

1 **Exploring how well UK coach education meets the needs of women sports coaches**

2

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4 **Abstract**

5 Inclusive and equitable processes are important to the development of sports coaching. The aim of
6 this study was to explore how well UK coach education meets the needs of women sports coaches in
7 order to make recommendations to further enhance the engagement of, and support for, aspiring
8 and existing women coaches. The national governing bodies (NGBs) of four sports (Cycling,
9 Equestrian, Gymnastics and Rowing) volunteered to participate and semi-structured interviews using
10 the tenants of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within a Self Determination Theory (SDT) framework were
11 undertaken with 23 coaches, eight coach educators and five NGB officers.

12 The data themed into an analytic structure derived from SDT comprising 'Autonomy: Freedom to
13 coach', 'Coaching competence', and 'Relatedness and belonging'. The coaches perceived potential
14 benefit from enhanced relatedness and belonging within their sport with the findings suggesting that
15 NGBs should embrace coach-led decision making in terms of the developmental topics which are
16 important and should adopt the development of competence, rather than assessing technical
17 understanding, as the foundational principle of more inclusive coach education. Future research
18 should investigate the impact of the inclusive practices which are recommended within this
19 investigation such as the softening of the technocratic focus of formal coach education.

20

21 Key words: Appreciative Inquiry; Coach development; Inclusion; Female; Sports coaching

22 Introduction

23 The *UK Coaching Framework* (sports coach UK, 2012) is designed to provide the coaching
24 industry in the UK with a common vision to drive the development of excellent coaching practice
25 and places strong emphasis on inclusive and equitable processes being pivotal. The purpose of the
26 *UK Coaching Framework* is to aid National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) in the construction of
27 their coach education pathways through which individuals will become qualified to coach in a
28 particular sport; a central component of this framework is the desire to ensure a diverse workforce
29 (sports coach UK, 2012). However, recent empirical evidence would seem to indicate that little has
30 changed regarding the under-representation of women since the publication of the *Coaching*
31 *Workforce* (North, 2009). In 2009, North (2009) reported that, of the UK's approximately 1.1 million
32 coaches, only 31% were female, compared to a national population proportion of 49%. Two years
33 later, sports coach UK (2011) reported the 31% figure remained unchanged, adding that only 18% of
34 qualified coaches were female. The under-representation of women in coaching is not solely
35 confined to the UK; approximately 21% of coaches within the USA are female which, alarmingly,
36 represents a modest decline since Title IX (Moran-Miller & Flores, 2011). Acosta & Carpenter (2014)
37 reported that, in the USA, around 20% of all head coaches of intercollegiate sport are female.
38 Furthermore, Acosta & Carpenter (2014) reported that in 1972, when Title IX was enacted, 90.0% of
39 female teams were coached by women; by 2014, that figure dropped to 43.4%. The decreasing
40 number of female head coaches in women's sports potentially leads to a dearth of women in
41 decision-making roles and also hinders the perception of autonomy (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012).
42 Furthermore, the under-representation of women coaching in the UK is further emphasized by
43 North (2009) who reported that just 18% of 'qualified' coaches were female illustrating an even
44 greater dearth of female coaches actually undertaking formal education and certification in this
45 field.

46 The nature and form of coach education has been debated extensively in recent literature
47 (see, for example, Cushion et al., 2010; Piggott, 2012) although examination of this discussion

48 provides only limited insight into the particular perspective of women coaches. A considerable
49 proportion of the recent sports coach education literature adopts the theoretical framework
50 originally proposed by Coombs & Ahmed (1974) which described formal, informal and non-formal
51 educational activities. Formal educational activities include accredited courses such as United
52 Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) endorsed coaching awards and Higher Education degree
53 programmes (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006). The UKCC is an endorsement system administered
54 by sports coach UK in an attempt to provide consistency between the levels of coaching awards
55 offered by national governing bodies (NGBs) (Piggott, 2015). Non-formal educational activities
56 comprise elements such as additional workshops and Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) events,
57 whilst informal activities include reflection, experiential practice and mentoring (Cushion et al.,
58 2010). The value of bespoke learning journeys, which actively engage participants through a range
59 of formal, informal and non-formal opportunities, has been an important theme of contemporary
60 coach education research (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009). A considerable volume of research
61 has reported that coaching practitioners place little value in formal NGB awards (Cushion, Armour,
62 & Jones, 2003; Nelson et al., 2006; Piggott, 2012, 2015), although there is little evidence linking
63 competencies with such learning opportunities (Cushion et al., 2010; Lyle, Sue, & North, 2010;
64 Nelson et al., 2006; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2013; Turner & Nelson, 2009) or whether such values
65 and perceptions hold true specifically for women. Irrespective, formal coach education has been
66 reported to be less valued than experiential learning and other informal opportunities with the
67 benefits to elite coaches being particularly questionable (Cushion et al., 2010; Gilbert & Trudel,
68 1999; Lyle et al., 2010; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2006; Nelson et al., 2013; Turner & Nelson,
69 2009). In particular, Piggott (2012) found that formal coach education courses which were delivered
70 akin to 'closed circles' of knowledge and providing a prescriptive model of practice to be followed
71 were reported, by coaches of a range of experience and qualification, to be useless. Extending this
72 work, Piggott (2015) proposed a philosophical agenda for reform of coach education suggesting that
73 NGBs adopt an 'Open Society' framework encouraging the democratization of educational

74 encounters. An Open Society educational model embraces, amongst many others notions,
75 individual autonomy, the fallibility of institutions, tolerance and critical rationalism (Piggott, 2015) all
76 of which would point towards a greater reliance on informal learning. Informal learning experiences
77 which coaches have been reported to perceive as beneficial to their development include unofficial
78 mentoring (Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009), knowledge gained as a performer (Jones, Armour, &
79 Potrac, 2003), and acting as an apprentice to a more experienced coach (Cassidy, 2010) amongst
80 many others. Some research has reported that non-formal learning activities have had a positive
81 impact on coach learning (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006; Kidman & Carlson, 1998), although the rigour
82 and breadth of these studies has been questioned (Cushion et al., 2010). How informal and non-
83 formal coach education is perceived by women is relatively unknown.

