Surviving rather than thriving: Understanding the experiences of women coaches using a theory of gendered social well-being

Abstract

In shifting our gaze to the sociological impact of being in the minority, the purpose of this study was to substantiate a model of gendered social well-being to appraise women coaches' circumstances, experiences and challenges as embedded within the social structures and relations of their profession. This is drawn on in-depth interviews with a sample of head women coaches within the UK. The findings demonstrate that personal lives, relationships, social and family commitments were sidelined by many of the participants in order to meet the expectations of being a (woman) coach. We locate these experiences in the organisational practices of high performance sport which hinder women coaches from having meaningful control over their lives. The complexities of identity are also revealed through the interplay of gender with (dis)ability, age and whiteness as evidence of hegemonic femininity within the coaching profession. Consequently, for many women, coaching is experienced as a 'developmental dead-end'.

Introduction

The coaching literature and indeed, sport and gender research more broadly, is saturated with studies and writing around the issue of women's underrepresentation as coaches. The consensus is that the coaching profession has long been and continues to be, a white male dominated occupation and that this is a global issue. Within the UK, the context for the present study, the statistic remains that only one in five qualified coaches are women (Sports Coach UK, 2011). Globally, figures reveal that one in ten accredited Olympic coaches are women (Norman, 2014). To provide country-specific examples, Australia currently have no women as national managers for any sport other than for gymnastics and netball (Robertson, 2016). In Germany, 10% of high performance coaches and 13% of professional coaches are women (Robertson, 2016). Paradoxically, in Finland, a country known for its societal and political embrace of the notions of gender

equality, men are in the majority in coaching. In team sports, two thirds of head coaching roles are taken by men (Robertson, 2016). In Canada, the percentage of women in both high performance coaching and university head coaching roles is approximately 20% (Coaching Association of Canada, 2012; Donnelly and Kidd, 2011). Within the UK, the underrepresentation persists despite an improvement in wider social attitudes and legislation towards equality and diversity within the UK society (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010) and the action in response to this legislative pressure by sporting organisations and national governing bodies. Since the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act by the UK Government, within sport and coaching there has been an increasing interest in and emergence of equalities on the agenda of policy makers and organisations (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2010), as part of a broader trend towards mainstreaming equality across the sectors (Mulderrig, 2007). Sporting governing bodies and organisations are seemingly providing more opportunities for minority groups and individuals to access the 'system'. However, research shows that the engagement of sport organisations in operationalising equality legislation and standards into practice, beyond 'tick box' exercises and number counting, is questionable (e.g. Spracklen et al., 2006; Rankin-Wright et al., in press; Lusted, 2009; Ahmed, 2007). What is still lacking is an examination of the power relations that lie at the heart of sporting inequalities and the experiences of minority groups in participation and leadership (Rankin-Wright et al., in press; Norman et al., 2014; Spracklen et al., 2006). Despite drives to enable more underrepresented groups to access sport and coaching, such as increasing the number of women within the coaching profession, the persistence to target underrepresented groups and provide extra programmes and services, rather than enact deep structural and cultural change, continues (Houlihan and White, 2002).

Researchers working within the area of gender inequality within the coaching profession have also tended to persist at addressing similar issues. Existing research in this subject area has provided us with burgeoning knowledge of many factors that have prevented women gaining more coaching opportunities or their intentions to leave the profession. Quantitative approaches have dominated the literature seeking to understand why women are so poorly represented in sport leadership roles. The under-representation of women as coaches in proportion to men is often explained by women coaches having lower self-efficacy, less intention, preference,

and motivation to coach and higher intent to leave the profession compared to men coaches (e.g. Chelladurai et al., 1999; Cunningham and Sagas, 2003; Cunningham et al., 2003; Sagas and Ashley, 2001; Sagas et al., 2006). Qualitative research has added to this by citing structural factors such as fewer opportunities, unequal gendered relations, unequal ideas of coaching competence, lower self-confidence, poor working conditions and sexism interconnected with homophobia and racism (e.g. Norman, 2010; 2012; Rankin-Wright, 2015; Allen and Shaw, 2013; Fielding-Lloyd and Mean, 2011; Kilty, 2006; LaVoi and Dutove, 2012; Shaw and Slack, 2002). To this end, we argue that this field is potentially reaching saturation point in terms of suggestions for the barriers and facilitators to women starting and progressing as coaches. What crucially remains is the need for a less 'static', ad-hoc approach to the issue of women's underrepresentation as coaches: there is a greater need for a contextual understanding including the performance level at which the coaches work; a greater critical examination of organisational practices that frame such experiences; more use of an interdisciplinary approach to this research 'problem'; a greater understanding of not only what it means to be in the minority but what are the consequences, for the individual and the wider coaching context; and a greater exploration of the nuances of what it means to be a 'coach' that all could contribute to women's poor representation and less positive experiences as sports coaches.. These questions require a review and summation of the quality of women's experiences, accomplishments, relationships and how they function within the social structures of their professional and personal lives (Diener et al., 1999; Keyes, 2005).

We see *well-being* as a broad category that encompasses these factors. Precisely, the purpose of this study is to adopt and substantiate Keyes' (1998; 2005) model of *social* well-being to appraise women coaches' circumstances, experiences and challenges as embedded within the social structures and relations of their profession. This is achieved through empirical research with a sample of UK head women coaches; their experiences and voices provide the basis for the present study. This is an alternative approach to psychological notions of well-being that focus solely on the private lives of individuals. Keyes' (2005) work understands social well-being as a product of social and community structures and enables and evaluation of the self with respect to social context, and evaluation of others and society (Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010). This paper is structured in six sections. First, we discuss well-being within a sport and coaching context and why

such a perspective should be adopted to problematise the underrepresentation of and the experiences of women coaches. We then introduce, broadly, the notion of social well-being and its merits. Third, we introduce our gendered adaptation of Keyes' model of social well-being to address this issue and discuss the multiple dimensions of social wellness that represent challenges that women coaches face while attempting to operate and progress within their occupation. Following an outline of the methodology adopted to appraise the social wellness of women head coaches in the UK, we present the findings from this research. Finally, we conclude with suggestions for the future directions for coaching sociology.

Introducing Social Well-Being to Coaching Sociology

Broadly speaking, well-being in coaching is an emerging area, limited to sport psychology and with much of the work and resources focused on athletes and their psychological development (Longshore and Sachs, 2015). The work that has included a coaching focus has tended to evaluate the connections between for example, coaching styles, behaviours, coach-athlete relationships and attachments, motivational climates and the impact on *athlete* well-being (e.g. Cronin and Allen, 2015; Davis and Jowett, 2014; Felton and Jowett, 2013; Stebbings et al., 2015). Yet, the sporting context, and in particular the high performance level, is a stressful one in which the demands on coaches are high. Demands include performance-related such as tactics, selection, and decision making as well as relational, emotional and social demands such as athlete welfare in addition to coaches' being responsible for their own emotional and physical health (Altfeld et al., 2015; Fletcher and Scott, 2010; Longshore and Sachs, 2015). The role of the coach is therefore a complex and difficult one; a job based upon performance outcomes within often restrictive resource and time constraints and with high expectations (Altfeld et al., 2015). It is perhaps then not surprising that many coaches, both men and women, often report high levels of exhaustion and sometimes burn-out (Altfeld et al., 2015). Combining this with the additional difficulties of being in the minority in the profession that brings with it added isolation and loneliness, marginalisation, and trivialisation (Norman, 2008; 2010), the need to explore and understand well-being in (women) coaches could be described as urgent. However, by adopting a psychological approach to the area may mean that well-being and any sub-optimal mental states are viewed

4

as an individual issue, for example as a coach's inability to cope (Fletcher and Scott, 2010). What remains unscrutinised are the organisational contexts, practices and procedures (Fletcher and Scott, 2010), as well as the wider discourses and social ideologies and relations that may scaffold a coach to feel more well or unwell within their day-to-day life. This warrants a sociological perspective to the issue of well-being and coaching, which at present is not found within the sociology of sport literature.

In a turn from psychological well-being that conceptualises individual lives as a solely private and personal phenomenon (Ryan et al., 2008), social well-being understands life satisfaction as a more public experience. To be socially 'well' means the presence of positive life satisfaction, positive social health, social integration, social cohesion, a sense of belonging and interdependence and a sense of shared consciousness (Durkheim, 1951; Keyes, 1998). Existing research, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, indicates the coaching profession is not a particularly positive environment for underrepresented groups, in this case women, with reports of feeling marginalised, bullied, harassed, unfulfilled, excluded and overlooked for progression (to be discussed more fully, in the following sections). Therefore, it begs the research question: how socially 'well' are women coaches? With an understanding of what is social well-being, the following section examines, in more depth, what factors impact social well-being as part of presenting our theoretical approach for our empirical research. Within this, the current literature around the subject of women in coaching is interwoven. First, we argue the need to gender our understanding of well-being.

