

1 A Creative Writing Case Study of Gender-Based Violence in Coach Education: Stacey's Story

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4 **Abstract**

5 Creative nonfiction writing is the literary technique employed in this article to explore insights
6 and assist our understanding of an “alleged” sexual assault in a sport coach education
7 environment. Creative nonfiction employs various narrative tools: characters, setting, figurative
8 language, sequences of events, plot, sub-plot, and dialogue, designed to render the sensitive and
9 controversial elements of sexual assault significant. Readers are, therefore, invited to engage
10 with *Stacey’s Story* and reflect on the actions of both the perpetrator(s) and the victim. While
11 there are risks associated with the sharing of stories, especially those which are considered
12 dangerous, it is envisaged that *Stacey’s Story* will be viewed as an opportunity to develop more
13 critical responses and advance our understanding of gender-based violence in sport.

14 *Keywords:* sexual assault, abuse, controversial and sensitive issues, sport, coach
15 education, narrative

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17 Story

18 The terminology used by scholars when referring to various forms of sexual harassment,
19 violence and assault in both the European Member States, and the United States of America
20 (USA), in and beyond sport contexts, varies considerably (Mergaert, Arnaut, Vertommen, &
21 Lang, 2016). In terms of consistency therefore, we accept the European Commission’s Proposal
22 for Strategic Actions on Gender Equality in Sport’s position, by adopting “gender-based
23 violence” as a proposition to capture any unwanted “sexual act” committed by a perpetrator.
24 According to Mergaert et al. (2016) gender-based violence is defined in these terms:

25 Violence directed against a person because of that person’s gender (including gender
26 identity/expression) *or* as violence that affects persons of a particular gender

27 disproportionality...sexual violence (including rape, sexual assault, abuse and
28 harassment) are considered a form of gender-based violence. (p. 2)

29 It is widely considered that gender-based violence occurs across all sports and at all
30 levels, but deliberate and targeted behavior is especially prevalent at the elite/professional ranks
31 (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2008; Caudwell, 2017, Fisher & Anders, 2019). In the USA for
32 example, the sexual abuse¹ of (mostly) female athletes, eventually lead to the prosecution and
33 criminal conviction of medical professional Larry Nassar, at the time, the team doctor for USA
34 gymnastics. The case of Larry Nassar acts as a stark illustration of both the physical and
35 psychological suffering which can occur at the hands of a sexual predator (Fisher & Anders,
36 2019). It also reminds us that there is no “typical” profile of a sexual abuser, and sexual offenses
37 vitiated by force, or the fear of force, can be perpetrated by individuals who typically rely on
38 upholding the highest levels of morality, trust and care (e.g., medical professionals). Similar to
39 the medical profession, sporting environments are also distinctive, in the sense that legitimate
40 physical touching can take place between the coach and the athlete, and there is no doubt, that
41 the spaces in which sport coaches inhabit are nested by complex social, political, historical,
42 cultural and gendered discourses (Fisher & Anders, 2019). Sporting environments, therefore,
43 provide a unique sociocultural context that offers the potential for gender-based violence to take
44 place (Douglas & Carless, 2009).

45 Theorization beyond sport reveals instances of gender-based violence occurring in both
46 university education settings and the workplace (Everbach, 2018; Phipps & Young, 2015). For
47 instance, gender-based violence is reported to permeate through universities’ sport and “lad”

¹ To trick, force or coerce a person into any sexual activity the person does not want, or is not sufficiently mature to consent to.

48 drinking cultures (Phipps & Young, 2015). Heavy drinking is considered an integral element of
49 university life and concerns have been raised about the potential violence, threats, and associated
50 risks that women face when entering historically hegemonic “masculine” domains (Rogan,
51 Piacentini, & Szmigin, 2016). Online forums such as Uni Lad and the Lad Bible are reported to
52 contribute to these sexual discourses and “raunch culture” (Rogan et al., 2016), with online
53 content, such as the example below serving as a disturbing illustration:

54 If the girl you’ve taken for a drink ... won’t ‘spread for your head’, think about this
55 mathematical statistic: 85 per cent of rape cases go unreported. That seems to be fairly
56 good odds. Uni Lad does not condone rape without saying ‘surprise’ (Cited in Phipps &
57 Young 2015; and in Caudwell, 2017, p. 69).

