

**Organizational Support and Management of Volunteer Coaching Pathways for Girls in
Community Sport**

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Volunteer coaches play a crucial role in teaching skills, guiding athlete development, and leading community sport programs (Cassidy et al., 2023). However, there is a notable underrepresentation of women and girl volunteer coaches in community sport, necessitating further research into their recruitment and support. Currently, little is known about the experiences of girl youth athletes related to coaching pathways and the support available to enter volunteer coaching roles despite this population representing an important pipeline of future sport coaches (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). This dissertation explores organizational support as it relates to the management of volunteer coaching pathways for girl ice hockey players in community sport. Guided by an interpretivist approach, this dissertation is presented in an integrated article format, comprised of three manuscripts that collectively contribute to the lack of research on women and girls in volunteer sport coaching roles at the community level (Baxter et al., 2021).

This qualitative study draws on data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with nineteen self-identified girl ice hockey players ages 12 to 17 years old and ten leaders of nonprofit community ice hockey organizations located in South-Western Ontario, Canada. Data were collected to maintain the overarching purpose of the dissertation while addressing the separate research objectives of each manuscript. Subsequently, data were analyzed following Braun et al.'s (2021) reflexive thematic analysis techniques and guided by the aims and theoretical assumptions identified in each of the respective manuscripts.

Theoretically, this research draws on perceived organizational support (POS) theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). POS refers to the general belief that organizational members (e.g., employees, volunteers) hold, regarding the extent to which an organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Members with positive assessments of POS tend to have higher rates of retention and commitment to an organization. In addition, the third manuscript (Chapter 4), draws on Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) to provide an additional analytic lens related to volunteer well-being. SDT suggests that well-being consists of three psychological needs, including the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

The purpose of the first manuscript (Chapter 2) was to examine perceived organizational supports for girl volunteer coaches in community sport and identify what support processes are needed to generate pathways and develop girls into sport coaching roles. The findings reveal girls' altruistic coaching intentions, the importance of relatability and communication in coaching pathways, preferences for resource equity, and the availability of coaching pathways. The research highlights girls' aspiration to give back as future coaches despite limited awareness of coaching certification processes.

The purpose of the second manuscript (Chapter 3) was to examine current challenges, strategies, and opportunities amongst club leader's for the recruitment of girl youth ice hockey coaches in community sport clubs. The findings also reveal the lack of organizational support sport club volunteers felt from provincial and national sport organizations as acknowledged in the challenges they face in relation to the recruitment of girls and women as

ice hockey coaches. Challenges include a lack of specific targets and informal strategies related to recruitment of women and girl coaches, club leaders perceived lack of interest in coaching amongst women and girls, and prioritization of elite-level sport by provincial and national sport organizations. Despite these challenges, leaders describe opportunities for engaging girl youth volunteer coaches including through the engagement of alumni networks, encouragement of volunteerism amongst current athletes, and support of the coach certification process for girl coaches.

The purpose of the third manuscript (Chapter 4) was to examine how the tenets of well-being as proposed by self-determination theory - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - can enhance our understanding of the organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches. Findings reveal that girls have positive experiences throughout their playing careers that contribute to their sense of well-being, yet there is limited knowledge of how these experiences can facilitate pathways into coaching despite an expressed interest in pursuing coaching opportunities amongst girls.

Together, the three manuscripts that comprise this dissertation offer new insights to help sport governing bodies and clubs consider the importance of club level intervention to promote the recruitment of girl athletes as volunteer coaches who are, according to LaVoi and Boucher (2021), the start of a fruitful “pipeline” of future women and girl coaches. In addition, the use of POS and SDT provides a theoretical understanding of how clubs can create supportive environments to engage girls as volunteer coaches during their playing career and offers an important direction for nonprofit sport organizations seeking to improve

capacity, increase the representation of women and girls in coaching and leadership positions, and deliver sustainable, high-quality sport programs in our communities for all participants (Hoye et al., 2019).

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List of Abbreviations

CSO = Community Sport Organization

POS = Perceived Organizational Support

SDT = Self-Determination Theory

NCCP = National Coaching Certification Program

NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association

TA = Thematic Analysis

NSO = National Sport Organization

PSO = Provincial Sport Organization

OWHA = Ontario Women's Hockey Association

PWHL = Professional Women's Hockey League

SCPM = Stages of Career Progression Model

EIM = Ecological Intersection Model

CBPR = Community Based Participatory Research

Chapter 1: Introduction

Nonprofit community sport organizations (CSOs) require the dedication of volunteers to facilitate and lead recreational and competitive sport opportunities for youth and adults across Canada (Hoye, 2019). Specifically, volunteer sport coaches hold a front facing role that serves to teach technical skills, guide athlete development, and lead sport activities (Baxter & Misener, 2022; Cassidy et al., 2023). Notably, there is a significant underrepresentation of women and girl volunteer coaches at the community sport level, which requires greater investigation into how they can be recruited and supported in the local grassroots sport system. Data available in Canada on a national scale demonstrate that only 25% of coaches in the Canadian sport system in 2015 identified as women (Government of Canada, 2015). More recent data reported by the Coaching Association of Canada indicate a slight growth in representation with 34% of women who took a National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) course compared to 66% of men and 0.1% of another gender (Canadian Women & Sport, 2019). In 2024, the province of Ontario presented similar coaching demographic data reporting that 34% of coaches identified as women (Coaches Association of Ontario, 2024). Interestingly, these data reflect a 4% drop in women coaches since the 2023 season (Coaches Association of Ontario, 2023). Women coach role models have been positively associated with coaching self-efficacy beliefs and coaching interests amongst girl athletes (Moran-Miller & Flores, 2011). The absence of women role models is often noted as a barrier that women and girls face to entering coaching roles which further exacerbates the low number of women in community sport coaching (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). In addition to the important benefits of role modeling and equity in community sport, tapping into the currently underutilized population of potential women and girl volunteer

coaches may help to build human resource capacity in community sport and counter the trend of declining sport coaches more broadly (Hoye et al., 2019). Finding ways to meaningfully engage women and girl volunteer coaches offers an important direction for nonprofit sport organizations seeking to deliver sustainable, high-quality sport programs in our communities for all participants (Hoye et al., 2019).

The barriers that women and girls face to sport coaching at intercollegiate and professional levels are well documented (e.g., Greenhill et al., 2009; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). At the local community level, less research has focused on women and girl volunteer coaches. One recent scoping review on the barriers faced by women and girl volunteer community sport coaches found that barriers include gender category sorting (e.g., channeling men into coaching positions and women into administrative positions), role conflicts, gendered assumptions, perceived lack of women and girl coach development, not feeling empowered to express needs, patriarchal belief systems, lack of organizational support, and insufficient support for young or inexperienced coaches (Baxter et al., 2021). There has been a call to address these barriers by better understanding the specific ways that women and girl coaches can be supported by their sport organization (LaVoi et al., 2019). In addition, LaVoi and Boucher (2021) have identified a need to recruit young girls with experience in sport as athletes themselves as a “pipeline” for developing future coaches and for researchers to aid in identifying critical developmental milestones (e.g., entering coaching).

Over the past 20 years there has been growing interest amongst management researchers to better understand the support that is provided by an organization for

employees or volunteers which has resulted in the emergence of perceived organizational support (POS) theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS researchers suggest that when employees or volunteers feel an organization values their input and contributes to their well-being, they feel a stronger identification with the organization which can result in increased commitment, engagement, as well as feelings of empowerment and satisfaction (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS places human capital and individual well-being at the heart of human resource management and displays how doing so might benefit organizations. Well-being theories represent a separate body of research stemming from the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Several theories of well-being have been proposed; however, POS theory has drawn on subjective well-being which measures the presence of positive mood, the absence of negative mood as well as additional measures of life satisfaction (Diener & Ryan, 2009). In contrast to this conceptualization of well-being, other well-being theories such as self-determination theory, which suggests that well-being consists of the fulfillment of three psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – may offer additional insights into the connections between POS, individual well-being, and organizational commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Organizations, such as CSOs, seeking to provide support for volunteers and offer opportunities for development may benefit from an understanding of the interconnections between POS, well-being, and commitment to an organization (Baxter et al., 2021). It is critical to understand a sport club's ability to offer the necessary organizational supports and thus meet the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness

of girl athletes. This may further influence girl athletes' decision as to whether to remain involved in the club in a volunteer coaching role.

At present, little is known about recruiting strategies for girl youth into coaching roles. While it may be intuitive that girl athletes could represent an important pipeline into coaching roles, young girls are often leaving sport after their 'careers' as athletes and not pursuing coaching careers (Drago et al., 2005). There may be several reasons for this, including ageist attitudes that compound the challenges that women sport coaches face to pursuing sport coaching pathways, whereby coaches perceived as younger are often discredited as inexperienced and incompetent (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). In Canada, young girls face barriers to continued involvement in sport including body image concerns, safety, injury, and lack of confidence and skill (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022). As such, 50% of Canadian girls drop out of sport by the time they reach adolescence (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022). In addition, 61% of Canadian women sport leaders do not feel that their organization invests in their development (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022). These statistics present a narrative that demonstrates the need to better understand the connections between girl youth athletes' perceptions of organizational support, their assessment as to whether the organization contributes to the fulfillment of their psychological needs and well-being, and their organizational commitment as participants and potential future sport coaches and leaders.

Currently, there is a lack of research on women in volunteer sport coaching, and very limited research specific to women and girl volunteer coaches at the community level (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021; Baxter et al., 2021). Little to no research has explored the experiences of

girl youth athletes related to coaching pathways and the supports available to enter coaching roles. This is a gap in sport management research considering the emphasis on positive youth development and the encouragement of life skills and competencies through sport and the focus on being involved in sport for life (Hoye et al., 2022). Indeed, sport can provide a context where youth can build competencies, assets, values, and life skills that promote positive youth development (PYD) (Jones et al., 2011). Volunteer coaching could be one way for youth to develop these skills, yet youth are a largely under-utilized resource who may provide unique insights, talents, and leadership within coaching roles (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021).

Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of this study is to explore organizational supports for girl volunteer coaches ages 12-17 in community sport. Overall, the inquiry is guided by the following questions:

- (1) What aspects of organizational support (or lack thereof) influence girl youth ice hockey athletes' perceptions of pursuing coaching?
- (2) What recruitment strategies do ice hockey clubs use to recruit youth volunteer coaches and are they designed in relation to the motives of youth athletes to volunteer?
- (3) How might understandings of girl youth perspectives on organizational support offer insights into how sport pathways can better support the well-being of girl youth athletes seeking to develop as potential future sport coaches?

Research Positionality and Personal Significance

Wary to Kuhn's (1962) warning that there is "...no such thing as research in the absence of any paradigm..." (p. 79), the paradigmatic assumptions and underpinnings of this study are as follows. This study adopts an interpretivist approach which suggests that inquiry is value laden and that meaning is subjective and produced through humans' attempts to make sense of phenomena through their engagement with the world around them (Skinner et al., 2024). Research conducted within an interpretivist paradigm presents "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Over the last decade, coaching researchers have begun to apply interpretive approaches; however, this is a relatively new paradigmatic shift considering the long tradition of positivistic research that has underpinned coaching literature (Potrac, 2014). Positivism assumes a measurable and discoverable reality where the researcher is tasked with uncovering an objective truth (Crotty, 1998). In contrast, interpretivism embraces a value laden approach to research, recognizing that the researcher cannot separate their interpretation of the world from the work they do (Skinner et al., 2024). As Ahmed (2006) notes, the direction we have taken in life is revealed by the objects we direct our attention to, and as a result other objects and spaces are placed in the background. In applied fields like sport management, many research topics come from personal interest in the field and the setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I have personally witnessed first-hand the coaching capabilities of young girls in my own role as a community sport ice hockey coach. As a prelude to this dissertation, I want to emphasize the significance of the research topic by sharing a short self-reflective narrative.

By doing so, my hope is that the reader will better understand the goals of this research and the position from which I write to foster dialogue and change (Ellis et al., 2000).

I walk into the ice hockey dressing room and I hear laughter, chatter, and a resounding “COACH HALEY!!!” followed by requests to help tie skates. I smile and ask them “What’s the magic word?” To my right Naomi is the first to respond with “PLEASE?” While grabbing her skates I ask her how her day at school was. Seemingly uninterested in the topic of conversation I had begun, she goes on to ask me what I have planned for practice. I assume she is asking so she can request to play games so I pre-emptively reassure her that if the team listens well today, we will get to play a game for the last five minutes of practice. Instead, Naomi looks at me in a somewhat serious way and announces that she has a drill planned and asks if the team can practice it. I am somewhat surprised by this request but I tell her to wait while I go retrieve my whiteboard so she can show me the drill she has prepared. She tells me that in the last game she noticed that our team was having a hard time getting the puck out of our end. For a seven-year-old, Naomi has proven to be quite observant and exceptionally passionate about ice hockey. The drill she shows me is a simple but effective way to help her teammates learn to shoot the puck off the boards and behind the opposing teams defender. I ask Naomi if she is comfortable sharing and demonstrating the drill for her teammates. She nods excitedly.

The team heads out on the ice. We start with our usual skating drills for the first fifteen minutes. I blow the whistle and call out “Coach Naomi, are you ready!?” Her face lights up with a huge smile when I call her Coach. I bring the team to the whiteboard, and I hand the marker to Naomi. As Naomi is explaining the drill to her teammates, I look over at

my Assistant Coach and we exchange grins, knowing full well that Coach Naomi is perhaps doing a better job of explaining the drill than we would have. She even brings up the number of an opposing player on the team we are playing in our upcoming game to watch for because they took the puck away from our forwards every time they tried to skate it out of the zone the last time we faced them. Admittedly I did not remember the score of that game, let alone a specific player. Naomi is the first to demonstrate the drill and her teammates follow suit. I am pleased with how quickly they pick it up, which for six- and seven-year-old athletes is not always the case. After practice I say my usual goodbyes to the girls, and I stop to give a special thanks to Coach Naomi. Her Dad stops me on my way out and expresses his thanks for allowing Naomi to run her drill. He says she has been talking about it all week. I smile and tell him she made my job easier tonight and give Naomi a high-five on the way out.

As I am driving in my car home, I reflect on the practice session. Usually, this process involves me worrying about what the parents might have thought of the practice or critiquing myself on something I should have done better as a coach but this time I can't stop smiling at the way that Naomi reacted to being called Coach. I think to myself "That kid will make a great coach one day," and then I quickly retract that statement because the truth is she WAS a great coach today.

I know firsthand the many internal and external obstacles young girls like Naomi may have to overcome to pursue coaching. I want to support her along this path and empower her in any way I can.

This research project is dedicated to all the strong women and girl athletes and coaches who pave the way for a re-imagined future of women as leaders in sport.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured in an integrated format that comprises three research articles that were developed from the data collected within the larger empirical study. Each chapter below provides important insights into organizational supports and management of girl volunteer community sport coaches. Chapter 2 presents the first manuscript which explores girls' perceptions of volunteer coaching pathways in community sport and the organizational support available and/or needed to help them develop as coaches. Chapter 3 contains the second article, which seeks to understand how club leaders perceive and provide organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles. Chapter 4 offers the final article of the dissertation and examines how the tenets of well-being as proposed by self-determination theory – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – can enhance our understanding of the organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation and outlines its key contributions to research, the practical applications of the findings, and directions for future research related to this topic of study.

Chapter 2: Fostering Pathways for Girls into Volunteer Community Sport Coaching

Community sport organizations (CSOs) offer essential sport participation opportunities for youth (Hoye, 2019). Sport can provide a meaningful context where youth can build competencies, relationships, values, and life skills that promote positive youth development (Jones et al., 2011). Particularly for girls, sport has a range of psycho-social, physical health, and motor skill development benefits, including but not limited to the development of positive and healthy body image, increased confidence and empowerment, decreased anxiety, and sense of belonging (Canadian Women & Sport, 2012). However, despite these important benefits of sport involvement, there remains a gender discrepancy in sport for all stakeholders including participants, coaches, leaders, and officials. Barriers such as access to proper resources and training, limited role models, time constraints, low self-esteem, and lack of family and/or peer support impact the sport participation pathways for women and girls (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022; LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). For coaches in particular, the gendered institution of sport often reproduces traditional notions of femininity and masculinity and leads to gender bias and stereotypes for women at all levels of sport coaching (Burton & Newton, 2021). As a result, women coaches are placed under constant scrutiny and their presence within sport leadership roles, including sport coaching, is often questioned (Fink, 2016).

There is limited research related to the supports women and girls need to enter and sustain their involvement in sport coaching (LaVoi et al., 2019). In addition, there is very limited research related to women and girl sport coaches at the community level (Baxter et al., 2021). According to LaVoi and Boucher (2021), research on girls as coaches is limited,

despite the strategic need to recruit young women with experience as athletes themselves as a “pipeline” for developing future coaches. In a scoping review on women coaches in volunteer community sport, Baxter et al. (2021) identified a lack of theoretically informed extant research on recruitment and coaching pathways. They suggested that future research needs to examine perceptions of community sport coaching roles amongst girls as potential future coaches, and how to effectively recruit and support girls as they progress through a coaching pathway. Organizational support is essential for ensuring that people remain in their roles and experience well-being through their affiliation with an organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Effective support is required for women coaches in any sport context (e.g., Dixon & Sagas, 2007) and can be used to better understand coaches’ experiences and intentions to continue coaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore girls’ perceptions of volunteer coaching pathways in community sport and the organizational support available and/or needed to help them develop as coaches. This research contributes to the literature on girls in community sport and pathways for developing youth volunteers, and it offers new directions for sport governing bodies that seek to enhance opportunities to widen their volunteer base and enhance inclusion amongst coaches.

Literature Review

Youth Volunteering in Sport

Youth volunteering constitutes activities undertaken by adolescents between the ages of 12 and 22 years old with no monetary reward that often benefits organisations, people, or

groups within a community (Smith et al., 2017). Much of the current research on youth volunteers focuses on their motives to volunteer and how specific characteristics of youth predict the likelihood of volunteer involvement (e.g., Rosenthal et al., 1998; Hasiki-Leventhal et al., 2008). Research has also demonstrated that youth participate in volunteering because of altruistic desires to benefit others and contribute to the community (Gage & Thapa, 2012) as well as to gain new skills and improve their opportunities for employment (Febbraro, 2001; Hall et al., 2006). Apart from these reasons, young people also volunteer as a form of leisure and to use their free time in a productive way (Stebbins, 2015). Youth volunteering has several benefits for individuals and organizations alike, providing spaces for youth to build meaningful relationships and to enable organizations to offer important services to their communities (Hasiki-Leventhal et al., 2008). Research on youth volunteering in sport has explored how sport environments can enhance access to resources like social capital (e.g., Bradbury & Kay, 2008; Kay & Bradbury, 2009). However, the benefits of youth sport volunteering are dependent on personal and structural factors that rely on the capacity of individuals to access and negotiate social networks (Bradbury & Kay, 2008; Kay & Bradbury, 2009). Thus, there remains a need to better understand the various dynamics that influence whether and how youth can access key volunteer roles in sport settings, including coaching (Storr & Spaaij, 2017).