Presenting a theory of gendered social well-being to the area of women in coaching

In the following sections, we present our theoretical framework for the present study and empirical data. In adopting this theory, we recognised that it did not necessarily possess an explicit gender sensitive lens. In addressing the experiences of the participants, we deem it necessary to problematise the broad social and cultural context underpinning the coaches' experiences (Markula et al., 2001) and the power relations inherent within these contexts (Sparkes, 1992). Crucially, we also argue that these experiences are consequences of the gendered identity of the coaches. While much has been written about women and coaching, and some work exists around well-being and coaching, the relationship between the two has not been explored (women

5

coaches and well-being). Therefore, we propose a *gendered* social well-being approach to understanding the lives of women coaches, drawing not just on Keyes' model (discussed in the following section) but also infusing this with elements of a feminist critical perspective and in particular, feminist cultural studies. As discussed earlier, social well-being itself originates in the sociological interest in anomie and alienation with societies and cultures, occupying itself with questions of social rules, orders and relationships (Keyes, 2005; Seeman, 1991). By drawing on feminist cultural studies sociological thought in conjunction with this, within each component of Keyes' model, we can examine how gender is played out in and affected through such cultural interactions whilst advocating that male power is responsible for gendered inequality within the coaching profession (Hall, 1996). Sport is widely understood as an (unequal) gendered space; sport and coaching has become a patriarchy as a product of years of men's knowledge, practices and behaviours becoming powerful and privileged (von der Lippe, 1997). The strength of intertwining a feminist cultural studies influence within Keyes' model is in confronting the larger cultural and social forces that surround women's lived experiences in sport (Krane, 2001a). While women's participation in sport might have increased (Sport England, 2016), they continue to be marginalised, trivialised, and undervalued as coaches.

.

Theoretical Approach: Applying Keyes' model of social well-being to the experiences of women coaches

In presenting our theoretical approach, we discuss components of social well-being that influence how 'well' an individual is and that present challenges to this as related to their gendered identity. In undertaking our work, we utilised Keyes' (1998) multi-dimensional perspective of social well-being, comprised of five concepts, in order to understand how and to what extent women coaches are functioning within their social world. Keyes' work has been credited with having a direct influence on the formulation of "a well-being manifesto for a flourishing society" (Shah and Marks, 2004: 2). The model has proved popular in well-being research as a well-established, holistic measure in capturing social well-being and in extending the eudemonic tradition of well-being from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal realm (Simmons and Lehmann, 2013; Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010; Gallagher et al., 2009). The five components: social integration, social acceptance, social

6

contribution, social actualisation and social coherence, will now be discussed in turn and gendered, to demonstrate its application to the issue of women in coaching.

Social integration

Keyes defines social integration as the assessment of the quality of one's relationship to their society and community around them (Keyes, 2005). To feel socially well, individuals need to experience feeling part of society and to feel integrated, i.e., that they have something in common with those around them who constitute their social reality (e.g. their workplace). In the workplace, if individuals experience positive and supportive relationships around them with their colleagues and organisational hierarchy, then they feel integrated, connected and acknowledged (Mohamed et al., 2014). In relation to the present study, existing research supports the argument that social integration is not always experienced by women coaches. Indeed, the organisation of sport runs counter to fostering integration; instead, within most sports men and women are separated and the power base of most organisations (both for the men and women's sports) remains white and male (e.g. Burton, 2015; Bower et al., 2015; Shaw and Slack, 2002; Shaw, 2003). Other means of segregation includes the sexualisation and trivialising of women as athletes and as coaches (e.g. Norman, 2008; 2010; 2012; Cooky et al., 2010; Cranmer et al., 2014). On a micro level, current research has shown that women coaches report feeling segregated in the workplace demonstrated by being left out of (predominantly male) networks in order to learn about educational and promotional opportunities, report poor working relationships with men and describe feeling 'left out' of decision making roles and not feeling integral to their organisation or male coaching colleagues who display often different norms and values which run contrary to fostering social integration (Allen and Shaw, 2013).

Social acceptance

Keyes (1998) presents the second dimension of social well-being as the degree to which individuals feel secure and valued as part of a community that demonstrate trust, kindness and believe in the qualities and capabilities of others. To work within a socially accepting organisation or workplace means that colleagues hold favourable views towards others and feel comfortable with others (Keyes, 1998). When applying a social acceptance lens to the subject of women's experiences as coaches, the research suggests that women do not

always feel accepted because of discriminatory ideologies and expectations attached to their gendered identity. This is demonstrated by a lack of value and respect towards their capabilities to lead. The research informs us of women coaches having to work much harder to prove themselves than male colleagues, to other coaches, to their organisation or governing body, or to athletes (e.g. Norman, 2010; Rankin-Wright, 2015; Kilty, 2006). This is because the cultural perceptions of women, based on biological and natural assumptions, are juxtaposed to perceptions of what is a leader. In her review of the challenges that women coaches experience, Kilty (2006) found participants reported an unequal assumption of competence compared to male colleagues. Such covert discrimination was also a contributory factor in women's turnover intentions in Lovett and Lowry's (1997) study. As a consequence of having to continually work to feel accepted, many women coaches have spoken of feeling undervalued, insecure and out of place in their organisation (Norman, 2010; Greenhill et al., 2009).

Social contribution

The third component of social well-being, according to Keyes (1998), is that of social contribution. This follows on from social acceptance in stating that when one feels accepted, they feel a sense of social value. Social contribution is the belief that one is an integral member of that context with something of value to contribute (Keyes, 1998). Counter to social contribution is alienation: the feeling of a lack of control, undervalue and domination within a context because one does not feel valued and is on the peripheral of a dominant, ruling social group. Within the context of coaching, the undervalue of women coaches is a well-documented issue (e.g. Norman, 2014; Allen and Shaw, 2013; Shaw and Allen, 2009). This has been show through the failure of organisations, governing bodies and decision makers to recognise women's accomplishments, achievements and potential as effective and competent coaches, and the failure of organisations to provide adequate education and practice opportunities to demonstrate support and progression for their women coaches (Norman, 2010). In this way, the contribution that women could make to the coaching profession is often ignored and devalued even though women represent a motivated, engaged addition to the profession (Norman 2013).

Social actualisation

A sociological alternative to self-actualisation (Maslow, 2000), social actualisation describes an individual's evaluation of the potential and trajectory of society. It is whether an individual is hopeful about the state and evolution of their social contexts, and whether they can recognise society's potential that would be achieved through others and the institutions around them (Keyes, 1998). Related to the experiences of women coaches, the coaching sociological literature has documented the accounts of women who feel the 'custodians' of their profession, i.e. policy makers, coach educators and governing body officials, are not always working towards growing and developing their potential (e.g. Norman, 2008; 2010; Allen and Shaw, 2013; Inglis et al., 2000; Kerr and Marshall, 2007). To use Keyes' (1998: 124) phrase, women coaches have often described their profession and individuals within their sporting institutions as 'unsavoury' contexts in which to try to progress (Bruening and Dixon, 2007). Instead, the feeling amongst many women is that they feel little sense of control of the development and growth of their coaching careers. Instead, this power resides in external forces which are overseen by custodians who often demonstrate insufficient interest in nurturing them (Allen and Shaw, 2009; Norman et al., 2014; Bruening and Dixon, 2007).