84 Previous research that has focused on the phenomenon of the under-representation of
85 women in coaching has commonly reported key themes purporting a culture of hegemonic
86 masculinity, covert discrimination, time constraints and an apparent lack of desire from women to
87 seek advancement or high level appointments (Cunningham, Doherty, & Gregg, 2007; Fielding-Lloyd
88 & Meân, 2011; Norman, 2010, 2013; Shaw & Slack, 2002). sports coach UK (2013) conducted a
89 preliminary investigation into the experiences and perceptions of women towards coach education
90 identifying that women highlighted barriers similar to those relating to their involvement in coaching
91 more generally. The sports coach UK (2013) report is similar in both disposition and methodology to
92 much of the research already discussed concerning under-represented groups in coaching (Fielding-
93 Lloyd & Meân, 2011; Lewis, Roberts, & Andrews, 2015; Norman, 2010, 2013; Shaw & Slack, 2002)
94 but also in relation to female athletes (Norman & French, 2013) being primarily focused on the
95 deficiencies of provision and culture. Fielding-Lloyd & Meân (2011) also discovered deficiencies in
96 relation to coach education provision for women within one County Football Association in the UK.
97 Fielding-Lloyd & Meân (2011) and argued that the organization's devolvement of responsibility to
98 individual women coaches to access open-entry (available to all) courses was both discriminatory
99 and victimizing. LaVoi (2016) suggested that a different approach to analyzing the deficiencies of the

100 current systems and culture is required and, furthermore, are critical of targeted interventions which
101 focus merely on increasing the number of female coaches and the volume of opportunities, arguing
102 such approaches fail to address the underlying, fundamental, issues and thus merely attempt to
103 cover-over the problem rather than addressing the root causes.

104 Adopting Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, Graham, McKenna, & Fleming (2013) also reported
105 concerns relating to the lack of female-led decision making in sports coaching and analyzed how
106 power and ideologies may be controlled and maintained by masculine establishments. Lewis et al.'s
107 (2015) investigated adopted a Bourdieuan perspective of women coaches' experience of football
108 association coach education concluding the courses they attended were sexist, isolating and
109 pointless. However, both Graham et al.'s (2013) and Lewis et al.'s (2015) research again focus on
110 deficiencies of the culture and systems, as opposed to considering alternative theoretical and
111 methodological perspectives which might more helpfully enable change through empowerment and
112 holistic understanding. Contrastingly, LaVoi & Dutove (2012) addressed the under-representation of
113 women in coaching by considering an Ecological Systems Model comprising four layers of cultural
114 understanding; individual, interpersonal, organizational and sociocultural context. The Ecological
115 Systems Model was chosen in an attempt to depart from the 'deficiencies' approach outlined above
116 and reported that women cited an interest in coaching careers and the stimulation of the job as key
117 reasons why they wanted to coach (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). Furthering this model, LaVoi (2016) and
118 LaVoi and Burton (2016) respectively added 'intersectionality' and 'multisystems' in an attempt to
119 provides tools for researchers to examine how the complex identities of women coaches interact
120 with their individual environments and social systems to impact their experiences. LaVoi's (Burton &
121 LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012) aspirational findings and approach contrast with
122 research focused on the deficiencies of systems such as Lewis et al. (2015), Norman (2010, 2013)
123 and Norman & French (2013) highlighting that such a different epistemological and methodological
124 stance might be appropriate for the study of women coaches' engagement with coach education.
125 Methodological approaches which seek to empower participants and provide a more holistic

126 environmental understanding focused on meaningfulness and relatedness may be more effective in
127 addressing the nuances of the long-standing under-representation of women in coaching (Occhino,
128 Mallett, Rynne, & Carlisle, 2014; Thedin Jakobsson, 2014; Vinson et al., 2015). Furthermore,
129 theoretical underpinnings which offer understandings of the motivational processes impacting
130 women's engagement with sports coaching may be useful to explore. A particularly prominent
131 motivational model in the field of sport over recent years has been Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
132 (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

133 Engagement with any task is undeniably connected to the individual's motivation. Deci &
134 Ryan (1985) proposed that motivation can be conceived as a continuum spanning amotivation,
135 through non-self-determined extrinsic motivation (non-SDEM), self-determined extrinsic motivation
136 (SDEM) to intrinsic motivation. Deci & Ryan (2002) suggested that intrinsic motivation is the most
137 desirable state and that this concept has been inextricably connected to positive psychological well-
138 being, enhanced engagement and greater longevity of commitment. Psychological well-being,
139 enhanced engagement and greater longevity of commitment are all potentially crucial
140 characteristics in coaching careers where extrinsic rewards (particularly remuneration) are likely to
141 be grossly insufficient for the vast majority of practitioners. For example, North (2009) reported that
142 only 3% of all coaches (including males) in the UK were employed full-time and the vast majority of
143 others delivered only a few hours per week. SDT proposes that humans have three fundamental
144 psychological needs:

- 145 1. Autonomy - being the perceived source of one's own behaviour;
- 146 2. Competence - feeling effective in the social environment; experiencing opportunities to
147 express one's capabilities;
- 148 3. Relatedness - feeling connected to others; being cared for by one's community.

149 (Deci & Ryan, 2002)

150 Deci & Ryan (2012) and Ryan & Deci (2011) outlined the appropriateness of SDT to help explain
151 sociocultural phenomena from a motivational perspective, although to date, this theoretical
152 framework has not been applied to coach education specifically.