Women and Girls in Community Sport Coaching

Policymakers and sport governing bodies are increasingly drawing attention to the lower numbers of women and girls amongst ranks of sport coaches at all levels of sport

(Canadian Women and Sport, 2022; LaVoi et al., 2019). In a recent review of published literature on women and girl community sport coaches, Baxter et al. (2021) noted that research has focused on five themes including coach motives, barriers, values, supports, and retention. They further noted that sport coaching is not perceived to be a positive or welcoming environment for women and girl coaches, and that the design of community sport delivery does not offer flexible options to engage and involve the participation of women and girl coaches. They recommended that further research in this context is needed in areas such as policy and governance, coaching pathways, recruitment, retention, performance, stress and well-being, and support mechanisms (Baxter et al., 2021).

LaVoi and Boucher (2021) have introduced a life-span career approach to the study of women and girls in sport coaching to address the lack of information on coach progression amongst women and girls at different life stages. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) call for international and domestic sport governing associations and coaching associations to support and develop initiatives to encourage girls and women to enter sport coaching. This echoes sentiments from Baxter et al. (2021) who suggest the importance of representation of women at all levels of sport but especially at the community level of sport. At the community level of sport where most participate, women and girl coaching role models can further encourage coaching self-efficacy beliefs amongst women and girl athletes (Moran-Miller & Flores, 2011). Further, research on women and girl sport coaches in male-dominated sport environments can provide insight into the exclusionary behaviours such as harassment, bullying, tokenism or occupational segregation, and bias that privilege White, heterosexual men, and that limit the recruitment and retention of women and girl community sport coaches

(LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). The current study addresses these gaps by exploring girls' perceptions of volunteer coaching pathways in community sport and their desired supports.

Theoretical Background

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support (POS) theory is a psychological theory of social exchange initially developed to understand the relationship between the employee and the organization from the perspective of the employee (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS was originally coined to refer to the general belief that employees hold regarding the extent to which an organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 1986). POS draws on the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974) and the norm of reciprocity. Social exchange theories focus on what motivates individuals to contribute to the mission and goals of the organization and what they expect in return for their involvement (Homans, 1974). The norm of reciprocity is an essential component of social exchange theory and explains how people feel inclined to repay favourable treatment through the exchange of resources to maintain self-image and receive favourable treatment in the future (Eisenberger et al., 2001). In this social process, members of an organization assess (a) whether their socioemotional needs (e.g., approval, emotional support, esteem, affiliation) are being met and (b) the value of contributing greater efforts on the organization's behalf based on their perceptions of organizational support. Social exchange relationships move beyond pure economic exchange and instead rely on the

premise that if both parties invest in a long-term relationship, they each will maximize their gain of many types of resources through the exchange (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

Business and management researchers have drawn on this theory to study people's relationships with organizations in order to explain and predict the causes of perceived organizational support and the positive consequences that may result, such as employee psychological well-being, positive orientation toward the organization, and behavioural outcomes (e.g., job performance, withdrawal behaviour, creativity, and innovation). As POS seeks to understand the employee-(or volunteer)-organization relationship, the theory has been primarily taken up by human resource and management scholars across sectors including the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations such as nonprofit CSOs face increasing pressure to take on a more formal approach to volunteer management and incorporate human resource management practices as a way in which to recruit, select, train, engage, and support volunteers (Alfes et al., 2017; Cuskelly et al., 2006). Unlike the business sector, the nonprofit sector relies heavily upon the contributions of volunteers who offer their time and expertise with no remuneration or perhaps a small stipend, thus reducing overall costs for nonprofit organizations functioning on limited resources and organizational capacity (Doherty & Cuskelly, 2019). Given the importance of volunteer contributions, POS has been applied in the nonprofit literature to understand the relationship between the organization and its volunteers. This framing gives understanding beyond the motives of volunteers and focuses more on the underlying psychological processes that occur in the ongoing social exchange between the organization and a volunteer and can be useful for understanding

issues such as turnover, dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and poor performance (Usadolo et al., 2022).

POS has also informed studies in sport management that focus on sport coaches. For example, Kim and Cunningham's (2005) research on intercollegiate sport coaches found that affective commitment is positively associated with job satisfaction. Dixon and Sagas (2007) found direct and indirect effects between POS, job-life satisfaction, and work-family conflict amongst American intercollegiate coaches. Findings from Rocha and Chelladurai (2011) suggest that affective commitment was a mediator between performance and organizational support. These studies have focused on coaches in the United States of America's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). There remains an important gap in research related to organizational support for community level coaches, and particularly for women and girls. Notably, POS has been employed as a framework to better understand the experiences of early career officials, Cuskelly & Hoye (2013), uncovered that an organizational support program did not impact officials' intention to continue. This finding demonstrates how context and role may be central to developing meaningful forms of organizational support amongst key stakeholders (e.g., coaches, officials) at varying levels of the sport system, including entry level stages.

In the context of voluntary sport organizations where players and coaches have opportunities to affiliate with different organizations in a community, the notion of organizational support can be used to highlight why an athlete or coach may choose to remain at a CSO or disassociate with that CSO in favour of one where they feel that their contributions are recognized, valued, and their well-being is supported. Hence, this theory

offers important insights for considering how athletes may evolve into coaching roles within a given organization based on their assessment of their relationship with their sport club and the sport club's capability of engaging athletes in ways to promote further involvement as volunteers.

POS theory offers a new perspective from previous theories used to study coaching pathways such as the transition-extension framework (Cuskelly & O'Brien, 2013) and Atchley's (1989, 1993, 1999) continuity theory, which asserts that people are in search of a coherent life story. This coherent life story is built through an individual's inner psychological continuity (e.g., attitudes, values, beliefs) and reinforced through their external continuity (e.g., social behaviour, relationships, activities). Atchley (1993) argues that people stake their identity on activities which increase their motivation for continuing these activities. The transition-extension framework was proposed by Cuskelly and O'Brien (2013) to understand the transition from playing to volunteering in sport. These approaches provided helpful insights into psychological and social factors that prompt athletes to transition to volunteerism, such as the desire to stay involved and connected to the sport, maintain a sense of identity and feelings of competence, and maintain relationships that foster a sense of belonging within a familiar environment. POS can provide new insights that differ from the transition-extension framework which focuses on individual motives for volunteerism based on an individual's efforts to maintain continuity in their life and instead begin to unpack how the organization can manage and play a critical role in supporting the retention of members as volunteers. Thus, this study builds on and extends from previous studies on community sport volunteers that have focused on identity and continuity as conduits for involvement and

instead seeks to understand how members perceive supports from the organization as the potential driver for their involvement as volunteers.

Methods

This study is guided by an interpretivist approach which is informed from a subjective epistemological perspective and a relativist ontology (Saunders et al., 2012). This perspective assumes that people and their knowledge are innately intertwined and thus cannot be separated. In addition, people experience reality differently from others and employing qualitative methods such as interviews can enable rich exploration of individual experiences that can enable a high level of depth and insight into the participant perspectives within a unique context (Alharahsheh et al., 2020). A basic interpretive qualitative research design was used to guide this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) as it allowed us to explore how people construct their worlds, interpret their experiences, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This approach also allows for the theoretical framework of the study to guide what questions are asked and how and what data are collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Research Context and Participants

In Canada, during the 2023-2024 ice hockey season, there were 94,160 coaches, many of whom were volunteers who contributed their time to CSOs for the delivery of the sport of ice hockey (Hockey Canada, 2024a). Ice hockey is an example of a sport in Canada that historically has been heavily dominated by men. Ice hockey for girls and women in Canada has historically faced persistent gender ideologies and prevailing attitudes of girls'

ice hockey as ‘second rate’ to that of boys’ ice hockey (Adams & Leavitt, 2018). This is exemplified through organizational practices such as discriminatory ice allocation that prioritizes boys and men and, importantly, a lack of women coaches at all levels (Adams & Leavitt, 2018). In the 2023-2024 ice hockey season in Canada, Hockey Canada (2024b) reported a stark gender discrepancy in coaching demographics. A total of 87,573 coaches nationwide were men and boys and only 6,052 were women and girls (7.07%), highlighting a significant under-representation of women and girls in coaching roles. Ice hockey participation amongst women and girls is growing. In the 2023-2024 season of women and girls made up 18.38% of participants. In the Canadian ice hockey system, coaching certifications follow a structured pathway governed by Hockey Canada and the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) of the Coaching Association of Canada that have implemented a minimum age policy which allows individuals to begin their coaching qualifications at 14 years old but are not able to hold a coaching role until they are 16 years old. Those coaches who have finished their training are automatically given certified status on their 16th birthday (Coaching Association of Canada, n.d.). These features offer important context for the current study which was based in minor ice hockey in Ontario, Canada.

Three community-level girls’ ice hockey associations were emailed a recruitment letter and asked to circulate to parents of girl players ages 12 to 17 years old. Nineteen self-identified girl ice hockey players indicated interest and participated in the study. Seven of the participants had previous volunteer experience in ice hockey but not in an official capacity that required certification through the Hockey Canada coaching pathway. These experiences primarily included helping out as on-ice helpers in learn-to-skate clinics with younger

players. Participants varied in their participation levels as ice hockey players with some having experience playing representative level ice hockey (competitive stream) and others participating in recreational level or “house league” teams. Table 1 outlines the participant details, which includes, 10 participants from Club 1, 5 participants from Club 2, and 4 participants from Club 3. Seven of the participants had previous experience playing for two of the three clubs involved in the study, giving them a unique ability to draw on experiences across multiple club settings.

Table 1

Chart of participant, club played for, age, and level of play

Participant	Club	Age	Level
Youth 1	Club 1	15	REP U18AA
Youth 2	Club 1	14	REP U15AA
Youth 3	Club 1	14	REP U15 AA
Youth 4	Club 1	15	HL U18
Youth 5	Club 1	17	HL U18
Youth 6	Club 1	14	HL/DS U15
Youth 7	Club 1	15	HL/DS U18
Youth 8	Club 1	15	REP U18 B
Youth 9	Club 1	15	REP U18 B
Youth 10	Club 1	16	REP U18 AA
Youth 11	Club 2	16	U18 A

Youth 12	Club 2	13	HL U13
Youth 13	Club 2	14	Rep U15A
Youth 14	Club 2	14	HLU15
Youth 15	Club 2	15	Rep U18 B
Youth 16	Club 3	14	REP (B)
Youth 17	Club 3	14	REP U15AA
Youth 18	Club 3	14	REP U15AA
Youth 19	Club 3	12	REP U15AA

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, lasting 30-40 minutes and focused on research participants individual experiences in local ice hockey clubs, their perceptions of organizational support required for their development, and their interest in pursuing volunteer coaching pathways. Sample interview questions include: (1) Do you feel supported and cared for within your ice hockey club? (2) Have you ever been asked to volunteer as an ice hockey coach? And (3) what factors would influence your interest in becoming an ice hockey coach now or in the future? Data collection and analysis occurred in an iterative way following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis (TA). Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and analysis consisted of six phases: (1) data familiarization, (2) deductive coding using a priori codes and novel codes of the interview transcripts; (3) developing the themes by organizing the codes into candidate themes; (4) refining the candidate themes; (5) naming each theme; and (6) producing the

report. After conducting 19 interviews we felt we had sufficient information power (Malterud et al., 2016) to contribute substantially to our understanding of organizational support mechanisms needed to generate pathways and develop girls into sport coaching roles. This approach allowed the researchers to utilize an inductive and deductive orientation to the analysis that was linked to theory (Braun & Clarke, 2019) in order to understand the experiences of the participants while also using POS as a lens to help make sense of these experiences.

Reflexivity, Trustworthiness, and Rigor

Critical reflection on a researcher's own experience in the research setting is an essential part of embracing and valuing our subjectivity in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). This includes connected forms of personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual processes (Walsh, 2003). As a researcher I recognize that my own lived experiences related to the sport of ice hockey are embedded in the development of this study. I am a White, able-bodied woman who has participated and volunteered within the Canadian ice hockey system at various levels from grassroots to high-performance sport. I have experience volunteering in coaching roles for 8-10 years. In addition, I have

experienced gendered assumptions regarding the role of women and girls within the sport system and the sport of ice hockey. The researcher conducted the interviews to provide consistency across the data collection process and discussed key learnings and assumptions with their doctoral supervisor. The researcher took extensive notes during discussions with their doctoral supervisor and shared their reflexivity throughout the research process.

Trustworthiness was maintained throughout the research process in several ways. The study maintains methodological coherence thanks to the congruence between the interpretivist approach and qualitative research design of the study (Burke, 2016). The involvement of multiple viewpoints in the research setting provided fulsome and collaborative analysis leading to a rich and nuanced reading of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher also maintained a reflexive journal during data collection and analysis which greatly supported the coding process and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Findings

The findings are presented below and organized into four key themes which offer new insight into girls' perceptions of volunteer coaching pathways in community sport and the organizational support available and/or needed to help them develop as coaches: (1) Girls' altruistic coaching intentions, (2) Importance of relatability and communication in coaching pathways, (3) Desire for resource equity, and (4) Availability and awareness of coaching pathways. These four themes will be further explored and expanded upon in the sections below, with direct quotations from the participants.

Girls' Altruistic Coaching Intentions

Almost all the athletes in the study had a strong desire to give back to the sport of ice hockey as future coaches, which shaped their perceptions and expectations of coaching pathways. This is fueled by positive experiences and long-term involvement in a club. For example, Youth 4 stated, “I’d like to coach for the club I play in more than any other organization because I’ve had so much experience with the organization and played in the organization for like my whole life.” Youth 3 discussed multiple motives to give back but highlighted the importance of having a positive experience and feeling supported by people within the club as central motivators for giving back as a volunteer coach. She expressed her desire to coach in the club she currently plays in comparison to a former club due to the negative experiences she previously had when playing in that club. Youth 3 stated:

Yes, I would consider volunteer coaching for my club because I love the club and my experience has been really good. The coaches and the board members are also really good. I would not want to volunteer coach at [former club] because that was not a good experience, and the people were not very nice or supportive there.

Youth 3’s expressed desire to coach where she currently plays because she felt supported and cared for, and this positive environment influenced her desire to volunteer within this club in the future.

Girl athletes who participated in this study viewed coaching as an opportunity to contribute to their community and pass on the benefits they received from their own participation. Many participants discussed conversing with fellow teammates about a desire to coach younger teams upon transitioning out of their own playing careers, particularly

when players had a close relation to a younger player (e.g., sibling, cousin, family friend, neighbour). For example, Youth 15 stated:

My friends and I have talked about coaching my cousin's team, because my cousin is younger, and she will be going into Rep hockey right when we are going to be leaving it. So we've talked before about coaching for our club and being a non-parent coach for her team.

In addition, players noted altruistic desires to give back through future coaching pursuits and utilize their own lived experiences to enhance the sport experience for young girls within their ice hockey club. In comparison to local league players, rep players noted the importance of pursuing higher levels of sport as athletes to enhance their technical abilities as future coaches and share those skills with the next generation of girl ice hockey players. For example, Youth 10 noted:

I think it would be super cool to coach for my club, especially if I do get really experienced by playing higher levels. I think I had good coaches growing up and I had bad coaches growing up so I kind of know what makes a good coach and what makes a bad coach. So I think because of my playing experiences, volunteer coaching would be pretty cool, you know, helping young girls. I went through a lot of stress playing so having a girl on the bench would be nice.

The interest in coaching expressed amongst all participants indicates a collective aspiration to take on coaching roles in some capacity, underscoring the importance of clubs actively promoting and supporting girls' coaching ambitions. In addition, Youth 10's experience going through "a lot of stress" as a player indicates that perhaps the lack of

support received from coaches and/or the organization fuels a sense of responsibility to give back to the next generation to improve upon the sport experience for fellow girls by having girls and women as coaching role models.

Relatability and Communication

Girl athletes in the study perceived women coaches, especially those closer to them in age, as generally approachable and communicative figures in their lives. This perception of relatability enhanced girls' sense of connection and accessibility to coaching pathways within their clubs. Youth 13 explained her relationship with a coach who was close to her age:

I know, with Coach [Sara] I can like talk to her if I needed anything without the feeling of like, she doesn't really know what I mean. That's because she's younger, she's experienced things I'm going through more recently. With other older coaches, I feel like it's more talking to like, your grandparents. With Sara, she knows because she had just gone through a similar playing experience and now, I can follow what she did to know how to get into coaching or university.

Many players discussed how young women coaches have already influenced them to pursue coaching or actively got them involved in volunteer coaching pursuits within the organization. They noted that young women were usually approachable and easy to talk to about not only their development as players but also their aspirations to coach. Oftentimes, women coaches were the ones who involved girls in volunteer opportunities, providing meaningful experiences to youth athletes and ensuring they saw a pathway to coaching. Youth 2 explained:

She would let us run a drill or like, a station so it felt like we were kind of coaching by ourselves and managing our own staff. She let us do like a lot of individual coaching with the little kids. So it was fun to run our own bench.

Youth 2 also explained that if she had questions about coaching pursuits, she would approach a woman coach for information related to coaching certifications and pathways noting that:

I really like having a woman to talk to. It's so different from a man because you feel even, like, more comfortable and I feel like the respect. She helps me get involved in coaching. She puts my name out there, and she's definitely a supporter too.

All three clubs in this study had women in coaching roles who were highly influential to girls and “almost like teammates” (Youth 2). These women were able to enhance the girls’ future desires to volunteer as coaches themselves by communicating different opportunities for girls to get involved as coaches. However, it was notable that girls did not share any examples of strategic organizational engagement and recruitment to foster these desires into actuality as none of the girls in the study had been approached directly by the club to volunteer as coaches. Thus, without the presence of a relatable figure who communicated these opportunities directly, the girls would not be aware of any coaching pathways.

Desire for Resource Equity

Another key theme drawn from the interviews centres on the desire amongst girl youth athletes for resource equity with boys/men when considering coaching opportunities. Our findings reveal that girls express a strong preference for coaching in clubs where programs focused on girls are well-funded and where clubs prioritize equitable resource distribution between boy and girl teams. This emphasis on resource equity reflects girls’

desire for fair and supportive coaching environments, where they feel valued, and where they feel they would have access to the necessary resources for their own and their athletes' development. For example, Youth 17 explained

I wouldn't coach in my former club because their association is not organized and there is lots of politics on the board, people yelling at other people on the board, and it's just nuts. Over there, the boys' side tends to get privilege over the girls' side.

They get more ice time, better rinks, and better time slots for practices and games so I wouldn't coach in that club.

Some of the girls expressed frustration with the lack of gender equity in the distribution of resources and discussed how this would deter them from coaching under those conditions.

Others; however, cited that they would volunteer despite inequity in the hopes of disrupting how resources are allocated and acting as agents of change. Youth 13 expressed:

We have two ice pads in our arena and we never get to play on [the big ice pad with the stands] and the boys who play a level down say "we play there almost every game." It's annoying because when people come to watch, no one wants to come watch in [the small rink]. It's frustrating and I hope that as a coach I can help change this for the younger girls coming up playing.

As athletes, most of the girls in the study recognize and have experienced inequity and lack of organizational support to promote equity between boys and girls' ice hockey clubs and desire to be part of future change. They were highly aware of inequities, particularly related to financial and infrastructure (e.g., facility) resources. Organizational decisions related to resources was therefore an important factor influencing their perception

of coaching pathways and their willingness to engage as coaches in particular organizations in the future.