58 With this in mind, it is perhaps no surprise that the #MeToo movement, which helps to
59 support those who have suffered gender-based violence has been formed (MeToo, 2018).
60 (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2005; Owton, 2016). Nonetheless, achieving diversity in male-
61 dominated industries remains an enduring challenge. It is well established that due to the
62 ideological and cultural centrality of sport, not to mention the dominant masculine discourses
63 and power relations which permeate their way across regulatory sporting bodies, any substantive
64 shift in attitudes and inequalities towards women remains elusive (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân,
65 2016). Within the United Kingdom (UK) formal coach education is framed as a predominantly
66 male-dominated preserve, where women continue to present and negotiate their gendered
67 identities along a path of both acceptance and resistance (Norman, Rankin-Wright & Allison,
68 2018). More recently, coach education has been described as a harsh and uncaring environment
69 for women (Lewis, Roberts & Andrews, 2017; 2018). However, it is not generally regarded as
70 fertile terrain for gender-based violence to take place. Saying that, existing research does not

71 portray the coaching profession (in the UK at least) as a particularly positive environment for
72 underrepresented groups (i.e., women) with reported evidence of bullying, harassment and
73 intimidation (Norman et al., 2018).

74 In the following pages of this article, we therefore draw on events that allegedly took
75 place during a formal coach education course in the UK. In doing so, we offer a creative
76 nonfiction short story, which aims to give voice to the voiceless and the underrepresented. As
77 such, we are treating the process of research as an act of critical construction rather than
78 discovery. Ontologically then, our reality is positioned within a political, cultural, historical and
79 economic context (Mertens, 2008). Critical researchers have an agenda of change, and attempt to
80 improve the lives and situations of the underrepresented or those of whose affairs are oppressed
81 (Freire, 1996). To help inform this work we are drawn to the theoretical concept of hegemonic
82 masculinity (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity is a concept widely used to identify the
83 attitudes and practices among men who seek to propagate gender inequality, mostly involving
84 the use of power as a way to dominate women (Jewkes, Flood & Lang, 2015). Hegemonic
85 masculinity is thus described as:

86 A set of values, established by men in power that functions to include or exclude, and to
87 organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of
88 masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women), and the interplay
89 between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy (Jewkes &
90 Morrell, 2012, p. 40).

91 It is outside the scope of this article to provide a detailed theoretical overview of
92 hegemonic masculinity, for a review see Jewkes et al. (2015). However, in terms of positioning
93 hegemonic masculinity in historical sporting terms, its application has been employed in

117 selected secondary sources (not revealed to protect individual identities) and a secondary
118 synthesis of qualitative data captured during the project. These included: newspaper articles,
119 written correspondences between an alleged victim of gender-based violence and a national
120 sporting body, informal conversations with coaches regarding the case, conversations with
121 women who were the alleged victims of sexual assault, and a copy of a written complaint
122 alleging gender-based violence that was forwarded to a national sporting organization.

123 Like others, we had a moral and ethical duty to ensure the best possible use of the data
124 and given the experiences recounted in the story, we offer a “cloak of anonymity” in order to
125 protect both the worthy and the unworthy (Douglas & Carless, 2009). The writing process
126 followed a multi-staged, iterative course of drafting, re-drafting, editing and story engineering
127 (Vickers, 2014). Partial happenings, fragmented memories, and echoes of conversations were
128 layered against conventional, creative literary writing techniques (Sparkes, 2007). For instance,
129 we make no assertions that scenes as described actually took place, or that the characters
130 portrayed actually said what they are reported to have said. All events as described (i.e., physical
131 spaces, plot, conflict and the composite characters) were captured in our data, however, we have
132 simplified certain elements into a story telling narrative, designed to portray an alternative
133 picture of hegemonic masculinity in coach education. Thus while certain encounters and
134 character development in this story have been imagined, that events in this story occurred as
135 described is not in doubt, the information presented is based on our own existing research (Finley
136 & Finley, 1999). Significantly, we have deliberately chosen to adopt some creative license by
137 mixing up the language features, metaphors, and embellishing or exaggerating the thread of our
138 narrative (Bachelard, 1964; Vickers, 2014). Our aim here, was to not to retell “life as lived”
139 (Finley & Finley, 1999, p. 318), but to create a story that was useful in raising important

140 questions, and by weaving the empirical, historical, imaginative and reflective, create a text that
141 allows us to know more about those who we choose to write about (Finley & Finley, 1999). In
142 this sense, the use of narrative in scholarly work is not new. Academics have made important
143 contributions to often complex and controversial topics by synthesizing existing works of fiction,
144 by shaping their own, or by adopting the tradecraft of fictional writing to allow nonfiction to
145 breath (e.g., Beames & Pike, 2008; Brackenbridge & Fasting, 2005; Douglas & Carless, 2009;
146 Dzikus, 2012; Pelias, 2004). Researchers adopting this genre create vicarious versions of reality
147 inviting the reader to inhabit the experiences of both the individual and the unique (Vickers,
148 2014). Creative nonfiction captures what Gilbourne and Richardson (2006) refer to as moments,
149 offering instants obtained from countless techniques of fiction (e.g., contextualized vernacular
150 language, composite characters, dialogue, metaphor, allusions, flashbacks and flash forwards,
151 tone shifts and so on) to communicate considerations, results and key findings in compelling and
152 emotionally vibrant ways (Smith, 2013).