Social coherence

The concept of social coherence argues that to be socially well, individuals need to believe that the quality, organisation and operation of their social world is organised ('coherent') and that they have a sense of meaning within their life. Social coherence is rooted in the sociological appraisal of society as discernible, rational, functional, and predictable (Seeman, 1991). To feel socially well, it is important that people find a sense of meaning and place. Related to a sporting context, the key to a positive coaching career and experience would then lie in the sense of coherence, comprehensibility and meaningfulness of reality provided by that profession (Bjarnason, 1998). Yet, it has been identified that the UK coaching workforce is potentially facing crisis in terms of inconsistent deployment and opportunities, its shrinking size and (lack of) diversity, lack of recognition, progression and value, and work-life tension for coaches (Future Foundation, 2014). As such, the norms and values within many sporting organisations, governing bodies and clubs mean a heavy

burden on coaches in terms of workloads, and unrealistic and unequal expectations (e.g. Norman, 2008; Ladda, 2015). In this way, women coaches are being appointed to positions in problematic organisational circumstances. This induces the analogy of the 'glass cliff' whereby they are judged and effectively blamed for not making credible coaches but the situational factors that surround them, are ignored (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). In essence, women coaches are in precarious positions. The importance of a clear, discernible developmental profession is crucial to recruit and retain women as coaches (Norman, 2008) and yet, the body of literature on this issue indicates that women conceive coaching as often an opaque, inflexible and unpredictable pathway whereby opportunities to progress are ad-hoc, irrationally allocated and difficult to locate (Allen and Shaw, 2009; Inglis et al., 2000; Kerr and Marshall, 2007; Weiss and Stevens, 1993).

The opening sections of this paper have presented a case for adopting a gendered well-being approach to understanding the experiences of women coaches. Therefore, the research question underpinning the present study was: how socially well are women coaches? The following sections outline the methodological approach taken for the present study and the subsequent findings and discussion that arose from the research.

Methodology

The present study formed one stage of a large, three staged, mixed-method UK research project around the issue of occupational well-being and women coaches. The focus of this paper and the subsequent findings are drawn from the second, qualitative sociological stage of the research. This second stage focused on sampling 16 head coaches from a larger group of women coaches who had completed a quantitative, psychological questionnaire on occupational well-being in the first part of the study (N = 218). With the focus of the second stage of the research on how socially well are women coaches, it was agreed between the research team that women who occupied head coaching roles (either within their clubs and / or national teams) who had completed the psychological measure would be sampled for stage two. The rationale for this was that being in a head coaching role would bring with it more responsibility, they were more likely to have greater experience and years coaching, and the coach was more likely to have a closer working relationship with their sporting organisation / national governing body (NGB). Not only therefore, could they discuss their

personal coaching experiences but would be able to reflect on how these related to and were influenced by, their organisation's policies and practices. In addition to head coaches, the sampling strategy also took into consideration the scores of the coaches from stage 1 (the psychological questionnaire) related to three constructs: psychological health (PsH), psychological well-being (PWB) and physical health (PH). Following analysis of these questionnaires, a sample of 16 head women coaches were sampled: four reporting poor health on two or more of these constructs; four reporting average health on two or more of these constructs; four reporting high levels of PsH, PWB and PH; and four coaches that reported a mix of scores across the three constructs. The 16 participants represented a variety of individual and team sports, and all were highly qualified within their respective sports, with qualifications ranging from level two of the UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) to level four – the highest award within the UKCC. All self-defined as White British, a reflection of the Whiteness of the UK coaching workforce in which 97% self-report as such (Sports Coach UK, 2012). 15 of the participants self-defined as able-bodied with one participant reporting a physical disability. This too is reflective of the able-bodiedness of the UK coaching workforce in which 92% describe themselves as without a disability (Sports Coach UK, 2012). The coaches were aged between 25 and 55 years old. Four coaches had children. Most of the participants coached women's teams within their sports but a few had previous experience of coaching men or mixed teams. Informal letters of information were initially emailed to the 16 head coaches. All of the invited coaches agreed to participate and consequently were sent formal letters detailing the study and consent forms to complete prior to meeting. In order to achieve a greater depth into their experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants by two of the research team who were expert qualitative interviewers and sociologists (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Following Patton (1990), we employed an interview guide approach to structure the interviews. The interview schedule was devised for the purpose of the research, drawing on Keyes' (1998) theory of social well-being with a gender sensitive lens. The focus of the interview included (1) the participants' background in and early experiences of coaching, (2) their role and responsibilities as head coach, (3) understanding how their gendered identity had shaped their career, and their life and career transitions, (4) gendered relations within coaching and engagement with their NGB, (5) supporting women in coaching. Participants were also

asked to elaborate on any further relevant information that arose during the course of the interview. Each interview lasted between 45 and 150 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed by one of the qualitative researchers within the team, using the constant comparison method of data coding, and then this analysis was checked by the other qualitative researcher who had led some of the interviews (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).This analysis involved unitising each interview transcript into smaller units of meaning and the response to each interview question comprised a unit. Each unit of meaning was then compared to other units of meaning and subsequently grouped with similar units to form a category (Tesch, 1995). When a unit of meaning could not be grouped with another, it formed a new category. Rules of inclusion for each category were written and connected to similar categories to show relationships and patterns across the data.

One of the principal objectives of the research was to provide a forum and platform through which the women's voices could be heard and their experiences shared. This aim originated from our own feminist perspective and informed by the feminist aspect of the gendered theory of social well-being. To conduct the research from a critical feminist position meant holding the view that the participants' experiences were morally significant (Brabeck and Ting, 2000). Tangibly, this meant that trustworthiness and respect of the participants was needed and this was achieved through member checking of the interview transcripts. We also ensured that we were reflexive as to our potential powerful position as authors of the research and thus, sought to equalise the researcher-researched relationship through considering each participant as the authority on their experiences (Brabeck and Ting, 2000). We spent time building a rapport and relationship with the participants prior to interview through their involvement in stage 1 of the research and through correspondence. During these exchanges, we made explicit our feminist perspective, the aims of the study, and the theoretical perspective of the research. Further, to protect the identity of the individual coaches, we anonymised the participants' names and sports (given the lack of representation of highly qualified, head women coaches, it may have been easy to identify the coaches) within the findings and each coach provided a pseudonym for their stories.

Findings and Discussion

The findings section applies Keyes' (1998; 2005) five components of social well-being to the experiences of the 16 women head coaches. We describe this in the context of their profession, providing examples based on their everyday experiences of coaching within their sporting organisations. It is important to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the women's coaching experiences, illustrated through their identities, critiques and aspirations. Relevant and related threads of the coaches' experiences and stories have been interlinked to provide the dominant narrative of the women head coaches who contributed to this research. The importance of engaging with well-being at both an organisational level and an individual level is reinforced by the coaches view-points presented in the five themes below.

Social Integration

A number of the coaches felt that coaching was a lonely and isolating job. Developing and maintaining positive and supportive relationships was noted to be difficult due to the competitive, high-pressured (and intimidating) nature of the high performance coaching environment. Lisa, a UKCC level 3 qualified team sport coach, described her journey through coaching as getting to "*the top of the food chain*". She explained:

> *I think the biggest problem [is] where people, coaches struggle and the bitchiness is people feel threatened by people […] I think a lot of the coaching world is feeling threatened by other coaches and that's sad.*

Cassie, a level 4 individual sport coach, also stated:

> *Yeah, it's quite solitary and it's very competitive, […] I think there is a lack of making any kind of network because you're all, you know, defending your own business to some extent.*

As a result, many of the coaches did not feel a sense of connectedness or belonging to a coaching community. This sense of isolation was heightened for the coaches due to the elusive, gendered, discriminatory actions described by Louise, a level 4 team sport coach. She described how she had felt excluded from her coaching team and important planning processes, which had in turn hindered her progression as a coach:

The barriers to trying to progress would be part of something - so exclusion, being ignored, being patronised, being included because I had to be included [but] some of the subtleties because people are protecting their own space and they don't really want you to come into that space because you might prove to be better than them, […] And being excluded from the planning process […] So just… feeling outside of everything and part of me feels I don't think that was accidental being kept outside of things […] So I think that sometimes it can be very subtle, it's not [just] a case of "Oh we don't want a woman around here".

Feeling excluded was an experience shared by a number of the coaches, who talked about the daily challenges of negotiating the informal, 'closed' networks that were often dominated and protected by men. The coaches understood that integrating into these networks would facilitate access to knowledge, information and support. Debbie, Jemima and Carolynn, all coaches within the same individual sport, referred to this process as being 'accepted into the gang'. The following quotes from Jemima, a level 3 coach, and Carolynn, a level 3 coach who was considering leaving the profession, illustrate these feelings of being left out of, and unsupported by the coaching community:

There's a lot of older male coaches in [sport] that have kind of run the show for a long time […] when you then get them in a room and you're chatting swimming or trying to learn as much as possible there is still a little bit of an old boy's club with who they'll talk to and you know, you can get the information but it's not necessarily, you're not in the club as such if you get what I mean (Jemima).