153 A number of studies utilising SDT do exist directly focussing on coaching practice more
154 generally. For example, Allen & Shaw (2009) examined the organizational support perceived by
155 eight female high performance coaches in two different sports in New Zealand. Allen & Shaw (2009)
156 found that the women coaches did feel supported by their respective organisations to a sufficient
157 extent to enable the perception of enhanced autonomy support and the development of
158 competence, but did not find evidence concerning the promotion of relatedness. In later work
159 concerning the social values of two sports organisations from the perspective of women coaches,
160 they found that only one of the two facilitated conditions likely to lead to basic need satisfaction
161 (Allen & Shaw, 2013). In broader coaching-related research in Australia, McLean & Mallett (2012)
162 investigated the motivations of 13 coaches (four women) across 10 different sports. The authors
163 reported both intrinsic motivation and self-determined forms of extrinsic motivation were vital
164 aspects for coaches to facilitate a performer's optimal functioning (McLean & Mallett, 2012).
165 Several other studies have featured SDT as a theoretical foundation from which to examine sports
166 coaching (e.g. Cowan, Taylor, McEwan, & Baker, 2012; Felton & Jowett, 2013; Froyen & Pensgaard,
167 2014; Hollembeak & Amorose, 2005; Iachini, 2013; Iachini, Amorose, & Anderson-Butcher, 2010;
168 Mallett, 2005; McLean, Mallett, & Newcombe, 2012; Occhino et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2013)
169 reinforcing the appropriateness of utilising this framework in coaching-related research. The aim of
170 this project was to explore how well UK coach education meets the needs of women coaches in
171 order to identify ways in which to enhance participation, improve continuing support and promote
172 the engagement of women in sports coaching.

173 **Methodology**

174 A pragmatic methodological approach was determined drawn from Appreciative Inquiry
175 (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry was founded as a change management

176 concept and has increasingly been cited as a highly impactful research technique for educational
177 organisations seeking to enhance particular aspects of their practice (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006;
178 Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014; Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009). The evaluation used the first
179 two 'D's of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry approach: Discovery and Dream. The Discovery phase is
180 concerned with the identification of the organisational processes that work well with a particular
181 focus on highlighting the elements of practice which work best (Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006). The
182 Dream phase is concerned with envisioning how processes and practice could flourish in the future
183 (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Relating to the present study, this process concerned identifying
184 factors within the Discovery phase which could applied, extended or replicated by the coach
185 educators and NGB officers within the Dream phase. The final two phases of the 4D approach
186 (design and destiny) are concerned with the planning and implementation of the Dream phase and
187 were not within the scope of this investigation or the agreements negotiated within the respective
188 NGBs.

189 The overarching premise of Appreciative Inquiry is the focus on the positive and aspirational
190 elements of the environment and potential of the area under investigation. At the heart of
191 Appreciation Inquiry is a commitment to the believe of the potential of the unconditional positive
192 question (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). It is this commitment which provides Appreciative Inquiry
193 the ability to engage, enthuse, energise and enhance learning communities (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014).
194 Furthermore, it is also a means of avoiding the negative, deficit-led, approach of many
195 investigations into systems which are inequitable or discriminatory (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014). As
196 such, the employment of an Appreciative Inquiry approach with women coaches, coach educators
197 and NGB officers was highly appropriate to understand the positives of how the coaches had
198 developed their practice and, from this, to explore the dreams of how coach education systems
199 could be enacted to promote more women to be engaged and feel supported.

200 **Participants**

201 Following institutional ethical approval, an invitation from sports coach UK to all UK NGB to
202 participate was sent and resulted in officers from British Cycling, the British Equestrian Federation,
203 British Gymnastics and British Rowing volunteering their organisation’s involvement. Stakeholders
204 within coach education were purposefully sampled and recruited to participate in the interviews by
205 consulting the respective NGBs and the research team’s own networks. Additionally, NGBs were
206 invited to distribute to their female coaches electronic invitations to participate in the project via
207 their websites and social media.

208 Twenty three female coaches were recruited through the purposive sampling strategy (eight
209 from cycling; four from equestrian; seven from gymnastics; nine from rowing) and these coaches
210 represented the full range of qualifications, from unqualified up to the respective NGB’s highest level
211 of award. Eight coach educators were recruited including six women (two from equestrian and
212 rowing; one each from cycling and gymnastics) and two males (both from cycling). Five NGB officers
213 working in coach development were recruited, two of whom were female (from gymnastics and
214 rowing) with one male officer from equestrian and two male officers from cycling (see Table 1). The
215 participants represent a sub-sample of the broader Supporting and Promoting Inclusive Coach
216 Education (SPICE) project concerning under-represented groups in coaching (Vinson et al., 2015).
217 The data and analysis presented herein are entirely original.

218

219 Table 1: Participant demographic table

Pseudonym	Sport	Highest (UK) qualification or role	Experience^a (years)
June	Cycling	Breeze Ride Leadership Award	2
Karen	Cycling	Level 2 – Road and Time Trial	11
Ivy	Cycling	Level 2	2
Brenda	Cycling	Level 2	10
Kevin	Cycling	Coach educator	23
Peter	Cycling	Coach educator	27
Zoe	Cycling	Coach educator	12
Geoff	Cycling	NGB officer	7
Alexander	Cycling	NGB officer	5
Jill	Equestrian	None	3
Veronica	Equestrian	Level 2 – Generic riding	7
Ellie	Equestrian	None	2
Sophie	Equestrian	Level 3 – Show jumping	20
Pamela	Equestrian	Coach educator	20
Josie	Equestrian	Coach educator	15
Anthony	Equestrian	NGB officer	4
Jenny	Gymnastics	Level 1 – Rhythmic	1
Pavlina	Gymnastics	Level 2 – Rhythmic	13
Tina	Gymnastics	Level 2 - Trampoline	6
Trish	Gymnastics	Level 3 – General and trampolining	10
Isobel	Gymnastics	Level 2 – Rhythmic	2
Paula	Gymnastics	Level 4 - Women’s artistic	20
Grace	Gymnastics	Level 2 – Acrobatics	17
Karly	Gymnastics	Coach educator	31
Elizabeth	Gymnastics	NGB officer	12
Gemma	Rowing	None	7
Clara	Rowing	None	1
Kate	Rowing	Level 2	8
Lucy	Rowing	Level 2	3
Catherine	Rowing	Level 2	4
Hayley	Rowing	Level 2	7
Jemima	Rowing	Level 3	3
Adriana	Rowing	None	6
Justine	Rowing	Coach educator	26
Margaret	Rowing	Coach educator	9
Xena	Rowing	NGB officer	11