153 Ultimately, the implementation of creative nonfiction in academic terms is only
154 warranted “when employed in the service of a legitimate research purpose. That purpose is the
155 generation of a conversation about important educational questions” (Barone, 1997, p. 223), or,
156 in our case, the pursuit of emotional truth or descriptions of unwanted sexual attention. More
157 recently, Carless, Sparkes, Douglas and Cooke (2014) have offered the following criteria for
158 judging the quality of creative literary fiction: is the topic under scrutiny timely, significant and
159 interesting? Does it contribute practically and methodologically to our understanding of social
160 life? Does the study achieve its primary goals? Does the work embody a sense of lived
161 experience? Does the work generate new questions? Do the stories hang together? Do they invite
162 an interpretive response from the reader? Are they credible and do they work? Does the work

163 resonate at an intellectual and emotional level? With these thoughts in mind the primary goals of
164 this article were to (a) show the emotional truth and effects of gender-based violence within a
165 coach education setting, and (b) illustrate the potential for creative nonfiction as a literary tool to
166 enable readers to understand an incident of gender-based violence from the perspective of the
167 victim. What follows is Stacey's story, however, we warn readers that the story does contain
168 some explicit sexual language and a bar scene that some readers may find distressing.

169 **The Location**

170 The Academy for Coaching Leadership and Excellence (ACLE)

171 **The Time**

172 Several years ago

173 **The Characters²**

174 Stacey—Female coach.

175 Tony—Ex-professional male athlete and coach.

176 Steve—Male coach and ex-police officer.

177 Gavin—Male coach education tutor.

178 **Stacey's Story**

179 I didn't open the letter, not straight away. Instead I placed it on the kitchen table and
180 stared at the crisp, white looking envelope. I knew straight away who it was from. The
181 distinctive logo, courtesy of the organization's franking machine was immediately recognisable.
182 The cause of my hesitancy lies with the decision, hitherto unknown, buried deep inside the
183 envelope. The unknown question: will I be good enough? The longer I stare, the more

² All the characters names described below are pseudonyms.

184 uncomfortable I feel. My stomach tightens, my heart is doing somersaults. It was as though the
185 envelope was goading me, whispering to me:

186 *Go on, open me...if you dare.*

187 You see, I have been here before. My previous applications—all rejected—not good
188 enough. In my own mind I had convinced myself that this would be the final time. Never again! I
189 could do no more. I had put in all the necessary hard work: the endless hours of planning,
190 coaching in the wind and the rain, the submission of the never-ending paperwork, attendance at
191 preparation courses, the accumulation of evidence, the completion of formative assessments, and
192 summative assessments. The tutor feedback though was always the same: *Not enough...not*
193 *working at a high enough level...perhaps in a two or three years.*

194 If I'm honest, I think it had something to do with me being a woman. I know what you're
195 thinking. I didn't want to use the gender card, you must believe me when I say that, but some of
196 my male colleagues were accepted first-time, no questions asked, but then again, they were
197 former professional athletes. A glance up at the clock that hangs above the kitchen door. I need
198 to open this thing, otherwise I will be late for work. With my eyes closed and with a deep intake
199 of breath, I tear open the envelope. I remember my hands were shaking. I don't recall my reasons
200 for this, but I started reading the letter from the bottom of the page. Beginning with the name of
201 the signatory, I scanned through the document for information, clues, anything for some
202 indication. It didn't take long before the text started to filter its way through my senses sending
203 messages to my brain:

204 *Congratulations...*

205 *Confirm your attendance...*

206 *We look forward to seeing you...*

207 At long last, I had done it. My hard work and efforts had been rewarded.

208 I had been accepted.

209 The journey to the ACLE was largely uneventful and the traffic on the road was kind for
210 a change. It was the height of mid-summer and the sun was making an impromptu, but welcome
211 appearance to what had been hitherto a very wet August. On arrival, I was in complete awe of
212 the surroundings. The grounds were manicured with immaculate lawns as far as the eye could
213 see; herbaceous borders were ablaze with an abundance of colour; further back, evergreens
214 competed for space with the sycamores and the cherry blossoms; together their expansive
215 canopies cascaded an intricate matrix of temporal patterns onto the lush green turf. The spectrum
216 of organic colour was in contrast to the white facade belonging to the Georgian mansion style
217 hotel, which loomed impressively at the end of the expansive driveway. It was eerily quiet, the
218 only sound being the crunch of the gravel resonating against the tires of my car. I complied with
219 the speed limit and followed the signs to: guest parking.