I mean at the beginning you might get completely ignored. I find often, as a middle-aged lady because I didn't start, what was I? 30 whatever, I think people can look at you and look at your image and think "Oh"... and they go to the younger one or they go to the one [who is already publically known as a successful coach] You won't be accepted in their gang […] I mean I do find that, you can be ignored because they don't want to associate with [older women coaches], female coaches will do it with you as well, not just male, female coaches that don't want to be associated with you because they don't think you're in the right gang so it's just like being at school (Carolynn).

Like Carolynn, a number of coaches felt that intersecting identities hindered their social integration into the coaching networks, in which acceptance was dependent on 'fitting' the ideal / normalised image of a coach.

I do think sometimes there's this feeling that, particularly as an older female coach, that hasn't been a high level athlete, there's this perception that you're not quite good enough at that level, and that annoys the hell out of me (Beth, a performance individual sport coach and coach educator).

We weren't really wanted, it's very difficult to get a job, because I'm not young, and I'm not male, and I think I'm not in their desirable category, and I don't look young, and fresh, and happening (Harriet, individual sport coach).

Understanding these stories within the context of a gendered theory of social well-being, it is evident that these women feel a sense of disconnect or segregation between themselves and their colleagues. As discussed in the opening sections of this paper, to feel socially well, individuals need to experience feeling part of their social context, i.e., that they have something in common with those around them who constitute their social reality (e.g. their workplace). Social integration also means to experience feeling as though you 'fit in' within your social realities (Keyes, 1998). On this basis, it is accurate to assert that the coaches did not always feel they shared similarities or experiences with their colleagues (mostly men) in more powerful positions around them nor did they feel they belonged. The interviews support the notion that these coaches experienced a sense of disconnect and less support because of their gendered identity and on some occasions, because of their status as older women coaches. The concern with this is that low social integration is often correlated with occupational burnout if combined with other work-related outcomes, particularly for women, and that more attention needs to be paid to women's working conditions to challenge this (e.g. Norlund et al., 2010; Soares et al., 2007). The finding of the present study builds on and updates previous work within this subject area that has shown that women coaches report feeling left out of (predominantly male) power networks, that the strength of the 'old boys' club is detrimental to women's professional progression, and working relationships with male coaching colleagues are often strained (e.g. Norman, 2012;Allen and Shaw, 2013; Lovett and Lowry, 1994; Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2001). The present study also finds that in addition to gender, age is also a significant influence on women's acceptance and integration as coaches, and older women coaches are less likely to experience social integration within their coaching communities.

Social acceptance

The gendered nature of social identities, power relations and acceptance was evident in the coaches' experiences of their relations with other coaches and colleagues, governing bodies, athletes and parents of athletes. Specifically, coaches felt that they were constantly judged by gendered assumptions and expectations and had to constantly prove their competence in order to gain and maintain acceptance and respect. Lisa (level 3 hockey coach) explained:

> *I think the issue is gender for me personally, it's trying to compete with the men and being respected, it's getting the men's respect as a coach, I think that what's it is, it feels as if you're always striving to get their respect which is a hard one really.*

Sarah, a level 4 team sport coach similarly talked about feeling judged as a woman coach:

> *Being a female coach I always feel as though I've got to be 120% over 100%... somebody can lead a session, male, job done, good session, you could deliver the same, I actually feel you could do the session as a female, to exactly the same audience but they would find something that needed to be better (Sarah).*

Louise described her everyday challenges of gaining acceptance using the metaphor of a (gendered) 'respect thermometer':

> *Well if people start, let's assume they start with 100%, with 100 degrees of respect and if you start getting things wrong it diminishes, some [women] don't [even] start with 100% they start with 50 and you've got to work really hard to raise that because the assumption and expectations are a bit weary...you don't do every little piece right but the speed with which people judge women I think is somewhat faster […] so you'd get all of those things absolutely right because... the respect thermometer falls pretty darned quickly. You're not allowed to get away with getting things wrong (Louise, team sport coach).*

As a result, the coaches felt that they were offered fewer development opportunities in terms of leadership because they were not trusted to do as a good a job as a male coach. Sarah discussed this:

> *I've been appointed this year, and they've told me this, "We want you to be the assistant coach, not the lead because we want you to develop him to be a lead", so I've been given the task of developing a male, a promising*

coach to give him the skills of quality to be a lead coach which I almost think is the ultimate irony […] They wouldn't trust me to lead but they want me to develop a coach to be a lead (Sarah, team sport coach).

Social acceptance however, was more likely when coaches had been previous high-performance athletes within their sport. Cassie explained:

The team's coaches have been very male, I think their view on the sort of thing that women might be good at is worrying sometimes and wrong and I think if I hadn't been a relatively good player, which also helps you command a kind of different role, then... it would have felt very different because I know quite a lot of men who, yeah, they're good coaches but they haven't played to a very high level and I think their equivalent woman wouldn't have been viewed maybe with a lot of respect... I think being a strong player has changed how it's felt for me […]that gives me a certain kind of confidence […] I think they treat you differently than they would a woman who has not got that (Cassie, individual sport coach).

In trying to 'fit' to the characteristics and perceived qualities of the dominant coaches in authoritative positions, some coaches talked about compromising their own personal and professional values and tolerating sexist behaviour in order to comply/assimilate with existing cultural practices. Lisa (team sport coach) referred to this as 'playing the game':

I'm annoyed with myself because I haven't challenged it [sexist behaviour] and the reason I haven't challenged it is because I'm playing a game because I want to stay where I am so you get into that cycle […] but I sometimes want to say sometimes "Do you know how much I've done? You're talking to me sometimes like I haven't got a clue about [this sport]", that tends to be guys and that's linked into the gender thing, I think that they don't feel you know much or they belittle the women's game so that's frustrating for me sometimes but I do feel I've got to develop my own skills to challenge that.

Zoe, a team sport coach, felt strongly that she was not prepared to compromise her values and 'play the game' but explained that she had suffered both personally and professionally as a result:

I'm about the only female involved in the game that isn't - this is going to sound awful but I've got to say it – that isn't gagged. […] And, the other ladies in the game pretty much … like the woman that left, she left because she said, "I'm not being gagged, I am not submitting to it". She left, I'm still involved, but getting an awful lot of grief

about it. But, the other two ladies, especially [the other coach] in the role that she is, if she said anything she'd be gone, and she knows that.

Consequently, a number of the coaches did not feel comfortable within their coaching environment and lacked trust in other coaches and colleagues. Where women coaches had succeeded in leadership roles, they had experienced bullying from other male coaches, as Beth discussed:

Yes, there is some resentment from some of the men, because of the work that I'm doing at the moment […] they become quite undermining and disruptive and quite unpleasant. […]I haven't ever had that from a female coach, only from male coaches, and they run you down all the time behind your back. You would call it bullying. […]That's quite painful to me, and that's one I find hard to deal with.

To summarise, the participants' experiences demonstrate that being in the minority coupled with ideological assumptions as to women's ability to coach, can bring with it a gendered toll. The coaches' experiences could be described as 'surviving' rather than thriving within their roles. Working daily to gain acceptance and respect against unfair evaluations of their coaching competencies took an emotional and physical toll on these women. The coaches expressed their frequent, almost daily, sense of frustration at having to work harder and prove their coaching abilities to their male coaching colleagues and to men in decision making positions. They described organisational cultures where women coaches are afraid to make mistakes for the cost to their respect and credibility, a culture that does not believe in them to lead and that leads them to question themselves whether they are good enough. These women coaches therefore, are in glass cliff positions, whereby they are individually judged but the circumstances in which they work, i.e. in organisations that may be in crisis, transition or precarious circumstances when it comes to the future of their coaching workforce, is ignored (Future Foundation, 2014). These experiences of undergoing greater scrutiny are also symptomatic of a lack of trust and that this too is a gendered issue (Kihl et al., 2013). Some of the participants likened these feelings to bullying; that when women do not meet (male) expectations, they are closed off from networks, progression and positive working experiences. When experienced on a regular basis, the impact of such working conditions can be draining, as evidenced by the participants. Through the historical exclusion of women from institutions such as sport, the dominant discursive practices become to belong to white, middle

class men and over time, these become subsumed as generic professional norms and behaviours (Walsh, 2001). As women attempt to enter, progress and be seen within these institutions, they present contradictory norms, values and expectations which has consequences for how they are seen and judged by (male) others (Walsh, 2001). Instead of just being evaluated on competency, they are expected to civilise white, male spaces which places extra burden on such women who have to manage complex negotiations in order make headway in such contexts (Walsh, 2001). The values and structures of sporting organisations are crucial for fostering positive working conditions to meet the needs of all their coaches (Allen and Shaw, 2013). These findings are congruent with previous work into this area that has similarly reported women having to work to prove themselves against unequal assumptions of their abilities as coaches (e.g. Norman, 2010; Kilty, 2006; Theberge, 1994; Fielding-Lloyd and Mean, 2011). The contribution of the present study is in connecting such experiences to the impact on working conditions for women, including poorer working relationships with male coaches, fewer opportunities to progress and practice, and worryingly, the coaches described having to comprise personal values and silence their own voices to fit in with the dominant culture which was often portrayed as unequal, favourable to men, unsupportive. This culture worked to suppress any dissenting voices. Consequently, the coaches interviewed reported experiencing a range of negative emotional states. Linked to the notion of gendered social acceptance, it is evident that these women did not always feel valued or secure within a community that often fails to show belief, faith, kindness and value in its women coaches (Keyes, 1998).