Availability and Awareness of Coaching Pathways

The final theme evident from the interview data is the notion that girls perceive a lack of availability and awareness surrounding coaching pathways and certification processes within their organizations. Indeed, none of the girls who participated in the study had been approached by club representatives to volunteer as coaches or were aware of any recruitment efforts directed to them as youth athletes. Youth 5 explained:

It's not advertised to pretty much anyone; usually it's like, oh, so and so's Dad is the coach and other parents will be the assistant coaches. It's never really advertised to any of the older players like – "hey, do you want to coach a team?" You have to actually approach someone to get the information.

Girls who had been involved in helping roles or coaching previously discussed how they had advocated for their own involvement, or some were asked to coach informally by older coaches to help with younger teams. In most cases, girls sought out these opportunities because they were aware of neighbours or relatives on a particular team.

Despite this perceived lack of availability and awareness of coaching pathways, our findings also reveal that girls appreciate opportunities provided by coaches to practice leadership and that as players, indeed, they felt that they have gradually built adequate knowledge of coaching during their playing careers. Youth 6, who was currently volunteering as a coach for a younger team in the club, described how she had been offered opportunities to build coaching and leadership experience:

As I get older, the coaches have us take more leadership roles for practices and ideas with announcing lineups, which I've been enjoying this year. The last year and this year, they've had one person each practice create a drill, something they want the team to work on, and then we explain it to the rest of the team.

While only a few mentioned opportunities like this, all girls noted that the opportunity to practice coaching skillsets would be valuable to them, yet they felt unaware of whether coaching roles were even available to them and did not know how to further their own knowledge related to formal coaching pathways. The participants highlighted an apparent gap in how clubs are underutilizing development opportunities to provide education on coaching pathways for girl athletes.

Discussion

The research highlights new findings that present theoretical implications for the field of sport management within the context of nonprofit community sport. The voices and stories of the girl athletes in this study emphasized a strong desire amongst girls to stay involved in community sport through volunteer coaching. The findings also indicate that some girls want to stay involved in community sport in order to have a chance to give back to the next generation of girl athletes and create a more equitable sport environment through sport coaching. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown a range of motives for engaging in sport volunteerism for adult populations. Notably, altruism has frequently been cited as the strongest motive to volunteer amongst volunteer sport coaches (Hallmann et al., 2025; Busser & Carruthers, 2010). Thus, it is interesting that in this younger

population of girl youth athletes, this motive is also a key driver of volunteerism. Our findings also highlight that altruistic motives are tied to specific organizational environments/clubs that are perceived by girls as supportive and equitable. This further establishes connections to POS, which has been shown to be related to altruistic concern for an organization (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). While previous research has shown that older volunteers (Emrich et al., 2014) or those who have volunteered longer (Merrilees et al., 2020) have more altruistic motives than younger volunteers, the current findings demonstrate that youth do indeed have altruistic motives in this setting. POS is rooted in the psychological theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964), which is helpful lens to understand whether and how members of an organization are motivated to repay or feel obligated toward the welfare of the organization when they feel supported by the organization. Much of the current literature on POS and sport volunteers has examined volunteers in the context of events and has suggested that supervisory support and autonomy in decision-making within their role contribute to increased volunteer commitment and satisfaction (Aisbett & Hoye 2014, 2015). Our study focuses on formal long-term volunteerism and findings show that the extensive relationship between the member and the organization is perhaps where altruistic motives for volunteerism may stem.

The girls interviewed in this study also feel most connected to women coaches who are closer to them in age and who they perceive as more approachable and communicative about coaching opportunities. Previous research has shown that young people in sport and physical activity contexts found coaches closer in age produced near-peer relationships (St. Pierre et al., 2024). When youth relate to and share similar backgrounds as coaches, they

have increased participation in sport and physical activity and also strive for achieving accomplishments outside of sport, such as academics and personal growth (St. Pierre et al., 2024). Youth often need the encouragement of fellow coaches to prompt them to enter volunteer pathways (Bradford et al., 2016). This relationship is crucial for understanding how to pursue coach pathways, given that information about the availability of coaching pathways is not always advertised by local clubs. Women coaches can positively influence girls sustained involvement in sport (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005), coaching self-efficacy beliefs, and coaching interest amongst girls (Moran-Miller & Flores, 2011). Considering that the absence of women coaches is noted as a barrier to women and girls entering into coaching roles (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), it is important to consider an organization's role in creating opportunities for near-peer volunteer coaches as a strategic recruitment strategy for increasing knowledge of coaching opportunities and pathways. Existing research has noted the lack of women and girls in coaching positions despite the importance of women and girls being exposed to same-gender role models (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; LaVoi, 2016). This research echoes these findings and contributes to further nuanced understanding of Ronkainen et al.'s (2020) findings, that in comparison to men, young women often choose role models based on proximity, the strength of the relationship with the role model, and the similarities between the role model and themselves. The current findings also demonstrate that having accessible role models is important to girls wanting to pursue coaching themselves.

Girls recognize resource inequities between sport teams of different genders and many indicated desire to coach for clubs that place high value on creating equitable sport

experiences. Girls in this study also want to be agents of change within their own club despite the current inequities. The desire for resource equity in the study highlights how girls develop beliefs throughout their playing career regarding the extent to which the organization would be able to support them in a prospective voluntary coaching role. Previous research on POS has focused on the antecedents of POS, or ways in which organizations indicate positive regard for the contributions of members. For example, Boezeman and Ellemer's (2008) study on POS and volunteer recruitment found that non-volunteers with information about organizational support anticipated feelings of respect, making them more inclined to volunteer for the organization. Research on antecedents of POS has shown that fairness, in particular distributive justice (the fairness of resource distributions) and procedural justice (fairness of the decision-making process that decides the distribution of resources) is relevant to engaging people in organizations (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Colquitt, 2001). The findings in this study show additional gender-based considerations for sport organizations seeking to enhance perceptions of organizational support amongst members, in particular girl athletes as prospective volunteer coaches.

Despite having a high level of interest in entering volunteer coaching, this study suggests that knowledge about volunteer coaching roles or how to pursue volunteer coaching pathways is currently not being provided to girl ice hockey athletes in a transparent or encouraging way. Research indicates that organizational factors that impact coaching pathways for women include organizational strategies, prevailing hegemonic masculinity, and systemic barriers within sport organizations (Greenhill et al., 2009). The findings in this study suggest a need to strategically foster the interest girls have in coaching and provide

intervening organizational strategies to recruit them into coaching pathways. Research on women community sport coaches has previously identified that women do not feeling empowered to express their needs or coaching interests (Hovden, 1999) and are unclear about coaching pathways (Shaw & Allen, 2009). The current study highlights that when specifically asked to volunteer, girls have the confidence to express their interests in coaching and take on these roles; however, there is still a lack of clarity on how to get involved and how to pursue coach certifications. The research offers new contributions to research on POS in the context of community sport and provides new insight into girls' perceptions of volunteer coaching pathways and their desired supports.

Future Directions

There are longstanding concerns over the difficulties in recruiting and retaining sport volunteers (Hoye et al., 2019). The findings of this study demonstrate that some girl athletes have a high interest in sport volunteering; however, there is low awareness of how to get involved, and a perceived lack of organizational support. Similar findings amongst non-volunteers aged 18-24 years old who completed the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2020 Sport Monitor indicate that they are most likely to cite lack of access, availability or knowledge of opportunities as key reasons they do not volunteer in sport (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2022). The current study points to the importance of understanding how sport clubs can intentionally promote sport volunteering pathways to youth athletes to educate them on how to get involved.

From a volunteer recruitment perspective, the findings indicate that CSOs are currently lacking strategies related to recruiting youth athletes into coaching roles and missing a potential pipeline of relatable coaching role models for girls in sport. This has implications for furthering youth interest in volunteer coaching pathways by having relatable role models who can communicate and counsel athletes in their transition into coaching as well as, from an added developmental and leadership perspective, advise them in other areas such as education and career paths. It is important to note that young adults, in comparison to older adults 65 years and older, feel that mentorship is the most important reason for volunteering (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2022). Sport clubs should consider the desire for young people to mentor fellow youth as an opportunity to engage in conversations around volunteer opportunities amongst the youth athletes in their club. It is especially important to engage in these conversations with young girl athletes considering the additional gender-based barriers girls face within sport coaching including gender segregation in coaching and the social construction of gender roles in sport organizations (Baxter et al., 2021).

Gender-based issues have been recognized by Hockey Canada, which in 2024 launched a 15-person steering committee of individuals who sought to remove six identified barriers for women and girls in ice hockey: (1) the structure of women's and girls' ice hockey, (2) equity in resource allocation, (3) policy and governance, (4) education and training, (5) data, and (6) visibility and celebration (Hockey Canada, 2024b). Findings from the current study identify the importance of Hockey Canada's second identified barrier, equity in resource allocation, in supporting grassroots coaching opportunities for girls.

Indeed, some girls want to coach in clubs that prioritize equitable resource distribution between boys' and girls' teams. This issue identified in the study also has policy implications. For example, Hockey Canada (2024b) has suggested a nationwide ice equity access policy to help local level organizations struggling to compete with groups that gained priority through agreements that pre-date the creation of women and girls ice hockey programs. The findings show that local clubs should consider and discuss how equity in resource allocation is not only a critical issue related to the experience of sport participants but also highly relevant to coaches and potential future coaches.

Notably, after participating in the interviews for this study, several of the participants were prompted to take action and followed up with their clubs to ask about steps to get certified as volunteer coaches. This catalytic and tactical authenticity amongst the participants resulting in action is an interesting and beneficial component of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Based on this interest, the research team provided educational information to all participants on the steps to take and provided contact information for them to begin their volunteer coaching pursuits.

There are several pathways for future research that emerge from this study. Future research efforts could include perspectives of administrators to better understand how club leaders perceive and provide organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles. In addition, researchers may want to consider different methods, for example quantitative methods for a more fulsome understanding of the antecedents of POS amongst girls who are interested in transitioning into volunteer coaching roles. Previous research shows that anticipation of POS begins to form early amongst

employees (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), so in-depth analysis of the antecedents relevant to the formation of POS amongst youth sport athletes may help organizations better understand how they can work to engage them in long-term involvement in the club as sport volunteers. The current study addresses calls to action (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021) and adds to the existing body of knowledge on women and girls in sport coaching. Specifically, the study contributes to understanding the experiences of girls and sport coaching pathways at the community level of sport.

Chapter 3: Recruiting Girl Youth Volunteer Coaches: Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities for Ice Hockey Club Leaders

Community sport organizations (CSOs) offer vital services for people of all ages, providing opportunities for physical activity and social connection between members (Misener & Doherty, 2013). In Canada and many other countries around the world such as Australia, New Zealand, and Germany, community sport is primarily delivered by nonprofit organizations and is heavily reliant on volunteers for operations, governance, and management of human resources (Breuer et al., 2016; Hoye et al., 2019; Misener & Doherty, 2013; Mulcahy & Kerr, 2024). The growing expectations of club members (i.e., athletes, parents, etc.) and emphasis on high-performance sport has resulted in trends toward the professionalization of CSOs. This trend has caused some nonprofit community sport clubs to invest in paid staff, particularly for administrative roles; however, most continue to run exclusively on the efforts of volunteers, including volunteer coaches (Hoye, 2019).

Community sport club leaders, whether paid employees or volunteers, are responsible for the club's strategic plan, the day-to-day leadership and management of the club, and the management and coordination of volunteers; however, clubs seek guidance from their national sport organizations (NSOs) and provincial sport organizations (PSOs) to stay informed of best practices, policies, standards and regulations, and to gain access to critical resources including coaching development.

Community sport relies on the output of front-line volunteer coaches such as sport coaches (Coakley, 2021; Harman & Doherty, 2014). Underrepresentation of women and girls in coaching roles remains a considerable issue across the community sport sector (Baxter et

al., 2021). For example, in Canada, despite increased participation amongst girls in the sport of ice hockey there continues to be significant lack of girls and women in sport coaching roles. In 2023-2024, Hockey Canada reported that 79,521 coaches were boys and men in comparison to 6,052 girls and women coaches (Hockey Canada, 2024a). The stark overrepresentation of men ice hockey coaches in comparison to women ice hockey coaches means that many young girls growing up playing the sport do not benefit from the mentorship women coaches provide, including fostering positive development, modelling lifelong involvement in sport, and positively impacting the coaching efficacy beliefs of young girl athletes (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2007; Moran-Miller & Flores, 2011). In addition, a lack of women coaches as role models is noted as a barrier for women and girls wanting to enter coaching roles (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; Midgley et al., 2021).

Currently, the majority of the research on women in sport coaching is focused on women in paid or professional coaching roles (Baxter et al., 2021). In contrast, little focus has been directed to women coaches at voluntary and community level sports where supports may greatly vary in comparison to those in paid coaching roles and at higher levels of the sport system (Baxter et al., 2021). This is surprising given that the number of people who may pursue coaching roles in community sport versus professional coaching careers is much higher, and these entry level coaching positions are critical for engaging people, including athletes, as coaches and supporting their pathways to other levels (e.g., Cuskelly & O'Brien, 2013). In Baxter et al.'s (2021) scoping review, they noted that 13 empirical research articles have focused on motives, barriers, values, and retention of women and girl community sport coaches. In their recommendations for future research, the authors noted a need to generate

new knowledge on recruitment and management of coaching pathways for women and girl community sport coaches. Subsequently six additional articles focused on women and girl community sport coaches have been published (Barrett et al., 2021; Gosai et al., 2023; Hogan et al., 2022a, 2022b; Hoye et al., 2025).

Research on sport volunteers more broadly has focused on understanding the behavioural motives of volunteers (e.g., Kim et al., 2010) and understanding volunteer identities (e.g., Wicker & Hallmann, 2013). Much less research has focused on the relationship between the volunteer and the organization and the impact this might have on recruitment and retention. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand how club leaders perceive and provide organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles. The current research addresses a significant gap in the literature on girls as coaches which has been identified by LaVoi and Boucher (2021) who note that the sport system is lacking pathways for future coaches amongst girl athletes themselves who could bring much needed mentorship, skill, diversity, and knowledge into the system.

Literature Review

Amateur Sport and Volunteerism in Canada

Amateur sport in Canada primarily functions in a club-based sport system, where nonprofit sport organizations organize and lead sport competitions and programming. The amateur sport system in Canada is influenced by both the government and nonprofit organizations at the national, provincial/territorial, and local levels (Thibault, 2017). At the local level, CSOs provide sport opportunities for people of all ages but often embrace a

particular focus on youth sport participation (Hoye et al., 2019). Many CSOs operate on a nonprofit basis and the vast majority require volunteers to provide sport programming for youth. This dependency on volunteers to sustain sport quality and provision remains an ongoing challenge for nonprofit sport organizations such as CSOs (Hoye et al., 2022).

Volunteer rates across the nonprofit sector and within sport have declined, impacting the availability of not only volunteer coaches and officials, but also those in administrative and board member roles within the club who often help support the recruitment, retention, and ongoing support amongst volunteer coaching staff and officials (Cuskelly, 2017). CSOs often operate independently with minimal supports from NSOs and PSOs within their given sport; the primary focus of these latter is often on enforcing rules of competition, creating provincial teams, hosting national championship events, developing elite athlete programs, and offering development clinics (Hoye et al., 2022; Parent & Patterson, 2025). As such, sport pathways and participation, including sport volunteer coaching pathways at the grassroots community level are seldom prioritized. Instead, they are left to the discretion of the individual clubs to navigate. For women and girls, many of whom currently do not pursue coaching pathways, additional supports may be needed to engage this group of community sport coaches from organizations at all levels of the sport system. At present, there is a lack of research on the necessary organizational supports for women and girl sport coaches (Baxter et al., 2021). To begin addressing this gap, the present study seeks to better understand perceptions of club leaders related to the recruitment of girl youth volunteer coaches and the organizational supports and management needed to engage the untapped potential amongst this group of volunteers.

Coaching Pathways for Women and Girls

The notion of ‘pathways’ in sport has been a longstanding concept used for developmental purposes. Sport pathways refer to the developmental journey(s) an individual may take to develop as athletes in sport (Hoye et al., 2022). There are many sport development pathways around the world, with various models to develop participants in sport from youth to adults. For example, in Canada, Sport for Life (n.d.) has developed a long-term athlete development model that outlines developmentally appropriate progressions applicable to all sports that are aimed to keep people physically active and engaged in sport for life.

There are also several frameworks for developing coaches rather than athletes. Many countries offer specific coaching pathways through national coach development associations that offer multi-sport and sport-specific coaching courses and certification streams. In Canada, the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) has followed a similar model based on promoting individual autonomy in coaching pathways and created “standardized, inclusive and sport safety education” opportunities for individuals to develop their own coaching pathways across 65 sports, including ice hockey (Coaching Association of Canada, n.d.). Depending on the requirements outlined by specific sport governing bodies, coaches must complete the required level of NCCP coaching training to volunteer in community sport. Despite efforts on behalf of NCCP to generate inclusive opportunities, sport coaching has continued to favour the progression of men in comparison to women coaches due to the

influence of social capital on recruitment procedures (Sisjord et al., 2021). Sisjord et al. (2021) found that men's social capital often increases access to social networks, where their relationships (rather than their coaching qualifications) provide them with coaching opportunities .

The under-representation of women in sport coaching roles at all levels has resulted in a surge of interest amongst scholars; however, most of the research on women in sport coaching is focused on women in paid or professional coaching roles (Baxter et al., 2021). In contrast, less is known about women coaches at voluntary/community levels where support for coaches may greatly vary in comparison to those in paid coaching roles (Baxter et al., 2021). There have been many theories and models have been applied to explain the transition from athlete to coach. For example, Cuskelly and O'Brien (2013) utilized Atchley's (1989, 1999) continuity theory to suggest athletes maintain a sense of identity as a volunteer within sport. Athletes who transition into coaching roles maintain their sense of identity and passion for the sport while bringing expertise from their playing experience to their continued involvement as a coach.

More recently, LaVoi and Boucher (2021) proposed a lifespan career approach to support investigation of women coaches at all levels of their career paths. Building on previous work, LaVoi and Boucher (2021) introduced the Stages of Career Progression Model (SCPM) and combined it with their Ecological Intersection Model (EIM) to fill the deficiency of developmental lifespan theories (Rudolph et al., 2019), aid in identifying critical developmental milestones (e.g., entering coaching), and help sport leaders identify

strategic ways to resource gender-equity initiatives (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). The SCPM was developed by LaVoi and Boucher (2021) after acknowledging the need for a lifespan approach to women and girl coach development due to the inherent gendered differences in coach career progression. The SCPM was inspired by Super's (1980) lifespan, life-space approach to career development. Super (1980) defines a career "as the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime" (p. 282). Super (1980) acknowledges the multidimensional way of thinking about careers and the roles people play in various spaces and times in their lives. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) argue that there is currently a dearth of lifespan approaches to the study of female coaches and that the application of SCPM can point organizational leaders to key leverage points within the coaching trajectory. These leverage points are identified through 5 distinct stages that include the Entice Stage, Enter Stage, Engage Stage, Exit Stage, and the Energize Stage. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) emphasize that further research is needed related to the recruitment, retention, and support strategies for women and girl coaches across the lifespan or throughout the various stages of their coaching career progression. Further, given the potential for athletes to transition into voluntary roles, it is surprising that little attention has been given to engaging youth athletes to encourage their transition into entry (voluntary) levels of coaching pathways.