220 ^a Relates to years of coaching and coach educating (coaches; coach educators) or years working for
 221 NGB in a coaching-related role (NGB officers)

222

223 Procedure

224 Individual interviews took place in-person, via Skype or on the telephone, depending on the

225 availability and preference of the interviewee. Interviews lasted between 42 and 70 minutes for the

226 NGB officers and between 31 and 51 minutes for the remaining participants. The interview schedule

227 was informed by Appreciative Inquiry in order to seek positives and to investigate how to improve
228 the situation for female coaches from where it was at present. For example, participants were asked
229 to identify the inspirational and excellent elements of practice evident within their coach education
230 experience (see Appendix I). All interviews were recorded (with the permission of the interviewee)
231 and were transcribed verbatim. Owing to particular learning needs, three coaches felt their views
232 would be better represented in the written form and so were provided with a written copy of the
233 interview questions to which they responded via email which is commensurate with
234 recommendations made by Ison (2009). Email respondents were issued with the same questions as
235 the interview respondents and follow-up emails were sent to 'prompt' for further information in a
236 similar manner to the participants who were interviewed verbally. The results of the analysis of the
237 data from all coach interviews informed the interviews with the coach educators and NGB officers.
238 This 'informing' process comprised common perspectives drawn from coaches with the 'Discovery'
239 phase being offered to coach educators and NGB officers to elicit their perspectives within the
240 'Dream' phase of the investigation. For example, the common reference by coaches to the excellent
241 practice of mentors led to a specific question in this area being directed to coach educators and NGB
242 officers.

243 **Data handling and analysis**

244 Each interview was transcribed verbatim producing 238 single-spaced pages of transcript.
245 Miles et al.'s (2013) three-stage content analysis procedures were followed in an inductive and then
246 deductive manner. Firstly, the lead author identified meaning units from within the verbatim
247 transcripts. Meaning units were words or phrases used by the participants that were considered to
248 be potentially important and were subsequently coded relating to key terms identified within the
249 raw data. Secondly, themes were derived inductively through systematic review of each of the
250 codes and meaning units. Subsequently, the first author consulted with the rest of the authorship
251 team to check the accuracy and confirm agreement of the thematic structure. Finally, the
252 authorship team then collaboratively sorted the themes deductively into the *a priori* framework of

253 autonomy, competence and relatedness (Miles et al., 2013). All processes were managed using the
 254 standard tools and features of Microsoft Word.

255 **Results and Discussion**

256 The data analysis processes produced 1,356 meaning units which were analysed and placed
 257 into eleven sub-themes (see Table 2). The eleven sub-themes were then allocated to one of the
 258 three *a priori* categories of autonomy, competence and relatedness. The thematic analysis of the
 259 coaches' interview data confirmed the suitability of the three overarching SDT themes, the titles of
 260 which were very slightly modified to better reflect the participants' perspectives – 'autonomy:
 261 freedom to coach'; 'coaching competence'; 'belonging and relatedness'. This section discusses each
 262 of the three key themes in turn and in so doing highlights the sub-themes that were placed within
 263 each theme. Coach pseudonyms and qualifications are presented alongside each quotation.

264

265 Table 2: Overarching Self Determination Theory themes and emergent sub-themes

Autonomy: Freedom to coach	Coaching competence	Relatedness and belonging
Positive dispositions and personal development (18, 5, 2)	Informal learning – mentoring, observing and co-working. (12, 6, 3)	'To give something back' – commitment to the sport, clubs and athletes (10, 6, 3)
Freedom from institutional barriers (11, 2, 4)	Informal learning – experiential development and information seeking (11, 1, 1)	Coach-athlete relationships (9, 1, 1)
A culture of supporting freedom and decision making (9, 5, 2)	Learning and non-formal coach education (8, 2, 4)	Coach-NGB relationships (16, 6, 5)
	Learning and formal coach education (9, 6, 5)	
	Gender and the coach education environment (16, 8, 5)	

266 N.B. Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of coaches, coach educators and NGB officers
 267 respectively who contributed meaning units to that particular theme
 268

269 **Autonomy: Freedom to coach**

270 The first sub-theme within this category referred to the *positive dispositions and personal*
271 *development* of the women coaches in terms of their personal drive to develop their coaching
272 practice. The overwhelming consensus from the coaches was that they wanted to improve through
273 a committed investment in their coaching practice and also in coach education. One coach said:

274 Seeing others develop is what inspires me to continue coaching, and the thirst for
275 knowledge does too. I continue to read and question what I know to develop my
276 understanding further, and I enjoy the challenges of additional qualifications as an
277 access to more information. In 2014 I was delighted to have the opportunity to start
278 to develop my practice as a coach educator as I know from experience the
279 importance of having a good coach that inspires you to want to continue in your
280 sport.

281 (Jemima, Level 3 rowing coach)

282 Jemima's drive in her pursuit of personal development was similar to most of the other coaches who
283 also felt that coaching was a fulfilling, challenging, practice which both facilitated, and demanded,
284 their personal development. Common to all the coaches' perceptions was that the power to
285 determine aspects of personal development lay with the coach themselves. A number of coaches
286 believed that the freedom and drive to develop their coaching practice was a medium for a more
287 holistic conception of personal growth. Numerous coaches appeared to have been captured by an
288 infectious positivity which seemed to pervade the culture of coach education. These findings are
289 consistent with Allen & Shaw (2009) and Allen & Shaw (2013) in that institutional support promoting
290 the perception of autonomy was evident for the women coaches; this was also deemed important
291 by the coach educators and NGB officers. Such evidence provides strong support for SDT as a
292 legitimate theoretical perspective from which to further our understanding of coaching (Mallett,
293 2005) and the culture of coach education. Furthermore, our findings reflect the aspirational and
294 positive disposition of women coaches reported by LaVoi & Dutove (2012) rather than the more

295 entrenched and deficit-led perspectives of Norman (2010, 2013) and Fielding-Lloyd & Meân (2011).
296 However, as with all the coaching-related studies we have cited, our sample comprises women
297 coaches who are already invested, albeit to differing degrees, in coaching and thus provide no
298 evidence relating to the perspectives of those women who may have been dissuaded or prevented
299 from engaging in coach education due to perceptions relating to the barriers discussed within
300 Norman's (2010, 2013) and Fielding-Lloyd and Meân's (2011) work.

