gendered sports landscape, it certainly does not reflect the challenges and opportunities that all women coaches experience. Therefore, the small sample size is recognized as a limitation of the current

study. Additionally, as the primary researcher, I recognize the perceptions, values, and beliefs I bring to the research process. Through ongoing critical reflection and engagement with personal experiences, I have tried to make my biases, perspectives, and values known in this research rather than hidden. For example, by identifying my ontological and epistemological assumptions.

### 8.3 Implications for Future Research

From an institutional ethnographical perspective, women's everyday work is informed and facilitated by varying ruling relations present in the organization. As understood by institutional ethnographers, work is a powerful means to understand the situatedness of what individuals do in their daily lives (Smith, 2006). Based on this research, it is evident that women coaches' work experiences are shaped by the hegemonic masculine culture of sport. The culture creates and sustains a distinct gender binary and maintains a hierarchy of sport. Women are therefore faced with the challenge of achieving work-life balance while completing unrecognized, undervalued work within the university. While women must have access and equal opportunity to obtain coaching positions, what is clear from this study is that once women are in these positions, they continue to face challenges and barriers in their jobs. To continue a career in coaching, women must take on unrecognized and undervalued responsibilities, ultimately "fitting in to get on" (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010).

The findings of this study offer some direction for future policy and leadership practice to address the underrepresentation of women in coaching and the barriers they face during their careers. The relations of ruling reveal the need for more support from universities, including providing educational opportunities, community building, and active equity initiatives. Currently, women coaches are faced with the individual

responsibility to advance their leadership by navigating institutional barriers. Instead, this research advocates for institutional commitment and accountability to create and sustain structural changes that address the hegemonic masculine culture of sport.

This project is significant because it recognizes the institutional support needed for both current and aspiring women coaches. It is important to address the gender gap in coaching so that other young female athletes can envision themselves in sport leadership roles in the future. While the challenges women head coaches face may be complex and nuanced, they are not insurmountable (Eagly & Carli, 2004). The requisite knowledge to challenge institutions to address the gender imbalance in sports leadership has been shared by mapping institutional processes. From here, the hope is that adequate education and professional development opportunities, community building, and policy changes can be developed.

What has come to the forefront because of the research findings is the need for the university to reveal and ultimately work towards changing the common, taken for granted practices within sport. If we are to work towards addressing the gender gap in coaching, universities must have practices in place that support collaboration. Through collaboration, experiences may be shared, and work practices challenged. By prioritizing women coaches' experiences in this study, work practices that have impacted their career advancement, and even left others out of the conversation, have been revealed.

This project has also shown the value of IE as a research approach, specifically in gender, sport, and leadership studies. IE can account for the invisible, taken-for-granted work in everyday life through an all-encompassing notion of work. As a result, we can gain insight into the time, skills, knowledge, and effort coaching requires and how these

activities are shaped by the social context in which they take place. This is lacking in current literature, and thus prioritizing the everyday life of women in coaching has provided valuable insight into the accepted and unchallenged limiting requirements of the job.

Additionally, this study has highlighted how IE studies can begin not by asking where the texts are but what people are doing. Currently, IE has been most actively taken up by researchers in professional practice disciplines (Brydges et al., 2021; Kuronen, 2019; McCoy, 2021; Spina, 2020), resulting in committed studies to exploring text-based practices. However, when we direct research attention back to what people do and how individuals know their world, we will find texts and other modes of knowledge that inform experience (McCoy, 2021). In this study, various organizing practices were identified, such as the impact of a hierarchy of sport on women coaches. What became clear was that the policy texts didn't have much organizing influence when it came to creating a more equitable culture for women coaches. Thus, this research highlights the potential of IE to recognize different ways that coordination happens beyond just texts.

From this research, I was amazed by how deeply engrained the relations of ruling are within Canadian university sport. So much so, that gendered practices are normalized and taken for granted. Given the insight that IE provided during this research, I hope that this work reaches individual not just within the gender, sport, and leadership scholarship but beyond, to practitioners, educators, athletes, and organizations. If there is ever to be effective action and change in coaching and women's leadership in sport, it is essential to see institutions as they are experienced by underrepresented individuals. An organization

that excludes women also excludes their knowledge, experience, interests, and perspectives (Smith, 2006).

To conclude, this study has provided me with the confidence to speak to the need for women in coaching positions and how the social organization of sport continues to maintain and perpetuate gender inequities. There needs to be more time and effort at the institutional level to address the taken-for-granted ways university sport functions to limit women's advancement in coaching. Unless current practices are reimagined and current coaches supported in ways that reflect their working realities, aspiring women coaches, like myself, may continue to struggle to envision themselves in these positions. It is not sufficient to have women “fit in to get on” within the current culture, but instead, institutional practices must be reimagined to support women’s leadership in coaching.