Motives and Recruitment of Women and Girl Community Sport Coaches

The benefits of community sport are directly offered by front-line volunteer coaches such as sport coaches (Harman & Doherty, 2014). Of the research identified in Baxter et al.'s

(2021) review, studies primarily focused on motives, barriers, values, supports, and retention of women and girl community sport coaches. While there is limited research on girl coaches, there is an extant body of research on motivations of young volunteers that can provide insights into potential future recruitment strategies based on these previous findings. Young sport volunteers increasingly see volunteering as an opportunity to develop professional skills, build their résumé, and expand their knowledge of the game (Dean, 2014; Casey et al., 2023). Volunteer sport coaching may provide opportunity for young girls to develop leadership and communication skills. In addition, community sport volunteers across all ages cite similar reasons for participating in sport as a volunteer and as an athlete. Volunteers often express that the fun and enjoyment experienced in sport is a primary reason for their involvement (Visek et al., 2015). Research has also sought to understand the specific motives of women and girl volunteer coaches, which include a desire to promote gender equity and increase representation of women and girls in coaching and leadership roles (Hovden, 1999). Other research, while not exclusive to women and girl coaches, has found that the majority of community sport coaches are motivated by their altruistic values and desire to give back to young athletes (Busser & Carruthers, 2010).

In their proposed directions for future research, Baxter et al. (2021) discuss a need to generate new knowledge beyond motives specific to recruitment and coaching pathways for women and girl community sport coaches. Previous research has identified evidence-based strategies to recruit mother-coaches in youth soccer (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011; Allen & Shaw, 2013). For example, Allen and Shaw (2013) found that mother-coaches felt positive

perceptions of organizational support when their clubs allowed them to bring their children to practices and competitions. However, research has not identified strategies to recruit other demographics such as young women and girl former athletes who have not yet pursued coaching roles (Drago et al., 2005). Wicker (2017) called for a focus on specific volunteer roles in future sport volunteerism studies. This study seeks to answer this call by placing a specific focus on girl volunteer community sport coaches.

Theoretical Background

Perceived Organizational Support Theory

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory helps to explain the development, nature, and outcomes of employee or volunteer beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and contributes to their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). POS draws on the theory of social exchange and the norm of reciprocity and gives understanding beyond the motives that entice people to work by focusing more on the underlying psychological processes that occur in the ongoing social exchange and relationship between the organization and the employee or volunteer (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Social exchange theories focus on what motivates some individuals more than others to contribute to the mission and goals of the organization (Homans, 1974). The norm of reciprocity is an essential component of social exchange theory and explains how people feel inclined to repay favourable treatment through the exchange of resources to maintain self-image and receive favourable treatment in the future (Eisenberger et al., 2001). In this social process, employees or volunteers assess whether their socioemotional needs

(e.g., approval, emotional support, esteem, affiliation) are being met and the value of contributing greater efforts on the organizations' behalf based on their perceptions of organizational support. Social exchange relationships move beyond pure economic exchange and instead rely on the premise that if both parties invest in a long-term relationship, they will maximize their gain of resources through the exchange of information, socioemotional resources, and economic resources (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). When organizations develop successful social exchange relationships, individuals incorporate their membership status and work roles into their social identity. This contributes to their well-being by meeting their socio-emotional needs (e.g., emotional support, esteem, affiliation) (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Perceived organizational support (POS) proposes that individuals who feel that an organization values their contribution and contributes to their well-being are more committed, engaged, empowered, satisfied, and identify stronger with the organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

POS has also been applied to nonprofit organizations and their volunteer workforce. Organizational support has been found to be critical in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, positively impacting the volunteer and the organization by increasing job satisfaction, commitment, and future intent to volunteer (Aisbett & Hoye, 2014, 2015). Voluntary organizations that provide reimbursement of costs, training, and appropriate promotions, are viewed by volunteers as providing positive and supportive volunteer environments (Aisbett & Hoye, 2015). In addition, research on POS and recruitment in the voluntary context found that non-volunteers with information about organizational support anticipated feelings of respect, making them more inclined to volunteer for the organization

(Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008). POS has also been found to be positively associated to perceived benefits and negatively associated with perceived costs (monetary and non-monetary) of volunteering for sport events (Won et al., 2024).

Organizational support theory has value for human resource management as it can provide useful strategies for effectively engaging members (e.g., employees, volunteers) such as enlisting representatives of the organization to work towards enhancing POS or tailoring supports to the cultural norms of the organization (Shanock et al., 2019). The nonprofit community sport context provides an interesting lens for understanding the complexities of perceived organizational support theory given that club leadership is comprised of both volunteers and employees who interact extensively and require supports from one another. Club leaders are continually assessing the organizational support given to them from their club, as well as from their sport governing bodies, while also providing organizational support to others, including community sport volunteer coaches. As noted above, perceived organizational support of women coaches who are mothers has been previously researched (Allen & Shaw, 2013); however, there is a lack of extant research on perceptions of organizational support for girls who wish to remain in community sport via coaching roles. The purpose of this study is to understand how club leaders perceive and provide organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles.

Methods

This study was guided by a basic interpretive qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research that is guided by an interpretivist approach often utilizes interviews as a method to enable in-depth exploration of varying participant perspectives within a distinct context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Interpretivist research, unlike positivist research, does not set out in search of answers to a hypothesis to uncover an objective reality but instead seeks to interpret and understand meaning from the unique perspective of the participants about an issue or topic within the defined context under study (Geertz, 1973; Grønmo, 2020). In addition, qualitative researchers who outline their paradigmatic assumptions add to the trustworthiness and quality of their work (Braun et al., 2021).

Participants

Participants were recruited after obtaining university research ethics approval and selecting three CSOs within the geographic area of South-Western Ontario, Canada. The clubs were selected based on criteria including offering girls participation opportunities in ice hockey and representing a mixture of urban and rural locations (Club 1 and Club 3 were in urban areas and Club 2 was in a rural area). Participants were recruited based on contact information found on the club website as well as snowball sampling.

Interviews were conducted with 10 ice hockey club leaders across the 3 clubs, including both men and women who held positions of club leadership (e.g., president, coach, board member). Club leaders held a variety of roles, that are outlined in Table 1, which also includes their self-disclosed gender identity, the club they represent, and whether their role is categorized as a paid employee or unpaid volunteer. The mixture of roles represented

amongst different clubs provided diverse perspectives into the management of the club and the responsibilities and experiences of club leaders as it related to recruiting and supporting girl coaches.

Table 2

Chart of participants club leadership role, club, gender identity, and paid/voluntary involvement

Role	Club	Gender Identity (Self-Disclosed)	Paid Employee/Un-paid Volunteer
President	Club 1	Woman	Volunteer
Registrar and Administrator	Club 1	Man	Paid Employee
Head of Player and Coach Development	Club 1	Woman	Paid Employee
Creating Coaches Mentorship Program Member	Club 1	Woman	Volunteer *Stipend provided
Vice President	Club 2	Woman	Volunteer
Coaching Committee Member, Former Club President	Club 2	Man	Volunteer
President	Club 2	Man	Volunteer
Coach	Club 2	Woman	Volunteer

Head of Player Development and Behavioural Health	Club 3	Man	Paid Employee
Vice President	Club 3	Man	Volunteer

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with club leaders online and lasted 40-60 minutes in length. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and data were analyzed following Braun et al.'s (2021) reflexive thematic analysis (TA) techniques. Reflexive TA is broken down into six phases that offer guidelines for the multidirectional process of analysis. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, allowing the authors to continuously familiarize themselves with the data set (phase 1) and develop initial codes. Journaling throughout data collection helped with the coding (phase 2) and generating initial themes (phase 3). Through an iterative process, themes were developed and reviewed (phase 4) and further refined and named (phase 5) for the writing (phase 6) of this paper.

Researcher Positionality

This research stemmed from personal interests, particularly for myself, as a self-identified woman volunteer ice hockey coach. My lived experiences as sport volunteer has exposed me to the difficulties sport clubs face in recruiting volunteers, and I have faced personal struggles as one of few women volunteers within my sport organization. I have a passion for sport management research within the context of community sport and have a desire to fill the identified gaps in research related to women and girl volunteer community

sport coaches (Baxter et al., 2021; Griffo et al., 2019). I hope to address LaVoi et al.'s (2019) call for sport researchers to lend their skills to gender-related research and investigate women in sport coaching beyond just identifying barriers women coaches face to instead focus on supports women need to engage and remain in coaching. Embracing my subjectivity is a valuable asset to engaging in reflexive thematic analysis as it allows for the researchers to provide transparency and insights into their role in knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Findings

The findings of this study illuminate both challenges and opportunities related to the recruitment of women and girl coaches, which in turn highlight specific organizational supports required to foster coaching pathways. These findings present challenges which include a lack of specific targets, strategies, and gender-based initiatives related to recruitment of women and girl coaches. Club level leaders perceive a lack of interest in volunteer coaching amongst women and girls, yet recognize that their clubs have lacked intentional recruitment strategies. Club leaders also expressed frustration that recruiting and supporting women and girls as coaches is not a priority for sport governing bodies that are more focused on developing coaches at the high-performance level. The findings also present opportunities which include the recruitment of girl youth through strategies such as engaging alumni networks, formalized player coach volunteer programs, and supporting the coach certification process for girl coaches. The findings also demonstrate the importance of gaining support from governing bodies to make widespread change.

Challenges

The challenges club leaders face reflect their perceptions of a lack of organizational support within the club. Further, while not an explicit focus from the outset of the project, all participants discussed lack of organizational support from their NSO and PSO in addition to their discussions of club-level support. These findings are also shared below.

Lack of Specific Targets

All club leaders who participated in the study shared that their CSOs did not set any targets for the recruitment of women and girl coaches, despite their CSO serving only girls in ice hockey. In addition, participants noted that provincial and national associations provide little guidance or support to local clubs in this area. For example, the Vice President of Club 3 stated:

National and Provincial Associations don't mandate 50:50 coaches men and women or say here is some incentive for you to have women coaches come in. So we don't get a lot of help whether it's financial support; or anything, there is not a whole lot that we're getting right now unfortunately.

Indeed, none of the participants were aware of any supports being provided to clubs by national or provincial associations in order to recruit or retain women and girl coaches. Instead, club leaders described some internal efforts in the form of the clubs' strategic plan to increase the number of women and girl coaches. The President of Club 1 alluded to progress being made in relation to the club's strategic plan to propose policies and procedures related to representation of women and girls in club leadership roles, including coaching. Club 1 also

had a coach who participated in the Creating Coaches Mentorship Program. This program was launched by the National Sport Organization (NSO) in partnership with the Canadian national university sport league, USports, to provide coaching mentorship and training to current university-level women ice hockey players. This coach noted that despite being in the program and having strong connections to those working for the NSO, she was unaware of any specific target number of women and girl coaches, or of any policies or recruitment strategies related to this area other than the Creating Coaches Mentorship Program, which she noted is only available to a limited number of selected university level athletes per year. Since the program's inception in 2021, eight to ten participants are selected annually and they must serve as an assistant coach with a U13, U15 or U18 girls' ice hockey team for the duration of the two seasons (Hockey Canada Foundation, 2025).

Perceived Minimal Interest

Amongst club leaders, there is a common perception that there is minimal interest amongst women and girls in taking on volunteer coaching roles within their CSOs. Club leaders cite that a lack of interest in volunteer coaching stems from increased expectations related to the scope of the coaching role by parents and the CSOs, from time constraints coaches face balancing a volunteer role with employment responsibilities, from parent over-involvement, and from athlete behavioural issues. In addition, some club leaders feel that the voluntary nature of coaching is changing and that coaches expect compensation for their involvement because of the increased time and expectations being placed on them. The Head of Player Development and Behavioural Health from Club 3 shared their observation:

I just don't think there's interest. And people want to be paid for these positions, and I can see why, coaching has become a full-time job. I don't think it needs to be, but every coach now wants to do game video review just to do it, so there's a lot of extra stuff that I don't think is really needed. And there's so many behaviour issues and behaviour challenges now with parents that the job has become full time where they're on the phone with parents through the night. And so yeah, if I'm putting 40 hours into this, I would want something out of it and if I'm not getting paid and I'll just go get a job and not coach at the minor level. So yeah, again, I don't mean to be pessimistic, it's just [that] minor ice hockey is an interesting place.

In addition, there is a perception that girls are not interested in volunteer coaching roles. The Vice President of Club 2 cited:

The younger girls are also playing hockey, so they don't have a lot of time to devote to helping out a team because they have their own hockey schedule and then jobs and things like that start to limit them from coaching.

Club leaders cite several barriers to volunteer coaching that have generated their perceptions of minimal interest in the coaching role. In addition, they specifically share notions that girls have additional barriers including the demands of their playing careers and extracurricular activities that might limit their level of interest to committing to a volunteer coaching position.

Informal Recruitment Channels

Despite claims amongst sport club leaders that there are “good models” for recruitment in place, organizations primarily rely on word of mouth for recruitment. They feel that face-to-face volunteer recruitment works better than recruitment via email or posting a call for coaches on their website. For example, the Registrar and Administrator for Club 1 stated,

A lot of it is word of mouth. Other coaches recruiting coaches at ice level. It doesn't seem to work to recruit anyone through email or on the website. A call for coaches doesn't work unless you are face to face. I think the best recruitment we have is other coaches knowing women and girl coaches or working with players and telling clubs, 'This is a great candidate to start coaching.'

Club leaders shared that because volunteer coach recruitment is a task assigned to fellow board member volunteers, it can fall by the wayside because of a lack of board member capacity. The Registrar and Administrator for Club 1 explained,

The League Management Committee [members] are tasked with coach recruitment. It's just a committee of Board Members and a lot of them are overworked as it is as volunteers, so coach recruitment sometimes falls by the wayside a little bit because you're dealing with the day-to-day issues and the day-to-day complaints.

The lack of intentional focus on recruitment in favour of informal recruitment methods, combined with club leaders' lack of capacity as volunteers themselves has created an environment of frustration. Club leaders express that they are overworked and burnt out and as such they find it difficult to market the role of volunteer coach because they are aware of the high expectations and difficulties that come with the role that they view as having

minimal reward and no financial compensation. The lack of formal recruitment channels has perpetuated what a woman coach in Club 2 referred to as the “good old boys’ club,” where she felt that women and girls were not the focus of club recruitment efforts:

The only thing that I’ve ever seen is a post go up on social media, Instagram or on their website, indicating that coaching applications are now open. As far as recruiting coaches - it’s always the good old boys’ club, right? I don’t see the same recruitment going towards women and girls.

Employed and voluntary club leaders felt as though the insufficient support provided by NSOs and PSOs has impacted their ability to focus on strategic recruitment and the result, while not intentional; has been an exclusion of women and girls because of current informal recruitment practices. Despite these disheartening outlooks, club leaders consistently demonstrated a strong desire to have more women and girls involved in coaching, in particular by providing opportunities for young girls whom they feel can develop important life skills through coaching.

Elite Sport Focus

Clubs feel that the national sport organizations (NSOs) and provincial sport organizations (PSOs) focus primarily on coach and player development at the elite-level and resources are allocated there instead of at the grassroots community level. Club leaders noted some frustration that governing organizations are far removed from what is happening at the local level, leading to a lack of management, policy, or pathway related guidance for clubs in all areas of sport including coaching. As previously noted, there is no known specific target

or strategic initiative to recruit women and girl volunteer coaches, so administrators feel a lack of direction and support. For example, the Vice President of Club 3 noted:

I find the National and Provincial Associations focus too much on the elite side of things, The PWHL [Professional Women's Hockey League] or the new professional league, they focus more on that. And then for us at the club level, they say 'do what you want.'

Club leaders expressed a lack of holistic support for their role in the sport system and discussed how leaders of governing bodies lack understanding of grassroots sport as the entry point for players, coaches, officials to name a few. who may (or may not) pursue elite levels of sport. They note the ongoing lack of support and at times barriers to encourage volunteer coaching. For example, in Ontario, the provincial organization is tasked with offering coaching courses, and club leaders feel that oftentimes there are not enough courses, nor are they offered at appropriate times of the year for coaches to attend and obtain coaching credentials. To the knowledge of club leaders, no coaching courses in recent years have been offered exclusively to women and girls. The President of Club 1 explained,

Typically, it's Hockey Canada or the OWHA [Ontario Women's Hockey Association] because they want to make sure that there's enough critical mass, but the two associations need to do a better job, in my opinion, on figuring out where and when the clinics can be offered. It's often way too late in the season that we find out that the clinics are coming up and people are scrambling to get their credentials.

Overall, club leaders desire more support from provincial and national sport organizations at their level and for the sport system to place less emphasis on solely elite sport at the detriment of grassroots sport. In turn, club leaders feel this may help boost initiatives, like increasing the numbers of women and girl volunteer coaches in community sport.

Opportunities

Club leaders expressed that while challenges did exist, there were also many opportunities for clubs, and their sport governing organizations, to better support the involvement of girls into coaching pathways.

Alumni Engagement

As participation in girls' ice hockey has grown, so too have the alumni network of former players and coaches in local girls' ice hockey clubs. Because of the sport's growth and significant presence in many Canadian communities over the last 20 years, there are now more women than ever before who have experience in ice hockey and who may be able to coach at various levels. Club leaders discussed the growth of girls' ice hockey and see this as an opportunity to engage this pool of individuals to recruit them into volunteer coaching positions. The process of recruiting remains informal; however, club leaders acknowledge the opportunity that their growing alumni base offers. For example, the President of Club 1 notes the importance of maintaining a connection with alumni,

Somehow creating an alumni connections, whether it's just keeping people on email blasts, when news updates go. Sometimes coaching opportunities won't be relevant to [our alumni], but it's just keeping that connection.

In addition, the Head of Player and Coach Development of Club 1 noted the importance of recruiting former players of the organization because of their connection to the club.

I think reaching out to the alumni is a great idea because when you play for an association or a university and you're an alumna, you care a lot more than if it's just, you know, a random association. I think that would be something else where you could reach out to the alumni and you reach out to one hundred and you get two responses it's better than getting none.

A minor challenge clubs discuss in the current state of sport is the increased player movement between multiple clubs throughout their playing career; however, club leaders reinforce the importance of connecting with potential volunteers who have stayed within the same association for their minor ice hockey careers.

The downfall to recruitment is the player movement between clubs. If you have somebody who stays in the association for you know, the ten or fifteen years, they're more liable to come back and say, 'hey, you know what, I want to give back to the association.'

Club leaders note the importance of tapping into alumni relations and growing their capacity to further leverage the connection players feel towards the association in which they grew up playing.

Encouraging Volunteerism Amongst Players

Club leaders discuss opportunities to expand or create more opportunities for current players to engage in volunteer coaching opportunities in hopes of creating coaching interest

amongst girls. For example, Club 1 requires girls who play on the high-performance under-22 competitive team to volunteer and support other teams within the association. In addition, clubs encourage volunteerism in their learn to play programs, allowing girls to volunteer as on-ice helpers to teach and support younger players within the club. The President of Club 1 explains:

Even at the youngest levels, we try to encourage the players to be volunteering or taking on leadership positions. As the kids get a little bit older we see a little bit more of them helping with the learn to play program, for example. So they'd be on-ice helpers. And that's encouraged all the way through their playing career.