301 Several coaches were very positive about the work of their respective NGB in terms of
302 providing *freedom from institutional barriers* thus providing coaches with the ability to make
303 decisions about their own development. Lucy was particularly positive:

304 I think British Rowing are quite good at including everyone. As a woman, I don't feel
305 discriminated against at all. There are enough awesome role models in women's
306 rowing that girls can feel they can get involved in rowing ... I think British Rowing
307 have got it going pretty well. I think they have a great team of people who are
308 enthusiastic.

309 (Lucy, Level 2 rowing coach)

310 Ellie believed there had been a shift in the culture of coach education in equestrian sport. Despite
311 having taught for many years, but not yet having completed a UKCC award, she considered herself to
312 have many more traits of the contemporary coach than a 'traditional' equestrian teacher. She
313 describes how she perceived the culture of teaching in equestrian to be characterised when she first
314 entered the industry:

315 It didn't fit well with me, as it was very directive – shouting 'do this, do that'. So in
316 my teaching career for many many years after, I did it my way, I didn't do it by the
317 book. What is now considered more as coaching rather than teaching ... For me
318 [what is important is] mostly experience, but for others, getting out of the 'teaching'
319 mind set into the 'coaching' mind set is something that needs to be done through
320 courses and workshops.

(Ellie, unqualified equestrian coach)

321
322 The autonomous drive for personal development, together with the freedom to make decisions
323 relating to problem solving and individual approaches to coaching practices was strongly related by
324 coaches throughout the Discovery phase. Graham et al. (2013) and LaVoi & Dutove (2012) reported
325 concerns regarding the falling number of women in high-profile coaching roles and the impact this
326 was having in the diminishing female voice at the highest levels and the related lack of decision
327 making and autonomy perceived by women in coaching. Whilst our data reveal a concern by some
328 coaches, coach educators and NGB officers regarding the lack of women in high profile coaching
329 roles, the women in this investigation reported a strong sense of autonomy regarding their coaching
330 futures and perceived a strong sense of being immersed in a culture which embraced freedom to
331 make decisions. This was not only apparent in the two female-dominated sports, but was also
332 evident, albeit to a lesser extent, in cycling and rowing. The women in this investigation viewed their
333 development in the long-term and were frequently keen to discuss their long-term aspirations and
334 future development which embraced an appreciation of the concept of lifelong learning. Such
335 evidence suggests that the difficulties of the culture of coach education discussed by Callary &
336 Werthner (2011), Kerr & Ali (2012), Callary (2012), Lewis et al. (2015) and Kidd (2013) can be, in part,
337 countered by a deliberate institutional commitment to facilitating an autonomy-supportive
338 experience for women coaches which enables positive dispositions, personal development and the
339 freedom to make decisions.

340 The importance of the self-determination to engage with coach education cited by coaches
341 in the Discovery phase was also recognised by some of the coach educators. Kevin felt that the
342 *culture of supporting freedom and decision making* had developed considerably over his years of
343 involvement in the sport. He perceived that very few coaches now engage with formal coach
344 education merely for the attainment of a qualification:

345 The experience of my role in coach education has been that those animals [coaches
346 enrolling merely for the qualification], they don't exist anymore. I can't remember

347 the last time I witnessed or heard about that. Peoples' motivations and reasoning to
348 get involved in coaching and coach education is vastly different now and I think that
349 means you are at a completely different starting point ... That's one of the big
350 changes, the motivation and the recruitment process of why people are involved in
351 coaching and coach education ... Then there is an expectation of the level of
352 experience people get when they go on a British cycling coach education course. If
353 they don't get the grade one experience they're quite shocked.

354 (Kevin, cycling coach educator)

355 Kevin's reflections concerning expectations of coaches enrolling on formal awards with British
356 Cycling illustrate a small range of the factors impacting the broader environment of coach education
357 in the sport. The coach educators and NGB officers interviewed within this investigation were
358 supportive of the coaches' desire to be self-directed in their coach education and to make their own
359 decisions about their development. Geoff felt that self-determined decision making was essential to
360 the broader culture of sport and was pervasive through the various aspects of the NGB's function:

361 That's why the GB cycling team have been so successful - because they had the right
362 people at the beginning coming through the system, developing slowly and just
363 having that consistent funding and autonomy, to do what they think is best. And
364 what's fascinating with how that system has worked, knowing the coaches as I do, is
365 they worked out most of the theory for themselves, without this academic side, they
366 worked out what works out really well.

367 (Geoff, cycling NGB officer)

368 Geoff's belief surrounding the importance of consistent, and supported, autonomy in the
369 development of excellent coaching practice is consistent with more generic literature in the sports
370 coaching domain (McLean & Mallett, 2012; Occhino et al., 2014) and provides further evidence for
371 the importance of supporting practitioners to find their own paths to excellence and that this also
372 leads to the subsequent emergence of genuinely self-determined coaching practice. Many of the

425 my UKCC was generic information, set in a variety of different contexts, so discussing
426 with coaches on a more one-to-one basis gave me the opportunity to divulge [sic.]
427 more into a specific context, what choices they made and why. Also because things I
428 picked up during my own experience of being coached I didn't necessarily always
429 understand.

430 (Jemima, Level 3 rowing coach)

431 Consistent with the wide range of literature concerning coach learning (Cushion et al., 2010;
432 Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2006) women coaches perceived a broader spectrum of mediums
433 featuring experiential learning and other informal sources such as personal research, reading and
434 surfing the internet as being fundamental to their learning. Furthermore, non-formal mechanisms
435 such as CPL were also highly valued which is also consistent with contemporary discussions in coach
436 learning (Nash & Sproule, 2011; Trudel, Culver, & Werthner, 2013).