Social Contribution

The coaches expressed varying degrees of confidence in their coaching abilities, but all of them felt that they had made, and could continue to make, a valuable contribution to coaching in their sport. This was linked to gaining confidence, which in turn linked to a greater sense of belonging (social integration), as Carolynn explained:

> I have the confidence now so I…feel that I belong and even [another coach] has said that as well, at the British [Championships] she was like "Oh Carolynn, I actually feel like I belong, I actually deserve my [place], you know", it's not like we're frauds anymore because we've actually got the results so that does give you the confidence […]

it was quite nice because we do feel, both of us, me and [another coach], like Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee who sit over there as a couple of middle ages ladies who, you know, and it is cliquey amongst the men ... but I now I feel like [my coaching] is doing the talking.

Polly, a team sport coach, had similarly gained confidence from qualifications and experience, which she felt had given her the recognition from other colleagues and athletes that she deserved:

The higher up I've got the more qualifications I've got, the more confident I've felt as a person and as a coach which has meant that probably my demeanour is very different so possibly people are less likely to you know have little digs and make little comments and hopefully respect you more but I've had to work jolly hard and get those qualifications and take on roles that give me that respect.

Yet, this feeling of being valued was rarely reinforced by other coaches, colleagues, and the sporting organisations that employed the coaches. Harter et al (2014) have reported that regular, individualised and instantaneous recognition of a person's contribution within their work place is important in the creation of positive emotions that reinforce success. Without this positive recognition, the coaches explained how they felt frustrated and marginalised.

I don't feel valued from people above me, […] I think, there's too much distance between top end and the coaches, and not enough support and I find that incredibly frustrating (Dorothy).

Working within that performance environment, I don't know, it has improved, but I think there's still a bit of a feeling of, you know, [clicks fingers] and you'll be there, sort of thing. And it's almost as if they feel as if they're throwing you a few scraps by getting you to do the nice things, throw you a few scraps then you'll do the work for us. That's how it feels sometimes, you know. […] It's very hard to feel valued, sometimes words are said, but you don't feel anything behind them, you know, so you're not sure if you're valued or not (Beth).

Feeling valued by colleagues and the organisation was also strongly influenced by opportunities offered to develop and progress as a coach. Debbie and Anne, two of the younger coaches who contributed their views, felt that in this sense, their gendered identity as a woman coach had enhanced their sense of social contribution at a time when their organisations were investing in women coaches. Yet, other coaches interviewed felt that their gendered identity as a woman within a male dominated environment had hindered

their progression due to gendered power relations that structured the development opportunities for progression in favour of men. Cassie and Zoe discussed their disappointment and frustration at the gendered nature of decision-making processes by male managers for coach promotion:

There was continually guys who were so under qualified compared to me who were getting the work again and again and again and that is when you start to think 'well that can't be coincidental' (Cassie).

The people who are in charge of the game are all male, and this includes the [disabled team] where [I am], they're all male. You can't even get near the management of the game anymore because it's a closed group, so there's nothing coming out, and you can't feedback in, so you can't say, look, this is what we really need. […] It's the old boys club, that's it in a nutshell. I mean, when there are just men at the top running, even our little bit of [the sport], you're not going to get up there. There will be guys come in that have been involved in the game 12 months, suddenly they're England manager, or they're this, or they're that. No coaching [qualifications] some of them. […] I was England manager in 2008, so I've proved I've got the skills, […] but no, they'll bring men in to do it instead of the people that are there (Zoe).

The result of these gendered-decision making processes that occur through informal networks rather than a transparent recruitment system was a sense of distrust towards the organisation and more senior coaches in the decision-making positions. Zoe explained that she now felt at breaking point after years of trying to progress and was considering giving up coaching for her governing body:

It's really frustrating, it's got me to the point where...I'm sat thinking, well, I'm not valued in [this sport] so what else is out there, and that's the point I'm at, at the moment […] Which to me would be a tragedy, because [I've] lived and breathed [this sport] for so long, but you can't just keep butting your head against a wall and getting nowhere. I want to be able to offer more to our players and the people that we work with, and I'm struggling, really struggling.

Thus, many of the women coaches felt a sense of alienation, in that their attributes and opinions were not valued, nor allowed to be contributed. These experiences of alienation, invisibility and 'not having a voice' provide an insight into the power relations that structure sport coaching and ultimately privilege white, able-bodied men within the system, whilst disadvantaging those considered as 'others' (Rankin-Wright et al., in

press). Although Zoe, and other women coaches were passionate about improving and developing coach education within their sport, they instead have to focus their energy again on 'surviving' within a masculine dominated culture in which they feel undermined, intimidated, marginalised or invisible within their role (Allen and Shaw, 2013). The outcome is that these coaches eventually drop out of coaching in search of an environment in which they feel that their contributions will be valued, recognised and developed, a finding from earlier work in this subject area related to women coaches and leaving the profession (e.g. Norman, 2012; Lovett and Lowry, 1997; Sagas and Ashley, 2001; Cunningham and Sagas, 2003). Often women coaches, isolated through their role and so unable to form collectives to push for change, chose to exit coaching because the cost of trying to make changes is too weighted against the benefits (Hovden, 1999). Interpreted through a gendered social contribution lens, while the coaches felt they made valuable contributions within their role (which was an intrinsic source of confidence), this appreciation was not reciprocated by colleagues or those in power in their organisations. These findings contribute to, and update the existing body of knowledge on women in coaching by demonstrating that women's experiences of feeling (under)valued are influenced by age and (dis)ability: younger, able-bodied women coaches may feel more valued because they are developing at a time where there is a greater drive to increase the number of women coaches in the UK. Thus, more opportunities exist to learn, train and progress. However, this is tempered by the accounts of older women coaches who have found such examples of positive action are temporary and piecemeal opportunities, rarely leading to equality of outcome (Rees, 1998; Skirstad, 2009).

Social actualisation

When discussing ambitions and aspirations for coaching, it was evident that every coach interviewed was passionate and motivated in terms of work engagement towards their coaching role. Yet, for a number of the more experienced coaches (i.e. had been coaching for the longest time), a reoccurring theme was the adaptation of aspirations and ambitions because they were distrustful of their organisations to support them to progress. The following quotes exemplify the negative emotions expressed towards their governing bodies and the perception of the unchanging and unchallenged, yet powerful structural relations that hindered their progression:

It's interesting because we have been recruiting for two elite coaches for the England squad and the number of people said to me "Are you going to apply, it's right up your street" but why would I want to step into that, I don't trust that organisation why would I want to work for that organisation? Even if it's a job that I may believe I can do, I might enjoy, I can't walk back in there. […] I would say, based on my last experience, that was, it's a toxic environment, […] and the [organisation] was responsible, they have a responsibility to ensure those situations don't arise...I would not go back and coach within the [organisation], never again unless I saw some visible change […] and [that] there was an ethos of honesty and respect, it's values based. (Louise).

I did have at some point [aspire] to go on to be a higher level coach, or whatever, but … I haven't kissed enough arse in the [organisation] to get anywhere. […]And, I just hope for younger people who are going into coaching, that it will change for them, it hasn't in my time, and I thought I lived in a forward enough time to not have to put up with that sort of crap, you know, but it's still there, big time. […] because every time they change it, they rewrite the job descriptions and employ all the same old crap. I mean, how is that changing? We've got the same people, with the same faces, running the same organisation with a different job description (Harriet).