220 After checking in, unpacking and a quick change of clothes, it was time for the first
221 meeting: welcome and general introduction. I found the meeting room with ease, and as I stood
222 in the doorway my initial impression was one of fear and trepidation. Professional athletes both
223 past and present were helping themselves to the complimentary coffee or mingling with
224 members of the tutor team. I seem to remember there was a lot of handshaking, back-slapping,
225 good humour and laughter. From a distance it appeared as though everyone knew one another;
226 familiar, comfortable, and at ease in one another's company. In contrast, I felt like an imposter; it
227 looked as though a squad mentality was already forming. I felt like an outsider: *I looked like an*
228 *outsider.*

229 The room reeked of professionalism and superiority. On the walls large plasma screens
230 were projecting images of community coaches working with younger athletes followed by
231 professional coaches working with the National team. Classical music accompanied the video
232 montages creating a relaxed, sedate background atmosphere. Name badges, complimentary
233 training uniforms and resource materials were stacked neatly on a large wooden table. No
234 expense had been spared. I recognised some of the other coaches in the room. They looked lean
235 and athletic. Wearing training uniforms with their organizational logo or expensive designer
236 clothing, they appeared somewhat incongruous when compared to the other coaches or the
237 course tutors who cut a much fuller figure around the mid-riff. Thinking back, there were
238 probably more tutors on the course than actual coaches. Over the week, I think we had probably
239 15 or 20 tutors, all male. They clearly didn't expect any women to apply, as all the pre-course
240 literature adopted the pronoun: *he*.

241 The course itself was both physically and mentally challenging. Early starts, coupled with
242 late finishes; in the classroom one minute, quickly followed by practical coaching sessions and
243 then back in the classroom for reflection and analysis. The itinerary was very full on; some days
244 we were in the classroom until late in the evening. I thought I coped pretty well with the
245 coaching side of things, but I was a little disappointed to be constantly referred to as a *fella* or a
246 *lad* and when it was my turn to coach the course tutors did nothing to stop *some* of the other
247 coaches fooling around. I was made to look foolish on a number of occasions, and whilst I
248 respected their status as former professional athletes, I did wonder whether they could show me a
249 little more respect, especially Tony, who seemed to take great pleasure and satisfaction when he
250 messed up parts of my coaching session. On one occasion during a technical practice I overheard
251 him say: *I'd love to give her one*, and when I turned around he was mimicking a humping action

252 with his hips. It was both juvenile and humiliating. This was in full view of Gavin the lead tutor
253 but he just smiled and said nothing. There were other occasions where I could sense Tony had
254 ‘crossed the line’ with the other coaches; pulling down other people’s shorts or crouching down
255 behind someone in order for someone else to push them over. It started off quite jovial and
256 playful but after a while, when some others were fatigued how it had the potential to develop into
257 more destructive violence.

258 To say a drinking culture existed on the course is somewhat of an understatement. After
259 the first few days it was apparent who the drinkers were. The absence of certain individuals at
260 breakfast was the first clue. The red eyes, croaky voices, vacating the pitch to throw up or even
261 in some cases, throwing up at the side of the pitch, was the other. It did leave me wondering how
262 they coped, especially when we entered the part of the course where we were required to conduct
263 small episodic coaching sessions. Gavin however employed some creative license to the delivery
264 timetable, especially when some of the group were so hungover they didn’t even show up. This
265 did lead to some tension and frustration amongst the group. Thinking back, I guess I was lucky;
266 as it didn’t affect me, but I did feel sorry for some of the guys who were required to deliver on
267 the spot sessions with inadequate numbers, or attempt to motivate the make-believe athletes who
268 were so ill, they could hardly move.

269 Tony was usually the orchestrator of a night out in town, or a late night drinking session
270 in the hotel bar. To be fair, Gavin did or said nothing to discourage the drinking, and remained
271 aloof from some of the antics and shenanigans which were going on. You know, the usual stuff:
272 putting all the drinks on someone else’s room tab, playing drinking games, the odd forfeit here
273 and there. In the evening it was round after round, and for those guys who didn’t drink or who
274 were on a tight budget, it was a bit awkward. Plus, when they had consumed a few drinks the

275 language tended to be of a sexual nature, and if I was in the vicinity I noticed how some of the
276 group looked a little embarrassed, and so I would call it a night. In all honesty, I didn't object to
277 the early nights as there was enough work for me to get on with; preparation tasks for the
278 following day, background reading that sort of thing.