However, despite some club efforts to build volunteerism amongst the girls in their clubs and expose them to coaching roles, club leaders still note that this has happened organically and is not a formal strategy or pathway for girls to pursue coaching beyond these more informal opportunities as on-ice helpers. The registrar and administrator from Club 1 noted:

We encourage on-ice helpers from kids who are rostered on teams, they can help with younger age groups if they are two years older than the players they are helping, which is mandated by Hockey Canada. So yeah, we encourage that. But I honestly can't speak to a lot of other recruitment strategies that we have for young female coaches. Other than like I said, it's kind of a word of mouth tap on the shoulder thing, but in terms of like a formal strategy or pathway from our NSO or PSO, we have nothing.

Club leaders see how much of a lost opportunity it is to not provide this programming because they therefore do not create opportunities for older girls or women to role model

volunteerism and coaching behaviours to younger girl players. A Coach from Club 2 explains:

The association could be more proactive with some of the older teams and getting some kids that would be interested in coaching out to coach younger teams a couple of times. Now you are building these girls up instead of how it is now - it's all about the Dads teaching the kids how to do stuff. You are encouraging them to see that girls can do this too.

Club leaders see opportunities to engage with young girls by implementing volunteer programs within their clubs in which players can partake in; however, clubs currently have no formal programs or strategies put in place to do so.

Support with Coaching Certifications

Clubs are willing to support and have shown a history of supporting anyone who desires to pursue coaching certifications to enable them to volunteer within their association. All club leaders in the study expressed that their club reimburses coaches for the financial costs associated with the certifications. Club leaders discuss opportunities to market this to those who perceive financial barriers to coaching certifications, particularly young girls. Interestingly, there is also a push, as explained by the Vice President in Club 3, to recruit girls into higher coaching levels as they age and gain more experience.

If we can get young girls interested, we pay for everything. We make everything available so it's affordable, whether it's a coaching certification, or trainer we encourage

them to get as much as they can. And we're trying to get some of the more mature ones to do more certifications to coach the higher level of ice hockey.

Club leaders also expressed minimal support from NSOs and PSOs and confusion amongst volunteer coaches as to how to navigate the certification process. The Vice President of Club 2 explains how this creates a heavy reliance on club leaders to support this process for volunteers.

Hockey Canada and the OWHHA don't really help us with anything that we do. It's all within our own association. They set the guidelines and the standards, but we do all of the legwork and everything else, even helping them find the courses on a website that is not easy to navigate. So to be honest, the organizations that govern us who are in paid positions don't really help us do anything and us on the other end, as volunteers do a lot of legwork to help our volunteer coaches and make sure that they've got everything they need.

Club leaders note the lack of formalized processes within clubs to onboard volunteer coaches. Clubs note that while they are willing to walk volunteers through the certification process, they feel frustrations towards the NSOs' and PSOs' leaders who dictate the certification requirements but operate through systems that are confusing and not user friendly to volunteer coaches.

Discussion

This study outlines club leader perspectives related to the challenges clubs face in recruiting young girls into volunteer coaching positions and opportunities to improve

recruitment practices for this demographic. The findings fill a gap in previous research on women coaches by focusing on coaching within the context of CSOs and the recruitment of youth girl coaches (Baxter et al., 2021). This study also contributes to the broader literature on volunteerism in sport and responds to Wicker's (2017) call for future studies to focus on volunteers in specific roles such as voluntary coaches instead of analyzing generic volunteers. In addition, the focus on girl volunteer community coaches situates within the "entice" and "entry" leverage points identified within LaVoi and Boucher's SCPM framework. Findings present club leader perspectives on both the direct challenges and structural gaps that make it difficult to entice girl youth into coaching positions; the findings also reflect on opportunities for making it easier for girls to enter into sport coaching pathways.

According to club leaders, one of the greatest challenges to achieving gender equity in coaching is the lack of support for initiatives at all levels of the sport system. Club leaders have no awareness of policies such as gender quotas or initiatives such as events, programs, or staff assigned to support gender equity for women and girls in sport coaching or other volunteering roles. This is perhaps a result of the previously identified lack of capacity from NSOs to implement, build, and maintain gender equity initiatives (Patil & Doherty, 2023). Some research has pointed to external social and political factors such as government pressure and funding to influence NSOs towards initiating gender equity initiatives (Myers & Doherty, 2007, Skirtstad, 2009). Policy can have a large impact on gender equity in coaching at the club level as shown in Patil and Doherty's findings (2023) when an NSO staff member

discussed the impact of implementing a women coach on the bench policy through their PSOs to communicate this policy change directly to clubs and their volunteers.

The current study reveals that at the club level, the club leaders feel a lack of awareness or guidance on gender equity initiatives and that they don't have the capacity to take this on as it pertains to volunteer recruitment of women and girl coaches because they already face overall challenges related to finding volunteers. Thus, club leaders seek the support of PSOs and NSOs for more resources and support for gender equity and volunteer recruitment initiatives. This finding points to the lack of perceived organizational support club leaders feel in relation to the inter-organizational relationships between the club, the PSOs and the NSOs. This is particularly important to our understanding of organizational capacity given that perceived organizational support seeks to understand how organization members feel they are being treated and in return what they are willing to give back to an organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

One of the largest frustrations expressed amongst club leaders was the focus they felt leaders of PSOs and NSOs place on elite sport at the expense of club sport. Most community sport clubs are in favour of a participation-focused approach in comparison to a high-performance pathway approach, supporting those who wish to pursue high-performance sport as much as they are capable given the resources available (Martin, 2022). In most cases, the funding NSOs receive for high-performance sport is rarely filtered to the club level (Sotiriadou, 2009). The disconnects between the priorities of clubs and the perceived priorities of the PSO and NSO within the study highlight the need for enhanced

communication, especially as it pertains to gender equity, given the evidence that suggests that tackling issues of gender equity from a holistic organizational perspective can reduce issues members (e.g., volunteers, coaches) face (Burton & Leberman, 2017). Considering the club perspective is also helpful in implementing gender equity programs given that a ‘one size fits all’ program is not possible because of each club’s unique relationships with PSOs and NSOs (Kerwin & Leberman, 2023).

Club leaders express a narrative that people are no longer interested in volunteering. While there are statistics that demonstrate that the overall volunteer force in Canada is declining, young people are the largest demographic of formal volunteers with 46% of youth aged 15-30 in Canada actively involved in some form of volunteering role (Arrigada, 2022). Interestingly, youth ages 15 to 30 years old are more likely to participate in sport or recreational activities than in other organizations (52.9%); however, young volunteers are most likely to volunteer for social services (24%), education and research (22%), followed with the sport and recreation sector (18%) (Arriagada et al., 2022)

In addition, Canadian women are more likely to participate in formal volunteering in comparison to men (Hahmann, 2021); however, there is a higher rate of men in comparison to women who volunteer formally in the sport and recreation sector. These data in some ways contradict the anecdotal narrative that persists amongst club leaders regarding interest in volunteerism. Two key questions emerge for clubs to consider: 1) if women are more likely to volunteer formally, why not in sport?, and 2) if young people have such high rates of

formal volunteerism and high rates of involvement in sport and recreation organizations, why are they being underutilized as volunteers in these settings?

These questions perhaps point to the issue of persisting informal recruitment channels in community sport. Club leaders maintain the idea that recruitment is most effective face to face or knowing someone to tap on the shoulder. For women and girls who are less likely to put their hand up (LaVoi & Dutove 2012), this may mean many are being bypassed due to gender bias in volunteer coach recruitment. Indeed, appropriate HR practices for volunteer recruitment, particularly practices with a gendered lens, can prove effective modes of increasing recruitment of women coaches. Interventions can include setting recruitment targets for women and girl coaches or providing women- and girl-only coach development courses (Banwell et al., 2019, 2021). Club leaders identified several opportunities for the engagement of girls in coaching. The clubs noted that they underutilize their alumni networks to engage former members to pursue coaching opportunities within their club. They also noted that they could work to formalize pre-existing player-coach volunteer programs. The simultaneous involvement of both alumni and current players may be beneficial in creating an atmosphere of mentorship, as mentorship has been reported as beneficial in the development of women and girl coaches (Banwell et al., 2019). In addition to mentorship, certification and coach education is important for women and girls who feel it helps their confidence and capabilities within the coaching role (Allen & Shaw, 2013). Club leaders feel that support is required from leaders of PSOs and NSOs to offer more availability for volunteers to attend certification courses.

Future Directions

Theoretically, this study contributes to the nascent body of research on women and girl community sport coaches. In addition, the study presents opportunity to understand perceived organizational support within the unique nonprofit context of community sport club leadership. Reflecting on the findings, we offer the following practical implications and suggestions for future research. In the current study, club leaders sought to improve upon management practices related the recruitment of girl community sport coaches and despite the challenges they face, they recognize opportunities to enhance their current efforts through several strategies. The findings reveal that clubs have ideas and a desire to tackle the issue of gender inequity amongst coaches; however, club leaders perceive a lack of support from leaders of NSOs and PSOs that limits their ability to work toward these goals. Previous findings from Spoor & Hoye (2013), demonstrate that when top level management supports equitable human resource management, it has a strong effect on POS, which is related to organizational commitment and intent to stay with the organization. The current study demonstrates that when there is little direction in regard to gender-equity human resource management from the NSO or PSO, there is little club-level change in volunteer management practices (despite an expressed desire for change). Future research should seek to understand the perspectives of NSO and PSO leaders to further understand the dynamics between the organizations and social exchange processes occurring between clubs and their governing associations.

Conclusion

Youth athletes are naturally embedded within sport organizations, often beginning their sport careers at age four and five and continuing to develop within the sport system, through adolescence, and into adulthood. CSOs need a better understanding of female youth athletes' preferences and how to best support them to progress into coaching positions. In their analysis of the research literature on coaching from 2005-2015, Griffo et al. (2019) identified the need for future scholarly work on the impact gender has on coaching and discrimination issues in coaching based on gender. This finding coincides with LaVoi et al.'s (2019) call for sport researchers to lend their skills to gender-related research and investigate women in sport coaching beyond just identifying barriers women coaches face and focus on supports women need to engage and remain in coaching.

Chapter 4: Supporting Girls' Transition from Players to Volunteer Coaches: Insights on Organizational Support and the Role of Well-Being

Historically, research has demonstrated that sport participation has been linked to positive well-being outcomes amongst women and girl athletes (Adam et al., 2021). This research has created impetus amongst policy groups and sport organizations to place emphasis on how to maintain and increase girls' sport participation. One area that has been somewhat neglected in both research and practice is developing an understanding of how to support girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches. The current study seeks to contribute to scholarly understanding of how sport clubs can engage young girls as volunteers from within their organization by utilizing self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and perceived organizational support theory (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Self-determination theory posits that well-being constitutes three basic psychological needs which include the need for: 1) autonomy (desire to experience ownership over one's own behaviour), 2) competence (desire to successfully achieve outcomes and manage challenges), and 3) relatedness (need to connect and feel cared for by others) (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Perceived organizational support theory provides a helpful lens to understand (a) how girl athletes develop a relationship with their sport club and (b) assess whether the sport club contributes to their well-being. This assessment is a critical piece to understanding human resource management practices that can better engage girls and enhance their potential for reciprocity to the organization as potential future volunteer coaches. The combination of SDT and POS provides unique insights into how positive perceptions of organizational support may create social contexts and environments that are autonomy supportive in

comparison to demanding and controlling, effectance supporting versus overly challenging, and relationally supportive as opposed to impersonal or rejecting (Deci et al., 2017).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how the tenets of well-being as proposed by SDT - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - can enhance our understanding of the organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches.

Literature Review

Women and Girls and Coaching

Historically, women and girls have been excluded from sport or access has been restricted to sports deemed 'appropriate' for women and girls because of socially scripted gender norms (Pfister, 2010). Since the 1950s, although women and girl participation in sport has increased (Pfister, 2010), yet issues surrounding women lifelong participation in sport and lack of representation of women and girls in sport leadership positions remains a prevalent concern (Burton, 2015). Front facing leadership roles such as coaching and officiating persistently have had lower rates of women and girl involvement. Data available in Canada on a national scale demonstrate that only 25% of coaches in the Canadian sport system were women (Government of Canada, 2015). More recent data reported by the Coaching Association of Canada in 2019 indicate a slight growth in women representation with 34% of women who took a NCCP course compared to 66% of men and 0.1% (another gender) (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022a).

Research specifically aimed at increasing representation of women in sport coaching roles has increased over the last decade (LaVoi et al., 2019). In 2012, LaVoi and Dutove outlined the Ecological Model of Barriers and Supports for Women in Coaching. This model drew on Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979) ecological systems theory to outline the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal level barriers and supports women experience in sport coaching. Later, LaVoi (2016) modified the model, now known as the Ecological-Intersectional Model (EIM), to acknowledge intersectionality and power that shapes human experience at each level.

More research has been conducted on women coaching at professional and intercollegiate levels of sport, which has made significant headway in identifying the barriers women face to sport coaching (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). At an individual level, these barriers can include lack of self-efficacy, stress/burnout, perception of negative outcomes, non-heterosexual identity, and lack of assertiveness. Interpersonal level barriers can include lack of mentoring, bullying or harassment, the "old boys' club" environment, competition with other coaches, and family-work balance. Barriers women face at organizational levels of sport can include tokenism, men-run coach education, unclear career pathway, travel, limited mobility, low pay, and lack of training and feedback. Within the socio-cultural context, barriers for women coaches include masculine hegemony, homophobia, leadership stereotypes, gender role assumptions, marginalization, and gender norms (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). Despite the progress made related to research on women coaches, there remains a lack of understanding of the experiences of women and girl sport coaches at the grassroots level

of sport (Baxter et al., 2021) which may pose issues in understanding the change needed to generate pathways and develop women and girls into sport coaching roles.

Development of Women and Girl Coaches

Sport pathways refer to the developmental journey(s) an individual may choose to take regarding their involvement in sport. In Canada, The Sport for Life Society is an organization that works to support lifelong participation in sport amongst Canadians (Sport for Life, n.d.). In the context of youth sport development, The Sport for Life Society has developed a long-term athlete development model that outlines developmentally appropriate progressions applicable to all sports that are aimed at keeping people physically active for life. Similarly, the NCCP has created a holistic model and developed a framework that provides opportunities for all stages of coaching and allows individuals to develop their own coaching pathways (Coaching Association of Canada, n.d.). Sport coaching pathways favour the progression of men in comparison to women coaches due to the influence of social capital on recruitment procedures (Sisjord et al., 2021). Many former athletes pivot their pathway from athlete to sport volunteer as demonstrated in Cuskelly and O'Brien's (2013) transition-extension framework hypothesis. The transition-extension framework draws on Atchley's (1989, 1999) continuity theory, to suggest athletes maintain a sense of identity as a volunteer within sport. Currently, most of the research on women in sport coaching is focused on women in paid or professional coaching roles (Baxter et al., 2021). In contrast, much remains currently unknown about women coaches at voluntary and community levels of sport career pathways where supports may greatly vary in comparison to those in paid

coaching roles (Baxter et al., 2021). Given the increased likelihood of athletes' transition into voluntary roles, it is surprising that little attention has been given to engaging youth athletes to encourage their transition into entry (voluntary) levels of coaching pathways. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) have introduced a Stages of Career Progression Model (SCPM) to help organizations identify key leverage points within the women coaches' career trajectory. The key leverage points include the following stages: (1) entice, (2) enter, (3) engage, (4) exit, and (5) energize. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) emphasize that further research is needed related to the recruitment, retention, and support strategies for women and girl coaches across the lifespan or throughout the various stages of their coaching career progression. Young women former athletes are consistently not pursuing coaching careers (Drago et al., 2005). This presents an opportunity to understand how organizational support can enhance coaching pathways and encourage girls to consider sport coaching roles.

Theoretical Background

This research draws on two theoretical perspectives, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2012) and POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). As will be defined and discussed within the following respective sections, the use of SDT frames how well-being is conceptualized within the study. This provides a framework for analyzing well-being through the psychological needs proposed by SDT, which include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In addition, the use of POS frames the psychological needs within an organizational context to help better understand the relationship between the members of the organization and the organization itself. Thus, the use of SDT and POS assists in the assessment of whether or not an

organization is fulfilling members' psychological need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The dual use of these theoretical perspectives may present helpful human resource management implications to enhance pathways for girl volunteer sport coaches.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory is how well-being is conceptualized within this study. SDT represents one of the many theories of well-being. In the field of psychology, there are two philosophical conceptions with distinct views of human nature and of what constitutes well-being perspectives and paradigms for empirical inquiry into well-being: 1) hedonism (well-being as the pursuit of pleasure or happiness over pain) and 2) eudaimonism (well-being as the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life) (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Both conceptions, like many other psychological phenomena are social constructions. Hence, neither hedonism nor eudaimonism are universal or true definitions of well-being, but are concepts based on morals, values, and ethical principles which guide the way people understand, explain, and define their worlds (Maddux, 2018). Given the multitude of psychological theories that can inform well-being, it is helpful to provide clarity on how well-being is defined as to situate research and provide transparency.

Self-determination theory was first developed by Deci and Ryan who were interested in understanding intrinsic motivation or why people do things purely out of interest and enjoyment (Gagné & Deci, 2014). Self-determination theory is a macro theory of well-being, human motivation and personality in social contexts that comprises six mini-theories. One of the mini-theories includes basic psychological needs theory (BPNT), which suggests that

well-being, psychological growth, self-congruence, and vitality are met with the fulfillment of three psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These three needs include the need for autonomy (desire to experience ownership over one's own behaviour), competence (desire to successfully achieve outcomes and manage challenges), and relatedness (need to connect to others and feel cared for by others) (Deci & Ryan, 2012). For Ryan (1995) a need is defined as a necessary "psychological nutrient that is essential for individuals' adjustment, integrity, and growth" (p. 410). Initial studies that utilized SDT found that extrinsic monetary rewards assigned for doing an activity participants already felt was intrinsically rewarding decreased participants' enjoyment of the activity (Deci, 1971). Deci used de Charm's (1968) concept of perceived locus of causality to explain how the introduction of reward can shift motives from internal to external and diminish people's feelings of autonomy in the completion of a task. This phenomenon is commonly known as cognitive evaluation theory, one of the six mini-theories that comprise SDT.

Beyond the need for autonomy, SDT also suggests that people need to feel a sense of competence and mastery of their environment to feel any form of motivation. However, the need for competence at times drives different forms of motivation. Ego-based motivation refers to feelings of motivation that are driven by people feeling that what they do and how they do it is tied to their self-worth (Ryan, Keostner, & Deci, 1991). At times it is difficult to discern ego-based motivation from intrinsic motivation because of the internally driven nature of the two. This finding informed cognitive evaluation theory with a theory of organismic integration to explain how humans can internalize values, behaviours, and beliefs

and take them on as their own (Ryan, 1995). Internalization can occur within two different contexts – one that is controlling where values are introjected and partially internalized or one that fosters nourishment and autonomy in a way that people integrate it into their sense of self and values are more fully internalized. Autonomy and competence are both important facilitators of not only intrinsic motivation but also of internalization of extrinsic motivation. Along with competence and autonomy, feelings of relatedness to others are also an important facilitator of internalization. People need to feel connected to others to internalize a value, behaviour, or belief. This finding aligns with previous research in psychology that suggests that relatedness is needed for well-being and human development (Ainsworth, 1979). Thus, over a decade of research has produced a consistent set of results indicating that the extent to which autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied can have a positive effect on individual well-being and motivation, and furthermore, the extent to which these 3 psychological needs are thwarted can have negative outcomes.