Jemima, one of the youngest coaches who had been a head coach for three years, demonstrated a great sense of social actualisation in that she did believe her governing body was changing positively with regards to the development of a more transparent system of coach development. She explained:

I think in the past maybe it's been very male dominated and so males are the coaches and women were the team managers, kind of the organisational person rather than the coach. Whereas, in fact [with] the recent changes in…the national governing body after the 2012 Olympics they changed the whole team and restructured it, after that it's very much more if you know the job well enough and you're good enough at your job you will get selected regardless of who you are […] those women that have got the good athletes, the Olympic athletes that are getting selected are now more visible anyway, I think everything's a little bit more visible now. Like before you didn't hear about who was on the coaching teams or anything like that whereas now it's announced and things as well so it's all more visible and the fact that there are women on there shows them that it's doable.

These narratives again illustrate that age, as well as gender, impacts the social well-being of women coaches. In this case specifically, it impacts their sense of social actualisation. The older women coaches described feeling less supported in their ambitions to progress by the custodians of their sport – their governing body,

despite remaining ambitious and motivated to move higher up the coaching ladder. In effect, they had reached a 'developmental dead-end'. On the other hand, the younger coaches reported feeling more positive, encouraged and endorsed by their governing bodies. There were varying degrees of trust between the participants towards the custodians of their governing bodies. These findings support the argument that this sense of trust is gendered and related to age, updating and adding to the earlier work of Acker (1990) and the more recent work by Kihl et al. (2013) who both described trust as a gendered concept with women reporting to feel untrusted to be leaders and coaches. Trust is a crucial component of the relationship, in this context between coaches and their NGBs, because it signifies commitment which means whether women feel a sense of attachment to their organisation (Kihl et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2002). Trust, within an organisational context, means integrity, open-ness and business sense (Kihl et al., 2013). Without social integration (as discussed earlier) and social interaction (evidenced by whether coaches feel connected to others around), trust in an organisation is weakened (Schoorman et al., 2007). Age is an important influence too. The younger women coaches reported a greater sense of control over their career development whereas the older coaches were less trustful and frustrated at the sense that progression was ultimately 'out of their hands'. This is a new contribution to the existing knowledge of women's coaching experiences. Previous research has found that a lack of sense of control over their careers is often cited by women coaches, particularly women from black and minority ethnic groups (e.g. Rankin-Wright, 2015; Allen and Shaw, 2009; Norman et al., 2014), and that many women coaches do not have faith or trust in those who are responsible for organising and leading their sport (e.g. Norman, 2008; 2010; Allen and Shaw, 2013; Inglis et al., 2000). Our findings add that as well as 'race' and ethnicity, women's experiences are also intersected by age and such feelings of (lack of) trust and support are part of a sense of social actualisation as a component of social well-being.

Social coherence

When discussing how they experienced working for their sport organisations, a number of coaches talked of a 'toxic environment' due to the gendered power relations noted previously, and the stressful demands. Time management was noted to be one of the biggest challenges for coaches due to the increasing job demands on their role. Working seven days a week, not having holidays, failed personal relationships, missing important

family and friendship 'milestones' such as weddings and parents evenings, and giving up social activities for coaching were commonly referenced by the coaches. In particular, the coaches talked about the expectation that you would always be available, and coaching would always be your priority, as Polly explained:

You can't be away every minute of every day; you have to be at home some time. Our meetings were always scheduled in the evenings and I would be the one who at 9 o'clock said "I'm sorry, I'm going because I want to read my daughter a bedtime story" and I was looked at as if I was this awful person but again blokes don't have to, well they choose not to do that.

There was an acceptance from some of the coaches that giving up a social life and family life was a necessity to progress as a coach. Debbie, (individual sport coach), explained that she had little social time, did not get to see her family very often and could not sustain a relationship with a partner because of her coaching commitments:

I think that's why you have to work maybe so hard... it's just facing facts that, right, for the next three months I'm not going to have a day off, and that's just the way it's going to be, but it will be worth it in the long run […] but then when you get to that point where you're, like, all I want is a day off, I just want to lie in my bed […] but you've just got to do it.

A concern for organisations is that this over-commitment to coaching combined with feeling undervalued (social contribution) can lead to resentment, as one coach noted, it's a "*thankless task… you invest, invest, invest, invest and yeah, it's quickly forgotten*". Over-commitment to coaching combined with greater job demands also resulted in feelings that they had limited, or no control over their life and reduced motivation in terms of work engagement. As a result, a number of coaches talked about being exhausted, needing a break and feeling like they could not remain in their role for much longer:

I feel a bit saturated to be honest at the moment because I haven't had a break (Lisa).

I remember one year, I think it was 2006, 2007 I went from the 4th January to the 27th of March and just straight through, no weekends, no days off at all because I was doing either European women's sport or [coaching my club] or [the] England [team] every single weekend as well as [my job] so I thought "I can't do it" (Louise).

In this sense, coaching was not a predictable or controlled environment for the coaches. Furthermore, the coaches' experiences evidenced the lack of clarity as to what the role of a coach is in terms of supporting athletes, mentoring, administration work, etc. The stories of the participants also demonstrated that the demands of coaching are high which has led to most of the participants struggling to have fulfilling personal lives, such as maintaining personal relationships, parental commitments or social engagements. This was often symptomatic of working within women's sports which are less resourced and supported than the men's equivalent, and therefore social coherence in this context is a gendered concept. These women coaches occupied 'glass cliff' positions. In other words, they are appointed to precarious roles in difficult organisational circumstances in which the coaching workforce and structure faces sizeable threats and weaknesses (Future Foundation, 2014). To be socially well, individuals need to believe that the quality, and operation of their social world is organised and that they have a sense of meaning within their life (Keyes, 1998). The participants' stories provide evidence that they do not experience a high sense of social coherence. The women described hectic, changeable workloads that were out of their control on occasions. When combined with a lack of trust and attachment to their organisation (but not to their athletes or role), this can undermine women's sense of social coherence even further (Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010). The unrealistic expectations of coaches and the lack of boundaries around what is their role underpinned by the women's sense of responsibility towards and strong engagement with their athletes which tied them to their job, placed heavy burdens on the women. Working in women's sports (as under-resourced) impacted the coaches' workload and so ability to carry out and enjoy their roles. There is some limited coaching research that has found that increased workloads for coaches can affect performance levels and increase their intention to leave the profession (e.g. Pelser-Carstens et al., 2015; Singh and Surujlal, 2006; Bruening and Dixon, 2007). The present study found that this is often a gendered issue. When coupled with often negative feelings towards their organisations or poor working relationships as discussed earlier, these experiences led to poor relationships between thecoaches and their governing bodies, or coaches unmotivated to remain within the profession. Being given appropriate resources and workloads reinforces positive social contracts within the workplace, an ingredient of strong employment relationships, as it enables individuals to fulfil their roles day-to-day (Lowe et al., 2003). Supportive, positive and healthy workplaces foster effective relationships and so a sign of a healthy workplace

is not just trust and respect as previously discussed, but appropriate workloads and resources (Lowe et al., 2003). Other research work has often framed this issue from an individual perspective when citing the high turnover within the numbers of women coaches or women's higher intentions to leave the profession (Cunningham and Sagas, 2003; Cunningham et al., 2003; Sagas et al., 2006; Narcotta et al., 2007; Wells et al., 2014). However, the present study contends that women coaches' dissatisfaction with their working conditions or possible intentions to leave is a social problem rooted in the organisational gendered practices of high performance sport which prevents women coaches from having meaningful control over their lives (Coakley, 1992; Bruening and Dixon, 2007).

Concluding thoughts

Using Keyes (1998) model of social well-being, and a critical feminist lens, we have sought to explore the question, "how socially well are women coaches?" Our exploration of the experiences of women head coaches provide evidence that women do not display high levels of social well-being. Specifically they do not always experience a high degree of social integration, acceptance, actualisation or coherence and that their social contributions to the profession are also marginalised. . Within this, it is also evident that older and / or less able-bodied women coaches are less socially well than able-bodied, younger women coaches (though it is noted that discussions around disability are based on the accounts of one coach). This intersection of age and (dis)ability with gender substantiates our claim therefore that not only does hegemonic femininity underpin the experiences of women as athletes (e.g. Krane, 2001b; Poniatowski, 2011; Harris and Clayton, 2002), it can affect the careers of women coaches too.