279 For the final evening we were booked into the gourmet restaurant, for what was
280 advertised as a gala dinner but in reality, it wasn't. The pre-course material made reference to the
281 event and reminded us to pack appropriate smart casual clothing including amongst other things:
282 *a shirt and tie*. As a rule, I don't normally wear business style clothes, being more content in a
283 training uniform or a casual pair of jeans, but on this occasion, I was pleased to make an
284 exception. I had packed my navy blue suit, normally reserved for weddings, interviews or a visit
285 to the bank manager! I had taken care with my hair and make-up, nothing over the top, but I was
286 pleased with my appearance. A crisp white blouse and a pair of heeled shoes completed my attire
287 for the evening. Following the meal, we all decamped into the various bars and lounge areas.
288 Tony was really going for it, ordering bottles of wine and beer on his American Express card. He
289 had quite an audience and was seemingly enjoying the attention. He was reliving some anecdotes
290 from his time as a former professional athlete. It was noticeable how his speech was beginning to
291 slur and his eyes were becoming glazed. As the time approached eleven, we were asked by the
292 hotel staff to move into another lounge. It was smaller and contained a number of regal looking
293 leather chairs and sofas, together with the wooden panelling it looked more like a private
294 gentleman's club than a hotel lounge. Tony was now ordering another bottle of red wine, some
295 of the group were calling it a night. He offered me a drink. I told him I would have one glass for
296 the road. Steve and Gary were sitting opposite. I had enjoyed Steve's company during the course,
297 but Gary was a bit on the strange side. He was from London and he kept using cockney rhyming

298 slang, which at first was funny, but after a while it started to sound immature and annoying. He
299 was a bit awkward on the social side. He was a bit too sure of himself and was only happy when
300 putting others down, making inappropriate lewd comments, or fooling around during my
301 coaching sessions. When Tony reappeared he was carrying a tray of Jäger bombs, which he
302 placed on the table before sitting next to me on the sofa. He offered one to me—I refused. He
303 placed his arm on the back of the sofa, and not for the first time during the course I felt uneasy in
304 his company. The topic of the conversation was beginning to become a little uncomfortable.
305 References and innuendos of an explicit sexual nature were becoming more frequent. Tony
306 laughed as he cracked another derogatory remark about one of his previous conquests, while
307 staring at my breasts for longer than was necessary. He attempted to top up my drink, however,
308 this time I reached forward and placed my hand over my glass. He looked angry and offended. I
309 could tell by the expression etched across his face that he was not used to a woman turning him
310 down. I remember removing my glass from the table and placing it down by my feet to prevent
311 him trying again and caught him leaning forward leering at my legs. Steve and Gary who were
312 sat opposite were trying to send messages on their phones, but with little success. Gary kept
313 throwing his head back and would fall asleep for short periods, before sitting bolt upright as
314 though he had experienced an electric shock. Steve then stood up and excused himself, he made
315 some reference to a python! Which I didn't understand. Gary now asleep was snoring softly. It
316 was well after midnight and the lounge bar which was now closed was otherwise empty. I had
317 finished my drink and was reaching for my jacket, which I had draped over the side-arm of the
318 sofa, when suddenly I felt a hand squeeze my breast. At first I wasn't sure what was happening
319 but then I felt another hand, this time on the underside of my thigh. I was being pulled, forced
320 violently onto my back. It was Tony. He was pushing hard against me. My neck was jammed

321 between the intersections of the sofa, and he was trying to force himself on top of me. I could
322 feel his stubble rubbing against the nape of my neck, it was rough and coarse like sandpaper.
323 Even though I turned my face in the opposite direction, I could smell his alcohol fuelled breath.
324 He was trying to kiss me. He pulled my face towards him. His hand was pressing hard against
325 the inside of my thigh, lifting up my skirt. With his other hand he was trying to pull my legs
326 apart. My response was ineffective; I just wasn't strong enough. His hand pushed further up my
327 thigh reaching for my underwear. I struggled. I really did. I tried punching his back, but it was
328 pointless, he was just too strong. He groped up my skirt and pulled at my underwear, he was
329 panting heavily, feral—out of control. His watch caught my pubic hair. He placed his fingers
330 inside me, he was beginning to hurt me...I asked him to stop. I wanted him to stop. Terrified, I
331 begged for him to stop.