437 The coaches also discussed their engagement with *learning and formal coach education*.
438 The cycling coaches were the most positive about their experiences of formal coach education,
439 perceiving a considerable development in the quality of coach education in cycling in recent times.
440 However, some coaches felt that overly-technocratic formal coach awards potentially damaged their
441 coaching efficacy. For example, Brenda said:

442 A lot of females are coming in as parents and so they are trying to get them to do
443 the course when they are not active participants. I think that knocks their
444 confidence. We had a couple of mums on the course. They're quite happy riding
445 their bike, but they couldn't do the more technical aspects and then we're asking
446 them to deliver that stuff. Certainly in practical elements, it does favour those who
447 are doing the practical aspects.

448 (Brenda, Level 2 cycling coach)

449 Brenda's perspective suggests that NGBs may benefit women's confidence and perceptions
450 of coaching competence by shifting from technocratic conceptions of coaching to an appreciation of

451 the importance of greater pedagogic understanding, the coach's role in developing the coach-athlete
452 relationship and, more generally, the 'softer' coaching skills (Jones, 2006; Light, 2008; Vinson, Brady,
453 Moreland, & Judge, 2016). Such an approach may be effective in enhancing women coaches'
454 confidence in sports in which males have a natural physical advantage, because it would challenge
455 the rhetoric that the faster (for example) cyclist or rower must be the better coach. The same logic
456 may also challenge the prominence of hegemonic masculinity in sport as discussed by Norman
457 (2010) and Norman (2013) although such an assertion requires considerable further investigation.
458 The findings presented here support the proposition by LaVoi & Dutove (2012) who suggested that a
459 systemic shift may be more powerful than individually-focussed strategies. Furthermore, these
460 findings may also contribute to closing the gap described by Piggott (2015) relating to the extent to
461 which current practice with coach education represents an open, as opposed to closed, society
462 educational approach. Our findings support Piggott's (2012; 2015) contention that an open society
463 educational approach is likely to be beneficial for women sports coaches and that Piggott's (2015)
464 belief that learning tools such as virtual networks, open forums and cooperating sharing episodes
465 should be actively deployed by NGBs.

466 *Gender and the coach education environment* also featured extensively within this
467 investigation in relation to perceived coaching competence. However, from the outset, Anthony was
468 keen to challenge beliefs that women are under-represented in coaching:

469 We have about six million riders across Britain and somewhere around fifty
470 thousand professional full-time coaches. So it always makes me laugh when I hear
471 stats around professional coaches in sport and the fact that it's male dominant. Well
472 actually, no, because if you actually include equestrian coaching in that, it actually
473 becomes actually, across all sports, it becomes very female-dominated because
474 there's so many more full time professional coaches in this sport. It completely
475 outweighs what happens in a lot of other sports. I think it does give a real different

476 [perspective], and shift to some of the national statistics that may have previously
477 provided.

478 (Anthony, equestrian NGB officer)

479 Anthony's assertion that equestrian coaching is female-dominated has clearly impacted his
480 appreciation of the needs of the workforce. Additionally, a number of the respondents felt that
481 women were better suited to the practice of coaching than males. For example, Geoff said:

482 Females make better coaches. I respond better to female coaches, because they ...
483 tend to listen more and they're more interested in me as a person, or more able to
484 adapt their delivery to suit the needs of the participant.

485 (Geoff, cycling NGB officer)

486 Geoff's perspective reflects similar perceptions reported elsewhere (e.g. Miller, 2015) although the
487 empirical basis supporting his assertions relating to listening and adaptability has yet to be
488 established. The impact of single-gender activities arose in a number of the interviews which
489 generally sided on the positive impact of allowing women to participate separately from men. For
490 example, June went on to say:

491 In a career of 20-odd years teaching PE, there is definitely a need for gender-specific
492 groups. Put girls in an all-female group and they don't feel intimidated and they will
493 shine. It works the other way too; some people will shine more in a mixed group.

494 (June, unqualified cycling coach)

495 Xena did not share June's enthusiasm for women-only courses, despite having coordinated such
496 programmes as part of her professional role:

497 We have run women-only courses, but as a woman I want to be treated like
498 everyone else, I know that's not the view of everybody, but if I'm going to coach I
499 want to be there as a coach and not as a token woman; I don't want special
500 consideration, but want to be treated equitably and fairly and being judged for what
501 I do and who I am rather than because of my gender. I know not all my colleagues

502 share that view, we have to be mindful that we need a different timetable e.g. of the
503 day when people can access courses.

504 (Xena, rowing NGB officer)

505 sports coach UK (2013) reported that some women coaches requested the provision of female-only
506 formal coach education courses although it rejected this proposal in favour of suggesting that more
507 inclusive approaches which tackled gender-related issues in a less segmented way should be
508 explored. Lewis et al. (2015) reported strong support for women-only coaching courses. Our data
509 provide modest support for women-only courses among coaches and coach educators which
510 appears to be primarily due to the perceived impact on confidence and competence of sharing the
511 educational space with male colleagues, although some NGB officers were not convinced that
512 gender segregation was the best approach.

513 In addition to ensuring an appropriate pedagogical approach for female learners, some
514 other potential enablers to engaging more women in coaching were discussed by the coach
515 educators and NGB officers. Xena was keen to highlight the power of a small-scale, bespoke,
516 scholarship programme:

517 I think we need to do more with women; One thing I am really proud of is our
518 scholarship scheme ... we have run it for over 10 years supported by the Henley
519 Stewards' Charitable Trust. The idea is we support people to do a postgraduate
520 qualification, usually a Master's, but doesn't have to be; they spend up to 20 hours
521 per week coaching young people in up to three clubs. I am really proud because so
522 many of the people that come in through that route are women and it has been
523 hugely successful; its enabling us to grow our own coaches, all four of our initial ETP
524 [England Talent Pathway] programme came through that route and some of them
525 didn't learn to row until they were at university, so were beginners when they came
526 ... Generally speaking the women are more mature, interview better, and have a
527 more developed sense of why they want to get into coaching, and quite often they

528 perform better on the coaching practical ... It [the scholarship scheme] is highly
529 regarded within the sport and can increase employability.