All 16 head coaches interviewed represented a motivated, passionate and ambitious part of the UK coaching workforce. Nevertheless, our findings also provide evidence of the emotional toll that coaching as a profession can take on individuals, in this case, women. While we do not argue that the demands and high expectations associated with coaching are not similar for men, we contend that the extra burden of having to continually prove oneself, having poorer working relationships, experiencing unequal evaluations of competency, and

being subject to what could be termed bullying in many cases because of one's gendered identity, means that the profession can be even more difficult for women in entering or progressing. The participants spoke of a state of 'surviving' rather than thriving within their role. Personal lives, relationships, social and family commitments were sidelined by many of the participants in order to meet the expectations of being a coach and in order to prove themselves as women. In a number of cases, energy had to be spent assimilating into a masculine dominated culture, in which the coaches felt undermined, alienated and excluded. Combined with this was a sense of distrust that their organisation, and those in decision making positions within the organisation, would support them to progress. In this sense, the cultural practices embedded within coaching are preventing this group of motivated and ambitious women coaches from progressing. It is not therefore surprising, that many of the participants expressed a desire to leave the profession within one or two years, or at least, downgrade their involvement in coaching. Rather than understanding this as an individual's inability to cope, there needs to be a greater onus and responsibility put on the shoulders on sport organisations, governing bodies and sports councils, certainly within a UK context, for the welfare of their workforce – in this case, coaches. As part of this, organisational policies and practices should be targeted towards drawing and reinforcing boundaries around the role of the coach to reduce their workloads and overly high expectations. Strategies suggested by the participants in the present study as ways that would sustain their work engagement included 1) a job share approach for head coaches and 2) establish formalised, sustained mentoring partnerships with more experienced coaches who could also be responsible for observing their health and well-being, for example, noticing signs of withdrawal or burnout.

Future research should be directed at adding to this study to provide more evidence as to the well-being of those in minority groups within coaching and the intersectionality of identities. This is an important line of enquiry because occupational health and well-being are critical factors in determining an individual's commitment to and continued participation in, a career. Coaching sociology should focus on understanding in more depth the impact of the experiences of women as coaches and the impact on their health, within the organisational and cultural structures of sport and coaching. At the same time, more work is needed to understand notions of difference between women's experiences. Our work has highlighted the interplay of

gender, age, and able-bodiedness and the effect on the lives of the participants. Due to the whiteness of the sample, there is a lack of discussion of the intersection of gender issues with 'race' and ethnicity. Further, while we provide evidence of the extra burden that having a disability places on being a woman in coaching through the story of Zoe, more focused research is needed to unpack the complexities of how disability interacts with gender to impact individual experiences. Therefore, the intersectionality of women coaches' oppression should be discussed further in order to recognise that women are not a homogenous group and to represent their lives and realities as diverse. While examining" how socially well are women coaches?" is important, it is also equally pertinent to consider what aspects of identity may mean that some women will feel more 'well' than others. This requires a more complex interrogation of the (high performance) coaching culture as well as more questions asked around accountability and responsibility for the health and well-being of sports coaches.

References

Acker J. (1990) Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society* 4: 139-158.

Ahmed S. (2007) 'You end up doing the document rather than doing the doing': Diversity, race equality and the politics of documentation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30: 590-609.

Allen J and Shaw S. (2009) Women coaches' perceptions of their sport organizations' social environment: Supporting coaches' psychological needs? *The Sport Psychologist* 23: 346-366.

Allen J and Shaw S. (2013) An interdisciplinary approach to examining the working conditions of women coaches *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* 8: 1-18.

Altfeld S, Kellmann M and Curran T. (2015) Are German coaches highly exhausted? A study of differences in personal and environmental factors. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching* 10: 637-654.

Bjarnason T. (1998) Parents, religion and perceived social coherence: A Durkheimian framework of adolescent anomie. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37: 742-754.

Bower GG, Hums MA and Grappendorf H. (2015) Same Story; Different Day: Greatest Challenges of Women Working in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration. *International Journal Of Sport Management, Recreation & Tourism* 19: 12-39.

Brabeck M and Ting K. (2000) Feminist ethics: Lenses for examining ethical psychological practice. In: Brabeck M (ed) *Practicing feminist ethics in psychology.* Washington: American Psychological Association, 17-37.

Bruening JE and Dixon MA. (2007) Work--family conflict in coaching II: Managing role conflict. *Journal of Sport Management* 21: 471-496.

Burton LJ. (2015) Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research. *Sport Management Review* 18: 155-165.

Chelladurai P, Kuga DJ and O'Bryant CP. (1999) Individual differences, perceived task characteristics, and preferences for teaching and coaching. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 70: 179-190.

Chen ZX, Tsui AS and Fahr JL. (2002) Loyalty to supervisor vs. organizational commitment: Relationship to employee performance in China. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 75: 339-356.

Coaching Association of Canada. (2012) *London 2012—Olympic and Paralympic Coaches.* Available at: http://www.coach.ca/london-2012-olympic-paralympic-coaches-p151190.

Coakley J. (1992) Burnout among adolescent athletes: A personal failure or social problem? *Sociology of Sport Journal* 9: 271-285.

Cooky C, Wachs FL, Messner M, et al. (2010) It's not about the game: Don Imus, race, class, gender and sexuality in contemporary media. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 27: 139-159.

Cranmer GA, Brann M and Bowman ND. (2014) Male athletes, female aesthetics: The continued ambivalence toward female athletes in ESPN's The Body issue. *International Journal of Sport Communication* 7: 145-165.

Cronin LD and Allen JB. (2015) Developmental experiences and well-being in sport: The importance of the coaching climate. *Sport Psychologist* 29: 62-71.

Cunningham GB and Sagas M. (2003) Occupational turnover intent among assistant coaches of women's teams: The role of organisational work experiences. *Sex Roles* 49: 185-190.

Cunningham GB, Sagas M and Ashley FB. (2003) Coaching self-efficacy, desire to become a head coach, and occupational turnover intent: gender differences between NCAA assistant coaches of women's teams. *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 34: 125-137.

Davis L and Jowett S. (2014) Coach–athlete attachment and the quality of the coach–athlete relationship: implications for athlete's well-being. *Journal of Sports Sciences* 32: 1454-1464.

Denzin NK and Lincoln YS. (2011) The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Diener E, Suh E, Lucas R, et al. (1999) Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin* 125: 276-302.

Donnelly P and Kidd B. (2011) *Gender Equity in Canadian Interuniversity Sport: A Biannual Report.* Available at: https://physical.utoronto.ca/Libraries/CSPS_PDFs/CIS_Gender_Equity_Report_2011.sflb.ashx,.

Durkheim E. (1951) *Suicide,* New York: Free Press.

Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2010) *Building understanding of fairness, equality and good relations,* Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Felton L and Jowett S. (2013) 'What do coaches do' and 'how do they relate': Their effects on athletes' psychological needs and functioning. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports* 23: e130-e139.

Fielding-Lloyd B and Mean L. (2011) 'I don't think I can catch it': Women, confidence and responsibility in football coach education. *Soccer & Society* 12: 345-364.

Fletcher D and Scott M. (2010) Psychological stress in sports coaches: A review of concepts, research, and practice. *Journal of Sports Sciences* 28: 127-137.

Future Foundation. (2014) *Coaching for the Future,* London: Foundation F.

Gallagher MW, Lopez SJ and Preacher KJ. (2009) The hierarchical structure of well-being. *Journal of personality* 77: 1025-1050.

Glaser BG and Strauss AL. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Greenhill J, Auld C, Cuskelly G, et al. (2009) The impact of organisational factors on career pathways for female coaches. *Sport Management Review* 12: 229-240.

Hall AM. (1996) *Feminism and sporting bodies,* Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics.

Harris J and Clayton B. (2002) Feminist, masculinity, physicality and the English tabloid press: the case of Anna Kournikova. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 37: 397-413.

Houlihan B and White A. (2002) *The Politics of Sports Development: Development of Sport Or Development Through Sport?,* Oxford: Routledge.

Hovden J. (1999) Is it worth the price? Women's involvement in leadership and coaching in sport organizations in Norway. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal* 8: 23-45.

Inglis S, Danylehuk KE and Pastore DL. (2000) Multiple realities of women's work experiences in coaching and athletic management. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 9: 1-11.

Kerr G and Marshall D. (2007) Shifting the culture: Implications for female coaches. *Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching* 7: 1-4.

Keyes CL. (1998) Social well-being. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 61: 121-140.

Keyes CL. (2005) The Subjective Well-Being of America's Youth: Toward a Comprehensive Assessment. *Adolescent & Family Health* 4: 3-11.

Kihl L, Shaw S and Schull V. (2013) Fear, anxiety, and loss of control: analyzing an athletic department merger as a gendered political process. *Journal of Sport Management* 27: 146-157.

Kilty K. (2006) Women in coaching. *The Sport Psychologist* 20: 222-234.