332 He refused. In the end I had no choice, and I give in to the inevitable.

333 The next thing I remember was shouting—lots of shouting. I glanced up and saw Steve
334 dragging Tony across the room by the scruff of his neck. He threw him hard against the bar and
335 started grabbing him by the throat. I didn't know at the time, but Steve was an ex-policeman.
336 Gary now awake, had a look of confusion ingrained across his drunken face as he stared at my
337 exposed thighs and torn underwear. I pulled my skirt down trying hard to ignore the red
338 handprints branded onto my skin. I reached for my jacket and raced out of the bar. I rushed back
339 to my room in a state of shock, confused, and unsure about what to do next. I slammed the door
340 shut and collapsed to the floor, my body was shaking and I wanted to vomit. I sat with my back
341 pressed up against the bed with my legs tucked tight into my chin and sobbed and sobbed. Tears
342 rolled down my face in torrents. I was inconsolable, drowning in a sea of desperation, guilt and
343 shame. *I was a victim.* That's what they would call me. They would say I brought this on myself,

344 that I encouraged him. For me though, this was not a scar showing competition. *I was a victim.*
345 Everyone's a victim these days. It's the only way to get your voice heard; use your gender card
346 that's what they would say, but I didn't want that level of protection—I'm better than that. I want
347 to feel protected. They would say, you can't say anything to her because she is a victim.

348 A knock at the door.

349 I could hear my name being called, repeated over and over again. It took some time
350 before I recognised Gavin's voice. He asked if he could speak to me, I agreed. Steve had woken
351 Gavin and told him what he had witnessed in the bar. Gavin was visibly shocked. I could tell by
352 the manner in which his voice trembled and the confused expression on his face that he was out
353 of his depth. He was really apologetic; but he could barely look me in the eye. Steve then
354 knocked on the door, and asked if I was okay. He said he wanted to stay and offer his support,
355 but Gavin told him it was not necessary. Steve however was insistent, he got his way in the end,
356 especially when he mentioned that he was a policeman in a former life. Steve was brilliant; calm,
357 reassuring, but also pragmatic. He asked me if I wanted to press charges and picked up a
358 notepad. Gavin's face was a picture when he heard this, he was shitting himself! I told Steve I
359 wasn't sure, that I needed time to think. Then Gavin reminded both of us that Tony was married,
360 with three young children. He looked straight at me when he reminded me that Tony was a well-
361 known former professional athlete and that the press would have a field day if this ever leaked
362 out. I became upset and angry, especially when Gavin concluded that: I leave the course and go
363 home, for my own good. I started to cry again, I couldn't understand why I was the one being
364 asked to leave. By this time Steve was sitting next to me on the bed convincing me that I had
365 done nothing wrong. He offered me an endless supply of tissues, from a box he had rescued from
366 the bathroom. He challenged Gavin, again and again, asking him why it was not Tony being the

367 one asked to go home. I recall he gave some pathetic excuse about him not being in a fit state to
368 drive. I knew this was bullshit and so did Gavin.

369 The following morning, I woke early. I say woke. The truth is that I didn't actually sleep.
370 My body ached and my mind was racing. I was still reliving the events of the night before. I
371 spent most of the night crying, staring at the ceiling, thinking about the consequences for both
372 me and Tony. I blamed myself and I was angry for not putting up a stronger fight. I was angry
373 because I should have done more. I am not the type of person to run away from things but I
374 couldn't face going to the restaurant for breakfast. I wasn't hungry, plus I was worried, you
375 know, just in case I bumped into Tony. The first person I spoke to that morning was Steve.
376 Thoughtfully he had brought me some pastries from the dining room and checked in to see if I
377 was okay, but I had no appetite for food. It was his idea that I attend the last classroom session; a
378 wrap-up before the final departure.

379 The classroom that morning was eerily quiet, the air full of tension. It was such a contrast
380 to the welcome event only days earlier which was full of laughter and bonhomie. I don't think it
381 was paranoia on my part, but I got the feeling that word had leaked out, though I couldn't
382 determine whether the other coaches were supportive of me or not, not that it mattered. Steve
383 was sitting alongside me; he was the only person who spoke to me that morning. The atmosphere
384 in the room was awful, it was like a funeral. I was treated like a leper. Then, to my surprise,
385 Tony suddenly got up out of his seat and casually strolled to the front of the classroom where he
386 spoke briefly to Gavin who was busy sorting out the course evaluation forms. Deep in
387 conversation, I remember Gavin turning his back on the group; presumably to mask his facial
388 expression, but it was obvious from his incessant nodding that whatever was being discussed had

389 his agreement. After a short discussion Gavin placed the evaluation forms back down on the
390 table and turned off both his computer and projection screen, and cleared his throat.

391 “Listen everyone, can I please have your attention for a second. Last night there was bit
392 of an incident in the bar, and Tony here would just like to say a few words,” he said.