530 (Xena, rowing NGB officer)

531 It is evident that niche and focussed scholarship schemes or targeted recruitment strategies can be
532 effective mechanisms in developing a small number of coaches in a very powerful and impactful
533 way. Although clearly highly resource-dependent, such programmes might provide an important
534 strand of a much broader institutional strategy to enhancing inclusivity and representativeness.
535 More generally, coach educators and NGB officers perceived inclusive pedagogies as a broad issue
536 surrounding notions of holistic understandings of athletes, coach (and horse) affirming recent
537 discussions in sports coaching (Light, Harvey, & Mouchet, 2014; Nelson et al., 2006; Padley & Vinson,
538 2013). Overall, the evidence reported here represents a genuine shift in the perceived nature of the
539 delivery of coach education pathways which Cassidy (2010) was sceptical was occurring, albeit half a
540 decade ago.

541 **Relatedness and belonging**

542 The coaches were very assured surrounding their motivations for coaching which largely
543 concerned their sense of belonging to the sport, club and/or the athletes with whom they worked.
544 Coaches' sense of belonging at whatever level was analogous with their commitment to coaching
545 but also their continued engagement with coach education. The vast majority of coaches said their
546 fundamental motivations for engaging in coaching and coach education framed the sub-theme '*to*
547 *give something back*' – *commitment to the sport, club and athletes*. The love of the sport was also
548 almost universally acknowledged by the coaches within this investigation and is consistent with
549 previous research (McLean & Mallett, 2012; McLean et al., 2012). Another strong theme within
550 coaches' motivations for coaching featured their passion for the betterment of the *coach-athlete*
551 *relationship*. Throughout the interviews, the coach educators and NGB officers demonstrated
552 excellent understanding of the coaches' motivations for being involved with the sport. The
553 importance of passion in underpinning self-determined coaching practice was, in some cases,

554 dependent on the extent to which coaches found a place within a local club. In gymnastics, coaches
555 have to have their own club participants to bring to an assessment, making club membership a
556 prerequisite to develop as a coach. Elizabeth articulated the importance of the club in personal
557 development:

558 I do recognise that, really the biggest influence on you, is your own coach and your
559 own club environment and your mentor coach, because, depending on what sort of
560 situation you're in, coaches in gymnastics can be in the gym, anywhere between one
561 hour a week and 30-40 hours a week. So, obviously if your one hour a week, our
562 course is probably going to have a big impact on you because our contact hours with
563 you at level one are 21 hours and so obviously if you're one hour a week in the gym,
564 21 hours of impact of being with a tutor is quite significant. If you're in the gym 30-
565 40 hours a week, 21 hours really doesn't even scratch the surface and you're far
566 more influenced by the environment you're in and the mentality of the person who
567 coached you and all those people.

568 (Elizabeth, gymnastics NGB officer)

569 The power of a strong coach-athlete relationship to enhance coaches' sense of belonging to the
570 sport was also evident throughout the interviews. The importance of coaches' passion for athletes
571 and the more general strength of the coach-athlete relationship is a relatively well-rehearsed
572 discussion in the literature and is strongly supported within this investigation (Davis, Jowett, &
573 Lafrenière, 2013; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Jowett, Yang, & Lorimer, 2012; McLean & Mallett,
574 2012; McLean et al., 2012; Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Relatedness, especially
575 when considered from the perspective of quality interpersonal relationships was frequently
576 highlighted by the coach educators. For example, Pamela said:

577 When women are in a stressful situation, they tend and befriend, they go for that
578 mutual support. So when I have groups of people on my courses, when they are
579 female, they tend to set up little groups of support, either a Facebook group or an

580 email group and I think without that face-to-face contact that wouldn't happen ... In
581 terms of supporting female learners, they need that sense of community.

582 (Pamela, equestrian coach educator)

583 The term 'community' has featured prominently within numerous recent coach-related
584 investigations (e.g. Culver & Trudel, 2008; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2012), predominantly pertaining to
585 the term 'Community of Practice' (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991), although use of this phrase has also
586 been criticised as being theoretically misconstrued resulting in rather formulaic, homogenous or
587 instrumentalist conceptions of the framework (Piggott, 2015). Whilst our findings support the
588 notion of community as an important mechanism to support the effectiveness of coach education
589 for women, the simplistic nature of the interactions described here do not provide sufficient
590 evidence to warrant use of the CoP term in enabling self-determined coach practice.

591 Many coaches reported a strong opinion of the work of their respective NGB which
592 enhanced their own sense of belonging to the sport thus forming the sub-theme of *Coach-NGB*
593 *relationships*. In particular, a number of the cycling coaches praised the focus and work of their NGB
594 in terms of generally getting women involved with the sport. Brenda said:

595 There is certainly a big drive from British Cycling to get women involved. I think
596 they've realised there is a need and a role for it. We're still a minority, but it is
597 improving so that is good.

598 (Brenda, Level 2 cycling coach)

599 Coach educators were cognisant of their role as representatives of the NGB and were very much
600 focussed on ensuring a positive and productive relationship with coaches. For Zoe, the ultimate goal
601 was to help coaches "Develop a sense of belonging in a very individual sport" (Zoe, cycling coach
602 educator). In cycling, Alexander articulated how British Cycling's use of social media was related to
603 the desire to strengthen the informal relationship between coach and NGB:

604 ...much more social media; we use Twitter a lot as well now. So we interact with the
605 coaches and try and create a culture and a bond which, again, there wasn't

606 previously. Twitter ... [we've] only been using it 12 months or something like that
607 and that's going quite well and obviously the more we can do with that [the better].
608 Before, we would train them and send them off and that would be it, so I think that
609 regular interaction, us looking like we are there for them and we're along with them
610 and getting a relationship with them. It also gives us an opportunity to highlight
611 good practice, or articles or workshops, learning opportunities.