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## APPENDIX A: Letter of Information and Consent



### Letter of Information and Consent

**Project Title:** Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women Coaches in Canadian University Sport

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Student Researcher+ Contact:** [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

**Principal Investigator + Contact:** [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

#### 1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a research study aimed at exploring the leadership experiences of women coaches in Canadian university sport. You are invited because of your current role as a coach of a team sport at a Canadian university.

#### 2. Why is this study being done?

Despite increased participation opportunities for women in sport, women are still underrepresented in sport leadership positions. In particular, coaching is the area with the most significant gender imbalance. It is important to problematize and challenge the underrepresentation of women coaches in Canadian university sports, otherwise the culture of the organization will continue to act as a limiting factor for women's leadership in the field. This research will address the challenges women coaches face so as to provide leadership strategies to support the future development, and maintenance of women coaches in Canadian universities.

#### 3. How long will you be in this study?

You will be asked to participate in one Zoom interview lasting 45-60 minutes. Participants will also be observed coaching.

#### 4. What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview. The purpose of this interview is to obtain a better understanding of how you are supported within your organization. Specifically, you will be asked about the institutional practices that have

impacted your ability to obtain and maintain your coaching role. The interview will be audio recorded for accuracy. Participants cannot take part in the study if they do not wish to be audio recorded. All participants' names and identities will stay confidential. After the completion of the interview, participants will receive an email that has a debriefing/member-checking form attached to it. The member checking form will include a secure link to OWL that has the transcript from the interview. This process of member-checking enables you to make changes to the transcript within two weeks of receiving the email.

Participants will also be observed coaching a game/ event. Like the interview, participants' names and identities will stay confidential.

### **5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

Although there are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study, there might be some discomfort in discussing challenges that you have faced during your coaching career. You can always choose not to answer a certain question, and in case of emotional discomfort, here is a list of wellness support services at Western and in Ontario:

Mental health resources at Western:

[http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/resources.html](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/resources.html)

After hours Good 2 Talk helpline:

1-866-925-5454

Ontario Mental Health helpline:

1-866-531-2600

### **6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

You will be given the opportunity to represent your voice, share your experiences and reflect on them. Specifically, you will have an increased awareness on your own leadership experiences as a university coach. Your perspectives on your career would benefit the community by illuminating additional supports necessary for both current and aspiring women coaches. Furthermore, your experiences can offer leadership strategies to support the future development, and maintenance of women coaches in Canadian universities.

### **7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you at any time before the final submission of the study. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know.

### **8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

The study participants' data that will be reported in the dissemination of results will be comprised of both de-identified descriptors and direct quotes. A master list of the first name of the individuals and their pseudonyms and email addresses will be kept on a password protected and encrypted USB. The data set will be stored on a secure university server. Electronic copies of the audio files will be saved on a password protected USB stick, and transcripts will be kept on the university's server, which is protected by password. The stored transcripts will only have pseudonyms. All research data will be destroyed after seven years, as per Western University's policy. Participants have the choice of receiving the full de-identified transcript and/ or a preliminary review of the data analysis upon request. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. However, the researcher might use and publish quotes which are not directly attributable to an individual.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

Participants will not be compensated in this study.

**What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate, you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**10. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study, please contact:

██

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics ██████████ ██████████

██

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**



**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women Coaches in Canadian University Sport

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Student Researcher+ Contact:** [Redacted]

**Principal Investigator + Contact:** [Redacted]

I consent the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

I consent to the use and publishing of any unidentified observations obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)*

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)*

## APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. How long have you been coaching at the university level?
2. Please describe a typical work day for you.
3. Leading up to your current position, did you have a female role model/mentor?
4. Can you describe a time when you have felt the most supported in your work?
5. Can you describe a time when have you felt the least supported in your work?
6. Are there job expectations outside of your coaching responsibilities? If so, what are they?
7. Have you ever considered coaching a male team? Why or why not.
8. Have you experienced inequalities and/or discrimination in the workplace?  
Prompt: As a coach, have noticed inequalities between you and your male colleagues? Please describe.  
Prompt: As a coach, have you noticed inequalities between you and other female colleagues? Please describe.
9. How has the USport organization supported your coaching career?  
Prompt: In what ways can the USport organization better support your career?
10. Based on your experience as a member of the organization, how can USport further foster the development and maintenance of women in coaching?
11. What are some of the leadership development programs you have participated in? (Offered by USport or others). Prompt: What have you found beneficial? Are there things you would change or add?
12. In your opinion, what is the biggest barrier to women entering the field of coaching?
13. What piece(s) of advice would you give new women coaches entering the field?
14. Is there anything else that you would like to share that has not been covered?