393 I remember sitting with my head in my hands, in a state of disbelief and embarrassment.
394 The discomfort was causing my skin to burn up. Heat was radiating from my cheeks, the trickle
395 of cool, wet tears ineffective. Silently, I was thinking, oh no. Please, no. Not here. Not here, not
396 in full view of everyone. I wanted to shout out: just leave it, its fine, but the words did not come,
397 and anyway, it was too late: Tony was already speaking:

398 “Listen *fellas*, last night after most of you had gone to bed, there was a little
399 misunderstanding in the bar involving myself and Stacey. I’ll be honest, I don’t remember much
400 as I was pretty wasted, but it turns out I made a bit of a *dick* of myself. I’m not proud of what
401 happened. I let myself down, and my family down, but above all, I let down the people sitting
402 here in this room. The people who I have enjoyed working with over the past week. I acted like a
403 right idiot and I hope you will accept my apology. I really didn’t mean to cause any offence or
404 upset anyone.”

405 To my complete astonishment, the room then exploded into a round of spontaneous
406 applause. To add to my sense of incredulity someone even managed a wolf-whistle. At first,
407 Tony looked embarrassed and uneasy with the adulation, but then he started to receive the
408 applause with acclaim, even managing a modest wave to his adoring audience, it was as though
409 he had just been presented with an award. He even managed a nod and a subtle wink in my
410 direction. I was flabbergasted, speechless, hurt and angry. He was being treated like a hero. He
411 didn’t even admit to what he had done. Nobody apart from Steve spoke to me as we departed the

435 violence is that the behavior experienced is not desired and instead is perceived as threatening,
436 degrading, insulting and offensive. Thus gender-based violence is not only a violation of a
437 person's body, but of their mind as well, and can lead to a number of debilitating health
438 outcomes. For instance, previous research has suggested that 31% of sexual assault victims will
439 display posttraumatic symptoms (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, & Seymour, 1992). Whereas others have
440 reported that victims of sexual assault develop depressive symptoms (Kucharska, 2017). More
441 worryingly, being a victim of gender-based violence is reported to be a strong predictor of future
442 sexual assaults (Gidyez, Coble, Latham & Layman, 1993).

443 Stacey's story reads similarly to findings in Fasting, Brackenridge and Walseth (2007) as
444 it shows us how Stacey was subjected to a range of humiliating and degrading forms of behavior:
445 sexual innuendo, jokes of a sexual nature, leering, and unwanted physical sexual attention that
446 eventually leads to a penetrative sexual assault. Similarly, these actions help to illustrate how
447 men are able to conform to hegemonic views of masculinity. Of interest here is that these
448 behaviors occurred during times which could be defined as both formal and social situations. We
449 know that gender-based violence can be prevalent in a range of settings and is not unique to sport
450 (for example Rogan et al. (2016) observations about marketing drinking venues in the UK). By
451 removing herself from the situation or laughing off the jokes rather than confronting or reporting
452 the behavior, Stacey exhibits a common reaction to such a situation. As the scene in the bar
453 escalates, Stacey is heard "asking...wanting...[and] begging for him to stop." The story
454 demonstrates how Tony appears to normalize his behavior and avoids taking responsibility for
455 his own violence. He doesn't go as far as blame the victim, but the lack of support provided by
456 Gavin rationalizes a hegemonic masculine view that the event does not need to be taken
457 seriously. Unfortunately, the gender-based violence entwined within the story is not unique to a

458 sporting setting but is all too familiar within the wider contemporary society (Scott, Crompton &
459 Lyonette, 2010).

460 Collinson and Collinson (1989) stated that “men’s sexuality and organizational power are
461 inextricably linked” (p. 107), and unwanted conduct of a sexual nature often reflects an abuse of
462 power and is primarily about men exercising their power over women (Wilson & Thompson,
463 2001). In Stacey’s story we show how Tony’s playful behavior during the practical coaching
464 sessions (i.e., short pulling) has the potential to become violent. Here the story illustrates how
465 men who do not use “serious violence” can be responsible for condoning less severe forms of
466 violence in order to avoid group exclusion without losing face. Men often provoke notions of
467 hegemonic forms of masculinity by presenting notions of an entitlement to women’s bodies. For
468 instance, when Tony was caught “leering at Stacey’s legs” and when he attempted to “grab her
469 breasts.”