Research utilizing SDT has drawn attention amongst management researchers and in applied psychology fields such as management, education, sport, exercise, and health. For example, SDT has been applied to understand the psychological needs of women volunteer coaches' perceptions of their sport organizations' social environment and whether the environment was supportive of coaches' psychological needs (Allen & Shaw, 2009). Relationships amongst coaches and with key personnel within the sport organization were central to whether women coaches who participated in the study perceived their environment to be autonomy supportive (Allen & Shaw, 2009). The primary contributions SDT has made

to organizational psychology and management is in understanding that when psychological needs are met in the workplace, workers are autonomously motivated and when these needs are thwarted, they are amotivated or controlled. Deci and Ryan (2014) maintain that leaders in management should consider psychological health and well-being of members of their organization (e.g., employees, volunteers etc.) as an important ethical consideration and as an indicator of long-term organizational health.

Perceived Organizational Support

POS is a valuable theory within human resource management as it centres the experiences of individual members of an organization (e.g., employee, volunteer) to better understand how they assess whether an organization cares for their well-being and values their contribution. Members with positive assessments of POS tend to have higher rates of retention and commitment to an organization. The use of SDT is traditionally not used in Eisenberger's POS theory which uses subjective well-being (SWB) that includes measures of individual life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood (Diener & Ryan, 2009). These measures of well-being fit within a hedonic view of well-being which defines well-being as the pursuit of happiness over pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In contrast, SDT fits within a eudaimonic view of well-being, which is related to the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The support that is provided by an organization for volunteers or employees has been an area of growing interest in management literature over the last 20 years (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). The notion of POS asserts that individuals who

feel that an organization values their input and contributes to their well-being are more committed, engaged, empowered, satisfied, and have stronger identification with the organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS theory represents a shift in ideology surrounding individuals who contribute to organizations (employees or volunteers) by emphasizing the importance of human capital and the positive consequences that result from organizations demonstrating care for the well-being of constituents.

Well-being theories represent a separate body of research and literature that expanded during the positive psychology movement's efforts to develop "...a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (which) promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Several different well-being theories have been posited and traditionally POS has examined the positive consequences of POS on individual subjective well-being. Subjective well-being encompasses measures of individual life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood (Diener & Ryan, 2009). In contrast, other forms of well-being, such as SDT, may be more helpful in contributing to better understand the connections between POS, individual well-being, and organizational commitment. The link between POS and individual well-being and organizational commitment is of interest for organizations seeking to develop and support volunteers (Baxter et al., 2021). Notably, better understanding organizational supports within local clubs through the club's ability to meet the psychological needs (autonomy,

competence, relatedness) of young women athletes who may progress into coaching roles may influence whether they continue their involvement in the club as a volunteer coach.

Methods

This study was designed using a qualitative interpretivist approach to seek to understand the participants' subjective experiences and how they make sense of them within social and cultural contexts (Merriam & Tisdall, 2015). Interpretivist research paradigms are informed by a subjective epistemological perspective and a relativist ontology (Saunders et al., 2012). This is a helpful lens for exploring this subject matter as it assumes the participants, in this case girl ice hockey players, construct their own meanings and realities. As such, there is no objective truth and through the study, we can develop a nuanced understanding of the perspectives of the participants and a rich exploration of how the participants develop meaning as it pertains to the research objective (Alharahsheh et al., 2020).

Following approval by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Waterloo, 10 club leaders and 19 self-identifying girl ice hockey players ages 12 to 17 years old were recruited to participate in the study. The participants were recruited after obtaining approval from the three clubs involved in the study. Clubs were contacted via publicly available information and the club administrator emailed information letters about the study intended to recruit participants to leaders and parents of girl ice hockey players ages 12 to 17 years old in the club. Participants were also recruited via snowball sampling. The clubs are all located within South-Western Ontario and exclusively provide ice hockey playing opportunities to

women and girls within their designated jurisdiction. Club leaders held a variety of roles within the club as shown in Table 3. Amongst the 19 girl participants, 13 participants played competitive/representative level ice hockey and 6 participants played house league/local league ice hockey (see Table 3).

Table 3

Chart of youth participant, club played for, age, and level of play

Participant	Club	Age	Level
Youth 1	Club 1	15	REP U18AA
Youth 2	Club 1	14	REP U15AA
Youth 3	Club 1	14	REP U15 AA
Youth 4	Club 1	15	HL U18
Youth 5	Club 1	17	HL U18
Youth 6	Club 1	14	HL/DS U15
Youth 7	Club 1	15	HL/DS U18
Youth 8	Club 1	15	REP U18 B
Youth 9	Club 1	15	REP U18 B
Youth 10	Club 1	16	REP U18 AA
Youth 11	Club 2	16	U18 A
Youth 12	Club 2	13	HL U13
Youth 13	Club 2	14	Rep U15A
Youth 14	Club 2	14	HL U15

Youth 15	Club 2	15	Rep U18 B
Youth 16	Club 3	14	REP (B)
Youth 17	Club 3	14	REP U15AA
Youth 18	Club 3	14	REP U15AA
Youth 19	Club 3	12	REP U15AA

Table 4

*Chart of club leader participant, role, gender identity and involvement status
(paid/voluntary)*

Club	Role	Gender Identity (Self-Disclosed)	Paid Employee/Unpaid Volunteer
Club 1	President	Woman	Volunteer
Club 1	Registrar and Administrator	Man	Paid Employee
Club 1	Head of Player and Coach Development	Woman	Paid Employee
Club 1	Creating Coaches Mentorship Program Member	Woman	Volunteer *Stipend provided
Club 2	Vice President	Woman	Volunteer

Club 2	Coaching Committee Member, Former Club President	Man	Volunteer
Club 2	President	Man	Volunteer
Club 2	Coach	Woman	Volunteer
Club 3	Head of Player Development and Behavioural Health	Man	Paid Employee
Club 3	Vice President	Man	Volunteer

Procedures

Online semi-structured interviews were organized based on the participant and researcher availability and conducted via Zoom. Once the Zoom meeting began, the researcher obtained verbal informed consent from the participant prior to the start of the interview. Participants were assigned monikers to maintain their anonymity. Interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes during which time (a) club leaders shared their perspectives on organizational supports for girls related to volunteer coaching and (b) girls shared their perspectives on their relationship with their club and their motivations to pursue volunteer coaching pathways. Participants were compensated with a \$10 gift card for their time.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. This study is built on a conceptual framework that includes two sensitizing concepts to guide analysis. Sensitizing concepts are useful tools in qualitative research as background ideas that inform a research problem in a qualitative study and as interpretive devices for building analysis (Charmaz, 2003). Blumer (1969) refers to sensitizing concepts as a “mode of attack or plan of approach to the situation...” (p. 46). Blumer (1954) viewed sensitizing concepts as a way to provide guidance to the researcher and suggest directions in which to look during the simultaneous data collection and analysis phases. The sensitizing concepts that guide this study include POS and SDT, which, together, link to form the conceptual framework that can contribute to the formulation of theory (Seibold, 2002). Data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2019) reflexive thematic analysis (TA), an approach that stems from positive psychology research methods, where research on well-being, a primary sensitizing concept used within this study, has origins (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Braun and Clarke’s (2019) reflexive TA views themes as

creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves. Quality reflexive TA is not about following procedures ‘correctly’ (or about ‘accurate’ and ‘reliable’ coding, or achieving consensus between coders), but about the researcher’s reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process. (p. 594)

As part of the reflexive process, it is important to note that as a researcher, I have a background as both a former ice hockey player and community sport volunteer ice hockey coach. This allowed me to interpret the data with an understanding of the sport system having had experiences both playing and coaching in it as a woman coach. It also allowed me to reflect on my own experiences navigating coaching pathways as a volunteer. In reflexive TA, data analysis follows a six-stage analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a two-stage review process to ensure rigorous and high-quality analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The six phases of TA included; (1) first transcribing the data verbatim in order to become familiar with the data. (2) Then, initial codes were generated systematically across the data set. (3) Next, codes were gathered into relevant themes. (4) In the review process, initial themes were reviewed against coded data and the dataset to aid in identifying and interpreting data as they related to the guiding research questions and conceptual framework (Clarke & Braun, 2017). (5) After the review process clear definitions and names were given to each theme to depict the overall story told through the analysis. (6) Finally, the data were reported in the findings section. Throughout the entirety of the analysis process, reflexivity remained essential as reflexive TA specifies that researchers reflect and name the philosophical and theoretical assumptions that inform their work (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Findings

Autonomy

Autonomy as defined by Deci and Ryan (2017) refers to the “need to self-regulate one’s experiences and actions” (p. 10). When behaving autonomously, actions are congruent

with an individual's authentic interests and values. Girls desire coaching experiences that are relevant to their interests and development needs. For example, girls enjoy coaching opportunities where they feel they have choice in the level they coach and when they can take on leadership opportunities in the coaching role. Youth 12 captured this sentiment, expressing, "I prefer to coach the local league, and younger (athletes), so that I can actually teach them something. I'm not just repeating stuff that the coaches have told me and can give them my own tips." In addition, girls appreciate having coaches who empower them to take on leadership roles in an autonomy-supportive way, offering options for players to experience coaching firsthand. Youth 6 described how her coach encouraged girls to take on coaching roles within a practice setting but provided options for how they engaged in the activity. She explained, "He gives us a choice. If players want to have like, a bigger role, they can run a drill, but if they want to just keep it simpler with a fun game or challenge, he offers that."

Club leaders recognize the importance of autonomy-supportive environments for girl coaches and know that girls may be interested in pursuing different volunteer roles. One club president discusses the options in volunteer roles that are promoted to girls:

We do try to encourage and support girls and women to take on coaching roles. And equally, we know sometimes coaching is not for everyone. Sometimes, the girls want to be an official. So, we'll work with the officials committee to help the kids to get into officiating and train them and support them.

There are currently no formal strategies put in place at the club level to offer more widespread support amongst girls within the club. There are informal ways in which club leaders promote girls through coaching pathways as discussed by a club Registrar and Administrator:

I've personally approached girls to provide options and say "hey, why don't you look at this coaching certification? Are you interested in moving up from house league to rep?" But I don't believe we have anything formal. No, it's not formalized.

These informal touchpoints about pursuing coaching opportunities resonate with girls but the lack of formality means that some individuals with a level of interest do not get involved.

Youth 4 explained a scenario that depicts this:

Our assistant coach talked to us after a game about the idea of coaching and how there's always an open option for coaching if anyone would be interested. It wasn't an in-depth meeting about coaching and how to get involved. But the idea really resonated with me for a little bit but it was never followed up on, so I haven't gotten into it yet.

Girls with experience in refereeing pathways note that the refereeing pathways helped them understand the certification requirements necessary to be involved as a volunteer, whatever role that might be, including coaching. Youth 5 states:

I would say that if I wasn't a referee, I probably wouldn't be a coach. Because it's not advertised to pretty much anyone, like usually it's, so and so's dad is the coach. It's

never really advertised to like any of us older players like ‘hey, do you want to coach on this team’, you have to actually approach someone to get the information.

The findings show that club leaders create an autonomously supportive environment and neither demand nor control the expectations of involvement of girls as volunteer coaches. However, the findings also reveal that there is a lack of management oversight surrounding volunteer pathways, and that while volunteer coaching opportunities are mentioned in passing, there is no formal strategy to engage girl players in coaching opportunities.

Competence

Competence refers to the need to feel effectance and mastery (Deci & Ryan, 2017). The results of the study show that girls perceive sport clubs as vital in developing their competencies as players and this makes them feel capable of taking on future coaching opportunities that are aligned with their playing expertise. Youth 12 expresses, “I feel like since I play local league, we’re not as good as the rep teams, so I wouldn’t have as much experience or skill to teach a rep team until getting more experience in coaching.” Girls enjoy having opportunities to work on developing skills as coaches in environments with other women and girl coaches. Youth 2 described this type of environment.

I liked how I was the older person and how I felt like a coach out there. And I also liked that it was all girls out there. I just felt like more comfortable, I guess. I liked teaching kids how to do moves that they haven’t learned yet and be the first to teach them that skill.

Youth 2 also elaborated on how women coaches helped to support a layer of confidence and mastery by providing them independence within controlled coaching environments:

She would let us run a drill or like, a station, and the bench during games. So, it felt like we were kind of coaching by ourselves and running our own staff. She let us do a lot of individual coaching with the little kids. So, it was fun and built our confidence being able to run our practices and the bench during games.

For girls, part of feeling competent to enter a coaching role stems from the institutional knowledge girls feel they gain from having their playing career within a particular club. For example, Youth 15 states their preference to coach for their club because of their understanding of how the club functions. She explained, “I wouldn’t really want to coach in another association, because I wouldn’t know how it works there. Like I know all that stuff in my club.”

Clubs recognize the importance of offering coaches’ resources to help them feel competent within their roles. This includes tactical skill resources such as practice plans and technology that can support their coaching performance. A Registrar and Administrator described some of the resources, “We do supply, X’s and O’s like coaching examples, practice plans and things like that. And we’re offering an app that has practice plans and player performance tracking.”

Club leaders have ideas for how to engage young people in coaching and build their confidence to pursue coaching roles; however, these are currently not being implemented within their club. For example, the Head of Player Development and Behavioural Health in

Club 3 described the possible impact of running a “coach for a day” program for players within their organization.

The opportunity to jump into certain roles builds belief and confidence and of course, enjoyment and being a part of something. I think having young coach days, would be good to get current players. Maybe a day as a coach, they get to wear the suit, so to speak, and they get to be in charge for the day, hold the board. At a young age, I think that would maybe be something that I think would help.

Beyond suggestions for initiatives to engage youth in coaching opportunities, the Head of Player Development and Behavioural Health elaborated on aspects of athlete identity and supporting them to see other opportunities to be involved in sport such as coaching.

So many players only know themselves as a player and this would help them see coaching is actually kind of fun. They get to embody the coaching role for once, which maybe they never thought was possible. I think something that would surprise a lot of people is discovering young people are interested in being a coach.

Despite sharing innovative ideas for engaging young coaches, club leaders feel limited in being able to support the competencies of coaches. A club Registrar and Administrator relayed this sentiment and also elaborated on the inequities in comparison to boys’ associations.

We get very little from the Provincial Association in terms of coaching resources.

There are rarely even coach clinics open for our coaches to register even when the Provincial Association mandates that any coaches in our association must take the

coaching certification through them. Now, if you look at the boys or coed Provincial Associations, they have coaching clinics open and available all the time.

Club leaders do not feel supported by governing bodies to be able to appropriately provide development opportunities to coaches. Club leaders within girls' ice hockey clubs also note that gender inequality plays a role in access to coaching resources and educational opportunities.

Relatedness

Relatedness refers to feeling cared for and socially connected to others (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Girls feel a strong sense of belonging within their club. Participants described several ways they felt strongly connected to others and supported within the club environment. They describe support from organizational agents including parents, coaches, and teammates. For example, Youth 14 stated, "I would say there was a lot of support in my playing career from my teammates, coaches, and parents. My teammates, they're like my sisters." Youth 15 specifically referenced non-parent women coaches close in age as a source of support stating, "There are lots of coaches and people, especially non-parent younger girl coaches who are always there to provide support."

Girls enjoy coaching as a social opportunity and to volunteer alongside their teammates and friends. Oftentimes their friends are the ones who bring them along to volunteer opportunities. Getting involved in volunteering or as on-ice helpers is often facilitated by participating in coaching with their friends. Spending time with their friends is the hook and they express other benefits once they participate. Youth 8 explained:

An email was sent to our team about it but it was my friend, who would always ask me, on the days when there is not a lot of people who want to come help then I would go. It's not complicated to get involved and the kids are really fun and cute.

Girls are aware that there is a need to rely on social connections within the club to get involved. Youth 15 explained, "To get involved in coaching, in our club at least, it's more of you know someone who knows someone. You just have to know someone to get your name in." Youth 15 who expressed future intent to coach their younger cousin's team, elaborated on their desire to coach teams based on existing social connections.

I want to do some sort of coaching and I think it'd be easier if you know someone who's playing at that level to get into it, versus like, just like trying to coach a team where you don't know anyone and no one knows you.

Players reveal they wish they had more support and guidance to better understand how to get involved in the organization as a coach. While they feel as though they could figure out how to navigate becoming involved as a coach within the club by relying on their existing relationships and asking various agents within the organization (e.g., coaches, parents, board members), they reflected on how they might be more likely to get involved should the club express more interest in their involvement as volunteer coaches. For example, a Creating Coaches Mentorship Program Member reflected on her own coaching journey sharing thoughts around how clubs could do a better job engaging fellow girls and women in volunteer coach opportunities by building and fostering relationships with them and discussed the importance of having women and girl coaches:

I think it would help if girls had a very easy way to get in contact with someone and then be able to discuss what coaching role might work best for you. For example, if you play or played higher level, maybe you can work with higher level athletes or if you're not as strong, maybe you're working with the younger kids or house league. You still have that knowledge that you can teach them the basics that they need. So having someone at an organization who's specifically going to do that role and talk to the local girls who are playing or who've graduated. Having information as to how to get involved readily available would be so helpful.

She continued to elaborate on how informal networks can inadvertently lead to gender inequality in coaching staff. When women do not express their interest in coaching often men reach out to their own network of fellow male friends despite preferring to have a woman coach on staff.

Because, I mean, oftentimes, you just see dads becoming the head coaches, and they have like their buddies, they want to have coach as their assistants. But when I reached out to the coach [with whom] I helped, he was like, 'Oh, I would love having a women bench. I always try to, but it just happened that this year I didn't have someone, so I'm really glad you reached out.'

Finally, she explained the importance of young girl athletes having women coaches and how it impacted her own coaching pursuits.

If governing bodies and clubs managed it so it was really easy for girls to get involved then it will start a cycle. When young girls have women who give back to

them, they're going to want to coach. I know I had women coaches when I was younger and that's what motivated me to return and coach because my experience was always so much better when I had a woman coach.

Despite sentiments towards interest in supporting women and girls in pursuing volunteer coaching opportunities, many club leaders noted barriers to coaching and emphasized negative parent behaviour as a deterrent to those wishing to enter into the coaching role. Club 1's Registrar and Administrator noted that parent behaviour is a major concern and as a result girls may not wish to pursue coaching opportunities.

I think that's something that is factored into not just women coaches, but all coaches coming in. They see the parents' behaviour. Since COVID, it's been worse in terms of their behaviour, parents' behaviour, a sense of entitlement almost. So yeah, I could see how young girls would not want to come coach the game, if they have been exposed to that type of behaviour.

Several club leaders expressed parents' behaviour as a top concern for the decline in volunteerism, but in interviews with girl participants there was no discussion of parents' behaviour as a limiting factor for their interest in volunteering. In fact, all girl participants expressed interest in volunteer coaching in some capacity whether now or in the future.

Discussion

The findings provide new insights into managing supports in the recruitment of girl coaches by displaying dual perspectives of girl youth athletes and club leaders. The two perspectives help understand 1) how girls perceive their club's contribution to their well-

being as proposed by self-determination theory (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and 2) how club leaders perceive the provision of organizational supports for girls' transition to the volunteer coaching role as it falls within these categories of basic psychological needs. This study provides a better understanding of the conflicting and congruent sentiments from girls and club leaders related to supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches.