(Alexander, cycling NGB officer)

613 The breadth of the issues concerning the development of coaches connection to the sport
614 and feeling a sense of relatedness within their coaching practice was quite extensive and drawn on
615 across a wide range of foci, target groups and responsibilities. What is clear is that building a sense
616 of belonging and relatedness among coaches was very high on the agenda for coach educators and
617 NGB officers. The topic of the nature of the relationship between coach and NGB has not previously
618 been investigated. Research investigating coach education has largely portrayed the relationship
619 between coaches and the institutional operations of NGBs through the mechanism of different
620 intermediaries such as coach educators (Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Roberts, 2010; Taylor & O'Sullivan,
621 2009) and, in the UK, County Sport Partnerships (Baker, Vinson, & Parker, 2016; Vinson, Parker,
622 Baker, Padley, & Croad, 2013). Therefore, the findings reported here represented the beginnings of
623 a potentially fruitful line of inquiry relating to developing self-determined coaching practice. It
624 appears vital to build a sense of belonging wherever achievable, and at as many levels as possible, to
625 encourage greater engagement with coach education and to foster a sense of inclusivity.

626 **Conclusions and recommendations**

627 The underpinning framework of SDT has been shown to be an appropriate lens through
628 which to investigate female coaches' journey to self-determined practice and to better understand
629 their likely engagement with all forms coach education; formal, non-formal and informal. This
630 investigation has revealed that each of the three key themes of autonomy: freedom to coach,
631 coaching competence and relatedness and belonging help us to understand the extent to which UK

632 coach education meets the needs of women coaches. In particular, women coaches' perception of
633 the freedom to coach in a manner consistent with their individual and bespoke coaching beliefs is
634 crucial in the journey to self-determined practice. Approaches to coach education akin to the open
635 society model represent the types of learning environments through which women coaches will
636 thrive and develop confidence. Women coaches should perceive their experiences of coach
637 education to be negotiable and developmental, rather than as a judgement of their personal
638 technical competence or assessment of knowledge. It is evident that formal, informal and non-
639 formal aspects of coach education all have a role to play in facilitating the likely engagement of
640 women coaches as long as they are developmentally framed.

641 There are a number of recommendations for practice which emerge from this investigation.
642 NGBs' recent shift away from a technocratic conception of coaching to a greater appreciation of the
643 interpersonal and pedagogic skills should be continued and will be a particularly valuable approach
644 to further enable self-determined practice amongst women coaches. It could be, for example, that
645 blended models of learning could be deployed to convey technical information as and when it is
646 required by the individual coaches leaving greater contact time with coach educators to focus on the
647 interpersonal and pedagogic skills. Future research should investigate the perceptions of women
648 not yet involved in coaching to establish whether our recommendations relating to the softening of
649 the technocratic focus of sports coaching or tackling entrenched hegemonic masculinity may most
650 effectively encourage more women to consider involvement in sports coaching.

651 Women coaches will benefit from being empowered by their NGB through their engagement
652 with all forms of coach education. For example, women coaches could be actively involved in the
653 selection and recruitment of their mentor. Furthermore, the topics of development which
654 subsequently frame the coach-mentor interactions should also involve the active negotiation of the
655 coach. It may also be of benefit to draw mentors from within the coaches' club or community
656 project and be appointed with a long-term perspective in mind. Relatedly, NGBs should ensure that
657 all coaches engaging with coach education have a 'place' to practice to which they can feel genuinely

658 connected. Within all these facets, it remains the responsibility of the NGB and coach educators to
659 provide a suitable coach education environment which meets the motivational needs of women
660 coaches. The active involvement and empowerment we have discussed here can only be achieved
661 through the careful design and commitment to satisfaction of the needs-related components by
662 NGBs. In turn, this may enable more women coaches to derive greater levels of intrinsic motivation
663 in their engagement with coach education, although clearly considerable further research will be
664 required to investigate this topic.

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671

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879 Appendix I – Interview guide for coaches

880 Introduction

- 881 1. Could you tell me:
- 882 a. Your gender (if not obvious)
 - 883 b. Do you consider yourself to have any form of impairment or disability?
 - 884 c. How do you describe your ethnicity?
- 885 2. Can you tell me all about your coaching journey?
- 886 a. Key milestones?
 - 887 b. Development of role?
 - 888 c. Motivations?

889 Transition

- 890 1. Can you tell me about how you have learned to coach (or about coaching)?
- 891 a. Formal (courses/degrees)
 - 892 b. Informal (CPD/workshops)
 - 893 c. Non-formal (mentoring/observation/web-content/books)
 - 894 d. Experiential

895 Main body

- 896 1. To what extent are [enter topics from transition question] important to help you learn as
- 897 a coach?
- 898 a. Most valuable – why?
 - 899 b. What is engaging about the most valuable forms?
- 900 2. What are the enablers to engaging in coach education?
- 901 a. Personal/general
 - 902 b. Formal/informal/non-formal
 - 903 c. Environmental
- 904 3. What inspires engagement in coach education?
- 905 a. Personal/general
 - 906 b. Formal/informal/non-formal
 - 907 c. Environmental
- 908 4. When is coach education most effective?
- 909 a. Formal
 - 910 b. Informal
 - 911 c. Non-formal
- 912 5. To what extent are there needs which are specific to women coaches in terms of coach
- 913 learning/education?
- 914 a. Issues for NGBs?
 - 915 b. Issues for sports coach UK?
 - 916 c. Issues for society/others?
- 917 6. What would help increase the number of women coaches engaging in coach education?
- 918 a. Responsibility
 - 919 b. Environment
 - 920 c. What else can be done?
- 921 7. What support is needed for women coaches to further enable engagement with coach
- 922 education?
- 923 8. What opportunities do/would inspire you to develop as a coach?
- 924 a. Coach roles
 - 925 b. Coach education

926 Ending

- 927 1. What does the future look like for your coaching practice?