Knoppers A and Anthonissen A. (2001) Meanings given to performance in Dutch sport organizations: Gender and racial / ethnic subtexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 18: 302-316.

Krane V. (2001a) One lesbian feminist epistemology: Integrating feminist standpoint, queer theory and feminist cultural studies. *The Sport Psychologist* 15: 401-411.

Krane V. (2001b) We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *QUEST* 53: 115-133.

Ladda S. (2015) Where Are the Female Coaches? *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 86: 3-4.

LaVoi NM and Dutove JK. (2012) Barriers and supports for female coaches: an ecological model. *Sports Coaching Review* 1.

Longshore K and Sachs M. (2015) Mindfulness training for coaches: A mixed-method exploratory study. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology* 9: 116-137.

Lovett DJ and Lowry CD. (1994) "Good old boys" and "Good old girls" clubs: Myth or reality? *Journal for Sport Management* 8: 27-35.

Lovett DJ and Lowry CD. (1997) Women coaches: Does when dictate why they leave? . *Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual* 12: 35-53.

Lowe GS, Schellenberg G and Shannon HS. (2003) Correlates of employees' perceptions of a healthy work environment. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 17: 390-399.

Lusted J. (2009) Playing games with 'race': Understanding resistance to 'race' equality initiatives in English local football governance. *Soccer & Society* 10: 722-739.

Markula P, Grant BC and Denison J. (2001) Qualitative research and aging and physical activity: Multiple ways of knowing. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* 9: 245-264.

Maslow AH. (2000) *The Maslow Business Reader,* New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Maykut P and Morehouse R. (1994) *Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide,* London: Falmer Press.

Mohamed Z, Newton JM and McKenna L. (2014) Belongingness in the workplace: a study of Malaysian nurses' experiences. *Int Nurs Rev* 61: 124-130.

Mulderrig J. (2007) *Equality and Human Rights: Key Concepts and Issues,* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Narcotta E, Petersen J and Johnson SR. (2007) Mentoring effects on job satisfaction and turnover intent of women's assistant soccer coaches. *Research Quarterly for Exercise & Sport* 78: A-115.

Norlund S, Reuterwall C, Höög J, et al. (2010) Burnout, working conditions and gender - results from the northern Sweden MONICA Study. *BMC Public Health* 10: 1-9.

Norman, L. (2008) The UK coaching system is failing women coaches. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* 3(4): 447-464.

Norman, L. (2010) Bearing the burden of doubt: Women coaches' experiences of gender relations. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 81(4): 506-517.

Norman, L. (2012) A crises of confidence: Women coaches' responses to their engagement in resistance. *Sport, Education & Society*, 19 (5): 532-551

Norman, L. (2013) The challenges facing women coaches and the contributions they can make to the profession. International Journal of Coaching Science 7 (2): 3-23

Norman, L (2014) *Gender and coaching report card for the London 2012 Olympics: Report for the International Council for Coaching Excellence.* Leeds: Leeds Beckett University

Norman L, Hylton K, Flintoff A, et al. (2014) *Exploring Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) sports participants' motivations, enablers and constrains concerning the pathway into coaching,* Leeds: UK SC.

Nottinghamshire County Council. (2010) *Equality Act 2010: The impact on sporting clubs, organisations, and individuals.* Available at: http://www.sportnottinghamshire.co.uk/files/9913/4200/2463/Equality_Act_2010_sports_impact_1__1.pdf.

Patton M. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods,* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pelser-Carstens V, Keyser E and Surujlal J. (2015) Relationship between social contract, anxiety, performance, workload and intention to quit among professional sport coaches. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation & Dance* 21: 1009-1023.

Poniatowski K. (2011) "You're not allowed body checking in women's hockey": Preserving gendered and nationalistic hegemonies in the 2006 Olympic ice hockey tournament. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal* 20: 39-52.

Rankin-Wright, A. J. (2015). Racial and Gender Equality and Diversity in Sport Coaching in the United Kingdom. PhD thesis, Leeds Beckett University.

Rankin-Wright AJ, Hylton K and Norman L. (in press) Off-colour landscape: Framing race equality in sport coaching. *Sociology of Sport Journal.*

Rees T. (1998) *Mainstreaming equality in the European Union,* London: Routledge.

Robertson S. (2016) Hear their voices: Suggestions for developing and supporting women coaches from around the world. In: LaVoi NM (ed) *Women in Sports Coaching.* Abingdon: Routledge, 177-223.

Rollero C and De Piccoli N. (2010) Does place attachment affect social well-being? *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée/European Review of Applied Psychology* 60: 233-238.

Ryan MK and Haslam SA. (2005) The glass cliff: Evidence that women are over-represented inprecarious leadership positions. *British Journal of Management* 16: 81-90.

Ryan RM, Huta V and Deci EL. (2008) Living well: a self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9: 139–170.

Sagas M and Ashley FB. (2001) Gender differences in the intent to leave coaching: testing the role of personal, external, and work-related variables. *International Journal of Sport Management* 2: 297-313.

Sagas M, Cunningham G and Pastore D. (2006) Predicting head coaching intentions of male and female assistant coaches: An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Sex Roles* 54: 695-705.

Schoorman FD, Mayer RC and Davis JH. (2007) An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management Review* 32: 344-354.

Seeman M. (1991) Alienation and anomie. In: Robinson JP, Shaver PR and Wrightsman LS (eds) *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes.* San Diego: Academic Press, 291-374.

Shah H and Marks NA. (2004) *A well-being manifesto for a flourishing society,* London: The New Economics Foundation.

Shaw S, & Hoeber, L. . (2003) "A Strong Man Is Direct and a Direct Woman Is a Bitch": Gendered Discourses and Their Influence on Employment Roles in Sports Organizations. *Journal of Sport Management* 17: 347-375.

Shaw S and Allen JB. (2009) The experiences of high performance women coaches: A case study of two Regional Sport Organisations. *Sport Management Review* 12: 217-228.

Shaw S and Slack T. (2002) 'It's been like that for donkey's years': The construction of gender relations and the cultures of sports organizations. *Culture, Sport & Society* 5: 86-106.

Simmons CA and Lehmann P. (2013) *Tools for strength-based assessment and evaluation,* New York: Springer.

Singh PC and Surujlal J. (2006) Factors affecting the job satisfaction of South African sports coaches. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 28: 127-136.

Skirstad B. (2009) Gender policy and organizational change: A contextual approach. *Sport Management Review* 12: 202-216.

Soares FJJ, Grossi G and Sundin Ö. (2007) Burnout among women: associations with demographic/socio-economic, work, life-style and health factors. *Archives of Women's Mental Health* 10: 61-71.

Sparkes A. (1992) The paradigms debate: An extended review and a celebration of difference. In: Sparkes A (ed) *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions* London: Falmer, 9-60.

Sport England. (2016) Active People Survey 10. (accessed June 13th 2016).

Sports Coach UK. (2011) *Sports Coaching in the UK III,* Leeds: Coachwise Limited.

Sports Coach UK. (2012) *Coach tracking study,* Leeds: Coachwise Limited.

Spracklen K, Hylton K and Long J. (2006) Managing and monitoring equality and diversity in UK sport: An evaluation of the sporting equals racial equality standard and its impact on organizational change. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 30: 289-305.

Stebbings J, Taylor IM and Spray CM. (2015) The relationship between psychological well- and ill-being, and perceived autonomy supportive and controlling interpersonal styles: A longitudinal study of sport coaches. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* 19: 42-49.

Theberge N. (1994) The construction of gender in sport: Women, coaching, and the naturalization of difference. *Social Problems* 40: 301-313.

Veenhoven R. (2008) Sociological theories of subjective well-being. In: Eid M and Larsen R (eds) *The Science of Subjective Well-being: A tribute to Ed Diener.* New York: Guilford Publications, 44-61.

von der Lippe G. (1997) Gender discrimination in Norwegian academia: A hidden male game or an inspiration for postmodern feminist praxis? In: Balboa J-MF (ed) *Critical postmodernism in human movement, physical education and sport.* New York: SUNY Press, 27-39.

Walsh C. (2001) *Gender and discourse: Language and power in politics, the Church and organisations,* London: Routledge.

Weiss MR and Stevens C. (1993) Motivation and attrition of female coaches: an application of social exchange theory. *The Sport Psychologist* 7: 244-261.

Wells JE, Peachey JW and Walker N. (2014) The relationship between transformational leadership, leader effectiveness, and turnover intentions: Do subordinate gender differences exist? *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport* 7: 64-79.