Autonomy

Girls and club leaders present a similar narrative depicting the importance of girls being able to choose how and to what extent they become involved in volunteer activities. In addition, the need for autonomy extends to their involvement in coaching activities and their appreciation of having the independence and ability to take on leadership roles in a way they feel comfortable doing. The latter finding echoes Harman and Doherty's (2019) findings that volunteer coaches expect clubs to give them autonomy in their coaching. The need for autonomy-supportive environments in the recruitment process for girl coaches and club recognition of presenting choice for girls in the pursuit and extent of volunteer roles is a new contribution to current research. The importance of autonomy-supportive coaching practices, particularly for girl athletes, has been covered extensively in the youth sport coaching literature (Carroll & Allen, 2021; Vella & Perlman, 2014; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). Hence the example in the findings from youth 6, describing the strategy her coach employed by having players take on coaching roles through choice, demonstrates how autonomy-supportive coaching research has translated to best practices utilized by coaches.

In addition, Shaw and Allen (2009) found that women coaches prefer autonomy-supportive environments in comparison to laissez fair environments. This study demonstrates the importance of autonomy-supportive management practices in the engagement of girls as volunteers. While this study focuses on coaching, the findings reveal that clubs understand that girls may want to have choice both within the coaching role and in selecting different volunteer roles, for example the official role. However, it is important to recognize that autonomy support not only includes affordances of choice, but also the importance of empowering individuals to take initiative (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to girls and club leaders, there is not enough being achieved to formally engage young girls by providing transparency in how to get involved. Clubs could provide more choice for girls by clearly outlining the options within volunteer roles. For example, in the coaching role, choices could vary between head coach, assistant coach, or practice on-ice-helper, and could provide choice in the age and level of the team they coach, and the flexibility in their coaching schedule to accommodate their other commitments (e.g., playing, school). Other volunteer pathways such as officiating may be beneficial models for sport leaders to utilize when considering for the recruitment of women and girls.

Competence

Low confidence is a significant barrier to women and girl coaches and is a contributing factor to the under representation of women and girl coaches (Robertson, 2016). This study contributes to understanding how building confidence in girls' coaching abilities can contribute to their future intent to coach. Banwell (2019) found that 90% of women

coaches found mentorship from men and women coaches helpful in their development. The significance of our findings pertains specifically to girls who are early in their coach development and perhaps differ from previous findings that do not find differences between men and women as coaching mentors whereas our findings point to the importance of women and girl-only spaces for girls to practice the art and skill of coaching. In addition, Wasend and LaVoi (2019) found that women and girls coached by women are more likely to pursue and stay in coaching. Club leaders should consider the importance of representation in increasing girls' confidence in their coaching abilities.

Clarkson et al. (2019) found that confidence is a barrier for women coaches especially at non-elite and recreational levels of sport. Girls who participated in this study express that they would have confidence in coaching younger teams that played at similar levels that they have and after more experience in coaching, they would consider moving to more advanced levels. Like findings from Allen and Reid (2019), the study shows that girls feel that playing experience is important to foster girls' confidence and sport-specific skill-set for the coaching role; however, it elaborates that girls at a variety of levels in their playing career want to engage in coaching throughout the latter half of their minor sport playing journey.

Clubs should also consider the importance of leaning on their existing membership given that girls express that their institutional knowledge of the club in which they play makes them feel more inclined to exclusively coach within their club as opposed to other clubs. The knowledge of the inner workings of the club and the pre-existing relationships they have within the club foster a sense of confidence in pursuing volunteer roles.

Several previous studies have identified ways to move beyond traditional coach education, including club-based training to foster dialogue amongst volunteers (Allen & Reid, 2019) and collaboration amongst coaches with different levels of coaching experience (Søvik et al., 2017). While club-based coaching education is helpful, the barrier discussed in this study is access to the certifications needed to be able to coach within the sport itself. In the context of this study, ice hockey coaching certifications in Canada are governed by Hockey Canada and the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). To coach for a community sport organization, a volunteer must follow the certification process and guidelines as outlined by these governing bodies. Depending on the age and level of competition a female wishes to coach, more certifications may be required. The primary barrier facing women and girl coaches in this study is that they can only register for coaching clinics offered by their provincial sport organization. These clinics are required components of the certification process and club leaders report discrepancies in opportunities for boys and girls to access these clinics in provincial associations, reporting lack of clinic offerings to girls. This points to the lack of support provided to clubs by sport organizations and reiterates gender discrepancies in access to these resources. This is concerning, given the relationship between coach education opportunities and the positive impact it has on coaching efficacy (Sullivan et al., 2012), particularly for women and girl coaches who value the feedback provided by credible educators within these formal training contexts (McCullick et al., 2005).

Relatedness

Clubs are successful in fostering girls' psychological need for relatedness. Clubs hold the potential to extend the ability to make girls feel cared for and socially connected to volunteer coaching roles. Previous research has noted the importance of developing communities of practice for women and girl coaches (Hogan et al., 2022a) and that the support of family and friends is key to women coaches continuing within their roles (Hogan et al., 2022b). This study adds to this through findings that for girls, friends, specifically fellow teammates, are also critical to their initial desire to engage in coaching. Busser and Carruther's (2010) research on youth soccer coaches found that volunteer coaches were motivated by their altruistic values, and their desire to make a positive difference in the development of young people. This research expands our understanding of motives to specifically understand the motives of girls and emphasizes that girls are also motivated to volunteer because of their relationships within the club such as the ability to coach with teammates who are friends and the ability to coach teams where they know someone whether that is a player such as a sibling or relative, or a coach. In addition, girls also appreciate community of practice to gain access to mentors and be able to coach in all girl and women environments. Shaw and Allen (2009) also used SDT to discover that women coaches of all ages that women and girls desire a sense of relatedness amongst coaches and key CSO personnel.

Interestingly, while Hoye et al. (2025) found that poor parent behaviour is a significant factor that impacts the experiences of women coaches, it seems that this is not a significant factor limiting girls from wanting to pursue volunteer coaching roles. Club leaders

should recognize that girls hold a strong interest in volunteer coaching opportunities and that it is important for club leaders to help girls manage poor parental behaviour once they are within the role but also recognize that parents within the organization can also be an important source of support for girl coaches.

Practical Implications

This study holds several practical implications for sport leaders and sport governing bodies. Sport organizations should consider the following when engaging young girls in volunteer coaching within their club. The study shows that while girls express genuine interest in coaching, they lack awareness of how to get involved, and clubs rarely have formal structures to guide them. Policy at the provincial or national sport governing body level (e.g., Hockey Canada, PSOs) could mandate that all community clubs establish transparent, formalized pathways for girls transitioning into volunteer coaching roles. This could include a standardized mentorship program, a “coach for a day” initiative, or clear communication of entry-level certification requirements. Such a policy would reduce reliance on informal “who you know” recruitment, increase equity, and foster a more sustainable pipeline of women coaches.

In addition, findings reveal inequities between boys’ and girls’ local sport associations in access to NCCP coaching clinics and certification opportunities. A policy change at the governing body level could ensure that equal numbers of clinics, mentorship placements, and subsidies are made available for girls’ ice hockey clubs. For example, provincial sport organizations could be required to track and publicly report participation

rates by gender in coaching clinics. They could also provide funding incentives for clubs that successfully recruit and support girl athletes into volunteer coaching roles.

Utilizing SDT as a theoretical framework for understanding recruitment is an important step in centralizing well-being and psychological needs within the forefront of youth volunteerism in sport. Findings reveal the girls value and wish to contribute to the organization as volunteers. It is important to consider their autonomy and how they wish to engage in volunteerism offering flexibility, and a diversity in types of roles not just limited to coaching but also officiating, timekeeping, or other volunteer opportunities specific to a club's needs. If they wish to engage in coaching roles, it would be important to discuss their expectations (i.e., what level and age they feel comfortable coaching, their level of involvement). In addition, findings reveal that girls of all different levels of sport feel competent to give back through volunteer coaching roles. Clubs should consider girls who play different levels of sport and assess how they can make important contributions as coaches. LaVoi and Boucher (2021) acknowledge the importance of organizational leaders in creating positive and supportive climates for women and girls entering coaching regardless of their identities, level, or sport type. While girls who might play house league levels of sport can start coaching at similar levels as they grow their confidence in coaching, this may (or may not) lead to coaching other ages and levels. Finally, findings show that girls feel strongly connected to their clubs, particularly their teammates. They are interested in coaching alongside their friends and feel most comfortable coaching players they know or

players to which they have a previous connection. Clubs should consider marketing opportunities to engage in coaching alongside fellow friends and teammates.

Future Directions

The findings from this study answer, in part, Roberts and Kenttä's (2019) call for research and frameworks on the career progression of women coaches by exploring organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches. The study builds on findings from Cuskelly and O'Brien's (2013) transition-extension framework which utilizes Atchley's (1989, 1999, 1993) continuity theory to explain how athletes maintain a sense of identity through their transition into sport volunteering. The findings in this study show that part of this transition is not only related to the identity of the individual, but it is also fostered by the organization and the perceptions players have of the organization. Players in the study perceive their sport club in high regard and feel that the club supports their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness; however, the informal management of volunteer coaching results in players not transitioning into coaching roles despite their expressed interest. Future research should also consider intervention-based studies, utilizing SDT as a theory of well-being and motivation to further understand the how management practices can facilitate further involvement of girls in volunteer coaching positions.

Conclusion

Girls represent the future for change in increasing representation of women and girls in coaching. Community sport provides a context for engaging girls in volunteer coaching

during their playing careers. If done effectively, girls represent a viable “pipeline” for future sport coaches (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). Despite the significance of this group of individuals, there remains little to no research on this topic. This study adds to the literature by utilizing SDT and well-being as a mechanism to understand perceptions of support as it relates to girls’ coaching pathways. As Harman and Doherty (2014) note, coaches are not a homogenous group. Coaches have different expectations of themselves, motives for coaching, and desire for particular forms of support. This study focuses specifically on girls in community sport and contributes to the current lack of literature on the topic of women and girl community sport coaches (Baxter et al., 2021).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The three papers that comprise this dissertation explore organizational support and management of volunteer coaching pathways for girls in community sport and present important findings that contribute new insights into how the practices of local sport clubs, and their sport governing bodies, can develop or deter youth girls as coaches. The papers reflect analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with ten club leaders and nineteen girl ice hockey players ages 12 to 17 years old across three ice hockey clubs located in southern Ontario, Canada. Data within the papers were analyzed using Braun et al.'s (2021) reflexive thematic analysis techniques. Despite increased participation of girl athletes in ice hockey, a significant gender disparity persists in coaching roles. Paper one (Chapter 2) and paper two (Chapter 3) draw on Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) POS theory to respectively explore the perceptions of organizational support amongst girl youth as potential future volunteer coaches and how club leaders perceive and provide organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles. Paper three (Chapter 4), additionally draws on Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory to explore how the tenants of well-being within the club environment for girl youth in relation to volunteer coaching pathways can enhance our understanding of the organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches.

The first study (Chapter 2) examined girls' perceptions of volunteer coaching opportunities in community sport and their desired organizational supports to pursue this path. The study drew on POS theory to understand support mechanisms needed to enable pathways for girls into coaching roles. Interviews of girl ice hockey players aged 12-17

focused on their experiences in local ice hockey clubs, the relationships that influence their perceptions of coaching pathways, and their perceptions of organizational support needed to help them develop as coaches. The findings provided new evidence of girls' 1) altruistic coaching intentions, (2) valorization of relatability and communication in coaching pathways, (3) desire for resource equity, and (4) lack of availability and awareness of formal coaching pathways. The research highlighted girls' aspirations to give back to their clubs as future coaches, and further established connections to POS, which has been shown to be related to altruistic concern for an organization (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). Girls perceived close-in-age women coaches as relatable figures and feel they can easily talk to them and discover more about coaching pathways. Sport clubs may want to create further opportunities for near-peer volunteer coaches as a recruitment strategy for increasing girls' knowledge of coaching pathways. Girls interviewed for the study wanted to coach for clubs that valued resource equity between boys' and girls' clubs, and some wanted to be agents of change for future coach leadership roles, if this was currently not the case within their club. Organizations should consider the importance of fairness in resource distribution, which has been shown to be an antecedent of POS, which previous research has shown to be relevant to engaging people in an organization (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Finally, this study revealed that despite limited awareness of coaching certification processes for girls, there is still a strong desire amongst those girls to stay involved in community sport through volunteer coaching. Notably, several participants in this study were prompted to take action and followed up with their clubs after the interview to ask about volunteer coaching opportunities. This research

offered new contributions to research on POS in the context of community sport and contributes to understanding the experiences of girls and sport coaching pathways.

The second study (Chapter 3) explored current challenges, strategies, and opportunities expressed amongst club leaders for the recruitment of girl youth ice hockey coaches in community sport clubs. Drawing once again POS theory, the purpose of this second study was to understand how club leaders perceived and provided organizational support for girls to enter and remain in community sport volunteer coaching roles. Data were collected through ten semi-structured interviews with club leaders. Findings indicated that club leaders perceive challenges in providing support for girls entering coaching, such as lack of specific targets, strategies, and gender-based initiatives related to recruitment of women and girl coaches. In addition, amongst club leaders, there is a common perception that there was minimal interest in volunteer coaching amongst women and girls due to barriers such as time and lack of compensation. Interestingly, these barriers were not discussed amongst girl participants in the first study (Chapter 2). Club leaders were also challenged by the lack of formal recruitment strategies and continue to rely on word of mouth to fill volunteer coaching roles. Club leaders expressed that the minimal strategic recruitment efforts were reflective of their perceptions of a lack of support provided by their NSO and PSO in Ontario, Canada. They also noted that the feelings of minimal support were reflective of the emphasis NSOs and PSOs place on elite sport in comparison to community sport. Future research should seek to understand the perspectives of NSO and PSO leaders who may be facing capacity issues that limit their abilities to implement gender equity initiatives (Patil &

Doherty, 2023). Despite the challenges faced by club leaders, they also identified opportunities to engage alumni, encouraged volunteerism amongst players, and supported girls with pursuing coaching certifications. These opportunities for engagement are important considerations for clubs given that women and girls are less likely to potentially seek coaching roles and as a result may be bypassed due to informal coach recruitment methods (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012).

Finally, the purpose of the third study (Chapter 4) was to explore how the tenets of well-being as proposed by self-determination theory-autonomy, competence, and relatedness- can enhance our understanding of the organizational supports needed to facilitate girls' transition from players to volunteer coaches. Interviews focused on girls' perspectives of their relationship with their club and their motivations to pursue volunteer coaching pathways. An additional ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with club leaders across three ice hockey clubs located in South-Western Ontario, Canada which focused on supports and programs in place for girl coaches. Data were thematically analyzed, and findings revealed that girls have positive experiences throughout their playing career that foster well-being and yet there is limited knowledge of how their experiences may translate into coaching pathways, despite an expressed interest in pursuing coaching opportunities amongst girls. Specifically, the study outlines the importance of autonomy-supportive management practices in the engagement of girls as volunteers, which may empower girls to take initiative through coaching roles (Deci & Ryan, 2017). This study builds on findings from Shaw and Allen (2009) who found that women coaches prefer autonomy-supportive environments in comparison to laissez-faire environments. Low confidence is a significant

barrier to women and girl coaches (Clarkson, 2019; Robertson 2016). This study also contributed to understanding how building confidence in girls' coaching abilities can contribute to their future intent to coach. Finally, the findings add to previous research on the importance of relatedness amongst women and girl coaches (Hogan et al., 2022a, 2022b),- i.e., that for girls, friends, specifically fellow teammates, are also critical in their initial desire to engage in coaching. Clubs currently do not have programs or a formalized process in place to support the transition of girls from players to volunteer coaches. NSOs and PSOs should consider policies such as mandating that clubs establish transparent, formalized pathways for girls transitioning into volunteer coaching roles.

Findings across the studies provided a holistic understanding of how management practices within club environments contribute to perceptions of organizational support amongst girl youth as potential future volunteer coaches. The research offered contributions to theory and practice, and also presented practical implications for sport organizations seeking to better engage girls and enhance their potential for reciprocity to the organization as potential future volunteer coaches.

Contribution to Knowledge and Theory

This dissertation contributes to advancing knowledge of organizational support and management of volunteer coaching pathways for girls in community sport, where research on women and girl community sport coaches has been limited (Baxter et al., 2021). The three papers cohesively help to unpack the experiences of girls and club leaders to better understand the necessary organizational supports and management required to start a fruitful

“pipeline” of future women and girl coaches (LaVoi & Boucher, 2021). This is an important contribution to the field of sport management, which seeks to impact the way in which the management of sport organizations not only affect sport but also the people who participate in and make up these organizations (Gammelsæter, 2021). Doherty (2013) argued for sport management researchers to consider theory as the “...foundation of efforts to generate new knowledge and understanding of phenomena in the sport industry” (p. 7). The use of well-established existing theories, including POS and SDT, within the dissertation offer a strong theoretical basis to explain and understand the current organizational support and management of volunteer coaching pathways for girls in community sport. Research on POS within the context of nonprofit organizations is arguably in its infancy with Prysmakova and Lallatin’s (2023) review reporting only 12 empirical articles focused on nonprofit research; however, in this review, they did not include research on based on the lack of formal organizational supports often provided to volunteers. Studies in this dissertation contribute to growing this body of literature and provide new insights into understanding that members of an organization, regardless of their employment or voluntary status, make assumptions based on their treatment that impact their desire to contribute to the organization in the future. This is especially important in nonprofit sport organizations that provide a large subset of the youth population with opportunities to participate in sport and yet face declining volunteer rates, despite high levels of membership. Perhaps there is a need for formal supports to help recruit and support volunteers, recognizing their importance in sustaining community sport.

Doherty (2013) contends that when the application of theory is not problem driven, it risks a lack of application to practice. The issue of gender-equity in sport has continued to permeate sport management literature with early sport management scholars explaining how organizational practices, cultures, and processes create gendered sport spaces (Acker, 1990) and issuing calls for researchers to question the notion that gender-equity must coincide with increased organizational effectiveness (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). The knowledge generated and practical implications suggested do not necessarily create less work for sport organizations and community sport leaders; however, when considering the potential impact and benefits, such as role modelling and increased sport participation rates amongst girls (Midgley et al., 2021), this endeavour may be viewed as critical and worthwhile. Citing Frisby (2005),

How can we go wrong if we envision a world of sport where profits are reinvested in the community; where concerns over the environment and equality take precedence over development and profit making; where athletes, citizens and employees are empowered; and where marginalized groups have the opportunity to achieve the many benefits of sport and recreation participation? (pp. 8-9).

This dissertation contributes to these aspirations as it demonstrates how the use of theory can amplify our understanding of real-world issues and create solutions alongside practitioners to focus on efforts to build girls into young leaders by developing opportunities for them to coach in their community sport club.