470 Also captured in the story are references to those individuals in a position of
471 organizational authority (i.e., Gavin) who did not respond appropriately to the situation or the
472 seriousness of what took place and acted as a bystander (Fisher & Anders, 2019). This is
473 juxtaposed against the uncertainty demonstrated by Stacey as to whether to press charges against
474 Tony or not. The decision of whether to report a sexual assault is a complex one (Hunt et al.,
475 2010). For instance, it is well established that not all organizations have a transparent policy or
476 procedure for dealing with potential sexual assault complaints (Hunt et al., 2010). The situation
477 for Stacey was intensified by the sporting organization’s apparent concern that the alleged
478 assault may get out and that as the alleged perpetrator was a former professional athlete that the
479 “press would have a field day.” Readers are, we hope, intrigued by how Stacey was also made to
480 become part of a conspiracy to protect the honour of the offender should the incident become

481 publicly known (for an example of ideas of good character that arise in sexual assault cases see
482 Inglis & MacKeogh, 2012). The position adopted by Gavin to offer immediate protection to
483 Tony is a worryingly common occurrence in sexual assault cases and one which serves as an
484 illustration of how sporting organizations may need to change and greatly consider training their
485 workforce on gender-based violence.

486 Interestingly, Steve, who was an ex-policeman, was the only person who seemed to be
487 aware of the serious nature of what had taken place and by shaping the story in this way may
488 help to bridge the research-practice divide. Whether gender-based violence training is considered
489 important enough by organizations to include on coach education programs is debatable (Fasting
490 & Brackenridge, 2009). What is clear, is that in the UK at least, a recent number of high-profile
491 sports have seen accusations of alleged gender-based violence appearing in the media (e.g.,
492 England women's football, bobsleigh, cycling and canoeing teams) and with the evidence cited
493 previously from the case of Larry Nassar in the USA, then perhaps further training is needed.
494 Despite the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Equality Act (2010) in the UK, there are still
495 examples of inequality in which women still have to prove their worth compared to men (Lewis
496 et al., 2017; 2018). Young (2010) also argued that the “aspects of a woman's body most gazed at
497 and discussed, and in terms of which she herself all too often measures her own worth, are those
498 which least suggest action – breasts, buttocks, etc.” (p. 14). She goes on to comment that
499 “contemporary film, advertising, popular literature and periodicals, and countless other media
500 objectify the female body as sexy, passive flesh...making them desirable.” A point echoed by
501 Rogan et al. (2016) in relation to marketing in the night time economy. Sport has often been seen
502 as a functional and positive environment, and the darker side of sport (i.e., sexual exploitation),
503 is often under researched (Owton, 2016), apart from a few exceptions (e.g., Fasting et al., 2007;

527 withhold her story. Stacey's story is, therefore, an example of an attempt to cover up gender-
528 based violence in addition to exposing a highly heteronormative and aggressively masculine
529 environment. Due to recent sexual abuse scandals in the USA, we are even more aware of the
530 potential impact of gender-based violence in sporting contexts (e.g., the Larry Nassar scandal).

531 In the context of advancing this debate, we recommend that there is a need to offer
532 participants who are attending coach education the opportunity to learn more about the potential
533 for gender-based violence to take place, in order to help keep both athletes and fellow coaches
534 safe (see Fasting et al., 2007). We believe some exciting, creative opportunities to move this
535 work forward exist. First, gender transformative programs such as those described in *The Macho*
536 *Factory* in Sweden offer exciting possibilities (Jewkes et al., 2015). It is outside the scope of this
537 article to describe *The Macho Factory* in depth, but in short this educational program uses
538 ethnomethodological material and two short films to illustrate men's violence against women.
539 Here the aims are to scrutinize accepted accounts of violence towards women and understand
540 new ways to think and act. We endorse the idea of "forum theatre" as a potential vehicle to make
541 this happen and will explore possibilities of shaping this work into what Denzin (2017) referred
542 to as a "performance-centered pedagogy." We are then, in the words of Denzin (2017, p. 14)
543 pushing back against "racial, sexual, and class boundaries..." and by talking about these
544 "...painful experiences..." we are framing them as a performance-centered pedagogy as a mode
545 of developing our understanding of provocative and sensitive topics. From a Freirean perspective
546 as pedagogues we are trained to respect the architecture and performance in the classroom, and
547 actively work on opportunities for incorporating different forms of knowledge. What we are
548 asking is whether this performance event can contribute to broader societal change in hegemonic
549 masculine domains such as coach education? At the very least, at a discursive level, it offers a

550 pragmatic, preliminary first step about how to raise issues surrounding gender equity and gender-
551 based violence. As others have stated elsewhere (i.e., Jewkes et al., 2015), such changes will not
552 happen in a vacuum or in isolation, and so we call on sporting organizations and governing
553 bodies of sport to take a more comprehensive, longer term view by considering suitable
554 interventions that lead to the eradication of gender-based violence in sport.

555 **Declaration of Interests Statement**

556 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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