## APPENDIX C: Ethics Approval



**Date:** 25 March 2020

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Study Title:** Addressing the Underrepresentation of Head Women Coaches in Canadian University Sport

**Short Title:** Underrepresentation of Head Women Coaches

**Application Type:** NMREB Initial Application

**Review Type:** Delegated

**Full Board Reporting Date:** May 1 2020

**Date Approval Issued:** 25/Mar/2020

**REB Approval Expiry Date:** 25/Mar/2021

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

### Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
HF Debriefing form JAN29	Debriefing document	29/Jan/2020	2
HF Interview Questions	Interview Guide	27/Nov/2019	1
HF Letter of Information and Consent mar16final	Written Consent/Assent	16/Mar/2020	3
HFEmail Script Recruitment mar16	Recruitment Materials	16/Mar/2020	3
Non-Participant Observation Guide	Non-Participant Observation Guide	16/Mar/2020	1

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [REDACTED]

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

**Note:** This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

## APPENDIX D: Curriculum Vitae

### Curriculum Vitae

<b>Name:</b>	Hayley Finn
<b>Post-secondary Education and Degrees:</b>	<p>York University Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2011-2015 B.A. B.Ed.</p> <p>The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2016-2017 M.A.</p> <p>The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2017-2022 Ph.D.</p>
<b>Honours and Awards:</b>	<p>The Robert Macmillan Graduate Award in Educational Leadership 2020</p> <p>Case Competition Silver Medalist, awarded at the International Leadership Association Global Conference, Ottawa ON. 2019</p> <p>Western University Entrance Scholarship 2017-2021</p> <p>Academic All Canadian, U Sport 2015</p> <p>Athletic Scholarship, York University 2011-2015</p>
<b>Related Work Experience</b>	<p>Course Instructor The University of Western Ontario 2019-2021</p> <p>Project Manager, SSHRC Funded Research Project The University of Western Ontario 2018-2021</p>

Research Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2021

**Publications:**

Papers in Peer-Reviewed Journals

- Finn, H., Gardiner, R. & Bruijns, L. (2018). Winning at all costs: Gender, sport and violence. *Gender Forum*, 70, 26-39.
- Fox-Kirk, W., Gardiner, R. Finn, H., & Chisholm, J. (2020). Genderwashing: The myth of equality, *Human Resource Development International*, 23(5), 586-597.
- Gardiner, R. A., & Finn, H. (2021). Translating gender policies into practice: Mapping ruling relations through institutional ethnography. In *Handbook of Research Methods on Gender and Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gardiner, R., Shockness, M., Almquist, J., & Finn, H. (2019). Politics versus policies: Fourth wave feminist critiques of higher education's response to sexual violence. *Journal of Women and Leadership in Higher Education*, 12(3), 319-336.

Abstracts, Presentations to Professional Meetings

- Abuya, K., Finn, H., Gallagher, C., Gause, S., James, M. & Teig, T. (June 2021). Online Presentation, Advancing Research Women and Leadership: Critical Feminism. The Women & Leadership Academic Colloquium 2021: From Intent to Action.
- Finn, H. (Nov. 2019). Guest lecture on institutional ethnography, Dr. Gardiner's Social Contexts Class, Western University, London, Ontario.
- Finn, H. (Apr. 2018). Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women Head Basketball Coaches in Canadian University Sport, Poster Presentation, Robert Macmillan Symposium in Education. Western University, London, Ontario.

- Finn, H. & McKechnie, S. (June 2021). Student Activism and Sexual Violence on Campus. CCSHE Panel presentation, Calling for Change: Addressing gender-based violence in higher education. Asynchronous presentation, Congress 2021.
- Gardiner, R. & Finn, H. (Oct. 2018). Whose authenticity matters: Gender politics and organizational policies in higher education, Real Conversations: Leadership and organizational violence. International Leadership Association (ILA), West Palm Beach, Florida.
- Gardiner, R. & Finn, H. (Jan. 2020). Guest lecture on institutional ethnography, Dr. Chisholm's Graduate Methods Class, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario.
- Gardiner, R., Finn, H. & Hartman, E. (Oct. 25, 2019). Panel presentation, Youth leadership, ILA Leadership conference, Ottawa, Ontario.
- Gardiner, R., Finn, H. & Hartman, E. (June 2019). Growing girl's leadership: Addressing the underrepresentation of diverse girls in STEM and Sport. Representation through programs, ILA 4<sup>th</sup> Women and Leadership Conference, Scotts Valley, California.
- Gardiner, R., Finn, H., Egan, K., & Chisholm, J. (Jan. 2020). The Good, The Bad and the Transformational: Feminist Approaches to Interdisciplinary Research, Panel Discussion, Women's Studies Speaker Series Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario.
- Viczko, M., McKechnie, S., Gardiner, R., & Finn, H. (April, 2019). Sexual violence: A critical policy analysis, AERA Presidential Stream, Toronto.

Other - Book Reviews

Finn, H. & Gardiner, R. (2018). Samier, E., (Ed.), *Ideologies in educational administration and leadership*. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 186: 31-34.