In addition to application of the existing theories, this research highlights new findings that present theoretical implications for the field of sport management within the

context of nonprofit community sport. The voices of girl athletes gathered through this research consistently affirm and amplify their desire to give back to their community sport club through volunteer coaching; however, they express a lack of knowledge on how to pursue coaching pathways. Furthermore, the stories of club leaders reflect their desire to engage this group of individuals in volunteer coaching pursuits, despite challenges in doing so. This dissertation provides new contributions on POS and SDT both by providing a theoretical understanding of how clubs can create supportive environments to engage girls as volunteer coaches in their playing career and by offering important practical directions for sport organizations seeking to improve capacity by increasing the representation of women and girl coaches.

Implications for Practice

The findings across the three manuscripts provide implications for practice both within the sport of ice hockey and for the broader community sport sector seeking to engage girls as volunteer coaches.

1. Adolescent girl players exhibit high levels of interest in coaching and want to give back to younger players within their club; however, the following organizational supports are required to facilitate their involvement:
 - a. Girls share altruistic values about giving back to their sport clubs. Sport clubs should market opportunities for volunteer coaching that are aligned with these intrinsic motives for volunteering.

- b. Organizations should recognize the importance of girls place on having coaches that are close in age with whom they feel act as mentors. These types of mentors are critical in relaying information to girls and clubs should be intentional in engaging young women to relay information to girls about coaching pathways and internal volunteer opportunities within the club.
 - c. Girls want and expect resource equity between boys' and girls' clubs. Organizations at all levels of sport (e.g., NSOs, PSOs, clubs, and local municipalities) need to support and implement policies and initiatives such as equal ice (time and space) provision.
 - d. Girls are often not aware of coaching as an opportunity available to them. Clubs need to enhance the availability and awareness of coaching pathways for girls. Strategies to do so include information sessions, more accessible online information on how to obtain coaching credentials, recruitment campaigns catered to the motives of girl athletes, and women and girls coach mentors within the club who regularly engage with girl athletes and can provide accessible information, guidance, and step-by-step instructions on the requirements needed to partake in coaching and in other available opportunities.
2. Club leaders see opportunities to engage girls in volunteer sport coaching but, they face challenges in doing so. Sport leaders within NSOs and PSOs should consider ways to increase opportunities and decrease the challenges faced by club leaders, including:

- a. Club leaders should set internal targets for increasing representation of women and girl coaches. In doing so, they can evaluate their success and assess whether tangible change is occurring in creating gender-equity in coaching spaces within their club.
- b. Clubs should implement gender-based recruitment initiatives within their club such as coaching education opportunities for girls to learn more about coaching.
- c. Clubs should consider the importance of perceived organizational support and, through their strategic planning process, discuss opportunities within their club context to engage girls in volunteer sport coaching.
- d. Clubs should create a culture of volunteerism by encouraging players of all levels to participate in coaching opportunities. This may include opportunities for them to practice coaching skills within the comfort of their internal team environment or externally for younger teams within the organization.
- e. Clubs should view their alumnae as a critical resource for recruiting women coaches. Clubs should create formal communication channels with their alumnae network to inform them of volunteer opportunities and include information regarding the nature and time commitment required.
- f. Clubs should continue to provide extensive support to girls in pursuing coaching certifications. NSO and PSOs should also consider how to make certifications more accessible to this important group of volunteers and communicate this to CSOs.

3. The idea of seeking to fulfil of psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) can help practitioners understand tangible ways to foster well-being of girls through organizational supports that facilitate their transition from players to volunteer coaches.
 - a. Clubs should consider the importance of providing girls with a level of autonomy and allowing them to select the level and age group in which they feel comfortable beginning their coaching journey. Oftentimes, there is a desire to coach in environments that girls have additional support or connection, such as teams of their younger relatives or neighbours. Clubs should try to accommodate this desire to provide entry points into volunteer coaching pathways.
 - b. Girls may want to take leadership roles within coaching spaces. They have a desire to teach skills and test their abilities as coaches while learning through hands-on experiences. Clubs should encourage this amongst girl athletes in volunteer coaching roles.
 - c. Clubs should continue to focus on developing girls' athletic skills within the sport. Their level of competency as players makes them feel capable of taking on future coaching opportunities. Clubs should be mindful of aligning coaching opportunities with the playing expertise of athletes; however, with increased coaching experience, girls may wish to pursue higher levels of coaching. Clubs should provide support for them to do so.

- d. Clubs should continue to create positive experiences for girl athletes and foster relationships amongst club members to build environment focused on supporting girl athletes. However, clubs should recognize that they can also expand their support beyond athletic pursuits and support girls in volunteer coaching pursuits. Clubs can do so by intentionally expressing interest in girls' involvement as volunteer coaches and creating more formalized pathways into these roles.

Dissemination of Research

Prior to the thesis defense, the research has been presented alongside other researchers and practitioners at a club event focused on women and girls' development in sport with athletes, coaches, volunteers, parents, and community members in attendance. I was invited to share insight from the project with the local girls' ice hockey community and was grateful for the opportunity to dialogue further about the recommendations listed above. Building on these conversations, I will work directly with clubs to co-create interventions to promote the involvement of girls in sport coaching. These interventions could include seminars or workshops with various stakeholders, including girl athletes, coaches, and club volunteers but they will be developed with the guidance of club leaders to consider their specific organizational contexts and needs. This is an important consideration aligning with Shaw and Frisby's (2006) encouragement that "sport management research be *with* not *on* sport managers and other organizational members" (p. 506).

Following the thesis defence, a report outlining key findings and recommendations will be prepared and these recommendations will be brought forward to all research participants. In addition, a copy of the report will also be brought forward to sport key contacts within sport governing bodies (e.g., Hockey Canada, Ontario Women's Hockey Association) to provide critical insights into club perspectives related to pathways for girls into volunteer sport coaching. These findings are valuable for sport organizations seeking to enhance representation of women and girls in sport coaching and develop volunteer pathways specific to girl athletes within their sport.

The connections made through undertaking this study were by far the most rewarding part of engaging in this research. Many of the girl participants reached out following their interviews to learn more about how to get involved as volunteer coaching within their respective clubs. Information and individual guidance on how to do so was provided. In addition, several club leaders expressed their plans to reach out to their alumni and create more formalized alumni engagement strategies to recruit former players into coaching roles. It is encouraging to see the research topic enacted a desire for clubs to create small changes in their practices to better involve women and girls in sport coaching roles.

Directions for Future Research

Given these studies are among the few, if any, focused specifically on pathways for youth girl volunteer community sport coaches, there is ample opportunity for future research with this population within the community sport context. Future research should consider engaging in community-based participatory research (CBPR) alongside girl athletes, parents,

and club leaders to formulate intervention-based studies to discover manageable strategies and/or programs that clubs can implement to improve pathways for girls into volunteer coaching. Participatory research is a collectivist orientation to research, and utilizing this approach helps de-centre power relations throughout the research process and find meaningful ways to enact community change and serve the needs of those the research intends to support (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Israel et al., 2019). In addition, CBPR methods have been previously used in intervention research (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) and could be helpful in conducting intervention research alongside sport organizations interested in implementing programming or policies focused on the recruitment of girl volunteer community sport coaches.

Researchers should also consider longitudinal studies to understand how girls navigate volunteer coaching pathways through various life stages and transitions. This may help club leaders offer better supports based on unique barriers impacting girls and women during specific points or events across the life span (e.g., post-secondary education, new employment, parenthood). This may also help researchers and practitioners to understand points of time that may require changes in level of coaching responsibility, or critical points of re-engagement after a time away from volunteer coaching pursuits.

Future research should expand to other volunteer roles, particularly officiating roles given the unique challenges faced by this group of volunteers (e.g., conflict, abuse, burnout) and in which limited research has been conducted on women and girls assuming this role (Baxter et al., 2024). In addition, future research should explore the differences in

organizational supports provided to girl volunteer sport coaches in sports historically dominated by women and girls such as gymnastics or figure skating, as a comparative to research on this topic in male-dominated sports such as ice hockey.

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Appendix A: Information Letter for Club Leader Participants

Insert Date

Dear **Club Leader**,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener, a professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. This letter contains information about the nature of the study and outlines your rights as a potential participant. We would like to invite you to take part in the study.

This study explores how sport clubs could better facilitate enhanced opportunities for female youth athletes to consider pathways into sport coaching. We are interested in girls' perceptions of sport coaching and whether sport clubs have mechanisms in place to engage youth female athletes in volunteer coaching. We hope the results of this study will identify ways to better develop and support girls as future coaches.

The study will involve interviews with coaches and administrators. Interview questions will focus on club recruitment efforts and programs for female coaching pathways. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes in length and will be conducted over an online platform, Zoom. Zoom has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the Services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free. We would like to ask whether you are willing to participate in a one on one interview. If you are interested in participating please let us know.

With each participant's permission, the interview will be video and audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Participating in this study is voluntary. Participants may decline to answer any question(s) you prefer not to answer. Participants may decide to leave the session at any time by communicating this to the researcher. Any information you provided up to that point will not be used. Participation will be considered confidential by the research team. Your name will not appear in any paper or publication resulting from this study; however, with your permission quotations may be used with a pseudonym in place of your real name and you may be referenced generally by your role (e.g., Club President). Identifying information will be removed from the data that are collected and stored separately for three months and then permanently deleted. You may withdraw your consent and request for your data to be removed from the study by contacting me within this time period. After this time, it will not be possible to remove your data because I will have no way of knowing which responses are yours. Additionally, data cannot be removed from findings that have been submitted for publication or otherwise shared

publicly. De-identified data will be securely stored for a minimum of 7 years in locked offices and on password protected computers.

Please note that whenever information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). University of Waterloo researchers will not collect or use internet protocol (IP) addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic device without first informing you.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #45132). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca

Participation in this study will not provide any personal benefit to you. To thank you for your time you will receive a \$10 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes. Results of the study will be shared through my dissertation, academic conference presentations and in peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, a final report will be distributed to all participants and the hockey club they are members of. Care will be taken in the choice of quotations used to avoid including any information that could inadvertently identify participants.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email or contact Haley Baxter at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca or 519-500-9916. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have and can provide you with additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation. We very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your involvement in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Haley Baxter, PhD Student

Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca

PhD Supervisor:

Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor,

Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

k.misener@uwaterloo.ca, 519-590-7844

Appendix B: Information Letter for Youth Participants

Insert Date

Dear **Youth Participant**,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener, a professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. This letter contains information about the nature of the study and outlines your rights as a potential participant. We would like to invite you to take part in the study.

This study explores how sport clubs could better facilitate enhanced opportunities for female youth athletes to consider pathways into sport coaching. We are interested in girls' perceptions of sport coaching and whether sport clubs have mechanisms in place to engage youth female athletes in volunteer coaching. We hope the results of this study will identify ways to better develop and support girls as future coaches.

The study will involve interviews with youth participants. Interview questions will focus on female youth athletes perspectives on volunteer sport coaching and programs for female coaching pathways. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes in length and will be conducted over an online platform, Zoom. Zoom has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the Services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free. We would like to ask whether you are willing to participate in a one on one interview. If you are interested in participating please let us know.

With each participant's permission, the interview will be video and audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Participating in this study is voluntary. Participants may decline to answer any question(s) you prefer not to answer. Participants may decide to leave the session at any time by communicating this to the researcher. Any information you provided up to that point will not be used. Participation will be considered confidential by the research team. Your name will not appear in any paper or publication resulting from this study; however, with your permission quotations may be used with a pseudonym in place of your real name and you may be referenced generally by your role (e.g., Female Youth Hockey Player #1). Identifying information will be removed from the data that are collected and stored separately for three months and then permanently deleted. You may withdraw your consent and request for your data to be removed from the

study by contacting me within this time period. After this time, it will not be possible to remove your data because I will have no way of knowing which responses are yours. Additionally, data cannot be removed from findings that have been submitted for publication or otherwise shared publicly. De-identified data will be securely stored for a minimum of 7 years in locked offices and on password protected computers. Please note that whenever information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). University of Waterloo researchers will not collect or use internet protocol (IP) addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic device without first informing you.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #45132). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca. Participation in this study will not provide any personal benefit to you. To thank you for your time you will receive a \$10 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes. Results of the study will be shared through my dissertation, academic conference presentations and in peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, a final report will be distributed to all participants and the hockey club they are members of. Care will be taken in the choice of quotations used to avoid including any information that could inadvertently identify participants.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email or contact Haley Baxter at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca or 519-500-9916. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have and can provide you with additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation. We very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your involvement in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Haley Baxter, PhD Student

Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca

PhD Supervisor:

Katie Misener, PhD, Associate Professor,

Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

k.misener@uwaterloo.ca, 519-590-7844

Appendix C: Guardian Recruitment Email Script

Hello,

My name is Haley Baxter and I am a PhD student working under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener in the Recreation and Leisure Studies Department in the Faculty of Health at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because you recently provided your name and contact details through your local sport club administrator as a guardian of a youth athlete. The reason that I am contacting you is that we are conducting a study that explores how sport clubs could better facilitate enhanced opportunities for female youth athletes to consider pathways into sport coaching. We are currently inviting youth female hockey players aged 13-17 to participate in this study.

Participation in this study involves taking part in a video and audio recorded one-on-one interview conducted over an online platform, Zoom. Zoom has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the Services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free. Interview questions will focus on female youth athletes' perceptions of coaching pathways and current interest and involvement in volunteer sport coaching. Participation in this study would take approximately 60 minutes of your time. In appreciation of your time commitment, you will receive remuneration of a \$10 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes. Results of the study will be shared through my dissertation, academic conference presentations and in peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, a final report will be distributed to all participants and the hockey club they are members of. Care will be taken in the choice of quotations used to avoid including any information that could inadvertently identify participants.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board. If you know a 13–17-year-old female hockey player who is interested in participating, please pass along the information letter attached to this email and have them contact me at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca to arrange an interview time that suits their schedule. I will then send a confirmation email and provide them with further information concerning the study. If you must cancel your appointment, please email me at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca.

Sincerely, *Haley Baxter*

Appendix D: Club Leader Interview Guide

Participants: Structured interviews of key organizational managers and staff from each organization (total 10 interviews) of 60 minutes duration each focused on the efficacy of current recruitment practices for female youth coaches and their understanding of the barriers faced in increasing participation rates for female youth in coaching roles.

Guiding Research Question(s): What recruitment strategies do hockey clubs use to entice female youth to volunteer as coaches?

Interview Questions:

1. What is your current role within your hockey organization?
2. Could you explain the model your sport uses to manage coach pathways?
3. What are the roles of the national association, provincial association, and clubs in managing coaches within this pathway model?
4. Could you explain how your sport recruits coaches?
5. Who are the key decision makers about coach recruitment in your sport?
6. Do you know how many female coaches currently coach within your sport organization/club?
7. Are there any efforts to specifically recruit female coaches?
8. Is there a target to increase the number of female coaches?
9. What sorts of strategies do hockey clubs use to entice female youth to volunteer as coaches?
10. Are there intentional programs or supports for female youth to gain coaching experience and certifications when Hockey Canada Policy allows (ages 14, certified at age 16)?

11. Are former female athletes within your club contacted to fill voluntary coaching roles?
12. What strategies do you think may help to support young females interested in pursuing future coaching opportunities?
 - a. What supports would your administrative role need to implement these suggested strategies?

Appendix E: Youth Participant Interview Guide

Participants: 20 current youth female hockey athletes for a total of 60 minutes each, focused on their individual perceptions of coaching pathways, the barriers faced in their development, their perceptions of organizational support required for their development, and the nature of the relationships required to support them as a future coach. The sample of youth athletes will include youth who play different standards of competition in sport and youth of different ages limited between the ages of 14 and 17 years old.

Research Question(s):

Are club recruitment strategies designed in relation to the motives female youth athletes express regarding volunteering?

What aspects of organizational support (or lack thereof) influence female youth hockey athletes' perceptions of pursuing coaching?

How might understandings of female youth perspectives of organizational support offer insights into how sport pathways can better support the well-being of female youth athletes seeking to develop as potential future sport coaches?

Interview Questions:

1. Could you state your age and what hockey team/level that you play?
2. Do you feel skilled and confident at your sport?
3. Overall, do you feel supported and cared for within your sport?
4. Do you feel that you are able to make your own choices with regards to your involvement in sport?
5. Do you feel that you are able and supported to pursue goals that are your own in your sport?
6. Do you think your hockey club cares about your well-being and values your contribution?

7. Does your hockey club take pride in your accomplishments?
8. Have you ever felt that your hockey club fails to appreciate any extra effort from you?
9. Do you have any experience volunteering within your hockey club?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about your experience?
10. Have you ever been asked to volunteer as a hockey coach?
 - a. If so, can you tell me what certification(s) you hold and share your experience?
11. Would you be interested in volunteering as a hockey coach now or in the future? Why or why not?
12. Has anyone ever spoken to you about coaching or about pursuing coaching in the future?
13. If you are interested in coaching in the future, would you ever consider coaching for the club you currently play in? Why or why not?
14. Do you know what steps you need to take to become a certified volunteer hockey coach?
 - a. If not, where would you think to go to look for this information?
15. Have you ever had a female hockey coach? What was this experience like?

Appendix F: Verbal Consent Form for Club Leaders

Consent Form Adult Participants (Club Leaders)

Before we begin the interview, I am going to ask you for your consent to participate in a study being conducted by myself (Haley Baxter, PhD Candidate) of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, along with Dr. Katie Misener, the PhD Supervisor and Associate Professor, Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies from the University of Waterloo. By agreeing to this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #45132). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca

Please let me know whether or not you consent to the following questions:

1. Have you read the information presented to you in the information letter?
☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Do you have any questions about the research?
☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Do you agree to have the interview video and audio recorded?
☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Do you agree to the use of quotations in any paper or publication resulting from this study with the understanding that a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name and that you may be referenced generally by your role (e.g., Club President)?
☐ YES ☐ NO
5. As a reminder, participation is voluntary, and you may end the interview by advising me of your decision at any time. If you have questions for the Research Ethics Board, contact information for the Office of Research Ethics is listed on the information letter that you received prior to this session. For all other questions about the study, you may contact me at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca]
☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name:

Date:

Appendix G: Verbal Consent Form for Youth Participants

Your parents have allowed me to talk to you about a project that I am working on. The project about your experiences playing hockey and your perspectives on whether you are interested in sport coaching. Before we begin the interview, I am going to ask you for your consent to participate in a study being conducted by myself (Haley Baxter, PhD Candidate) of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, along with Dr. Katie Misener, the PhD Supervisor and Associate Professor, Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies from the University of Waterloo. By agreeing to this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #45132). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca

Please let me know whether or not you consent to the following questions:

1. Have you read the information presented to you in the information letter?
☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Do you have any questions about the research?
☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Do you agree to have the interview video and audio recorded?
☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Do you agree to the use of quotations in any paper or publication resulting from this study with the understanding that a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name and that you may be referenced generally by your role (e.g., Club President)?
☐ YES ☐ NO
5. As a reminder, participation is voluntary, and you may end the interview by advising me of your decision at any time. If you have questions for the Research Ethics Board, contact information for the Office of Research Ethics is listed on the information letter that you received prior to this session. For all other questions about the study, you may contact me at haley.baxter@uwaterloo.ca]
☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant Name:

Date:

Appendix H: Verbal Appreciation Script

Verbal Appreciation Script

Thank you for participating in this interview! We appreciate you taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives.

We hope this research can help more community sport clubs better facilitate enhanced opportunities for girls who are youth athletes to consider pathways into sport coaching.