

Understanding the Experiences of Female Sport Officials in Male-Dominated Sports

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Abstract

Sport officials are tasked with making quick and accurate decisions, maintaining order, communicating with athletes and coaches, and enhancing athletes' safety—all while being under intense scrutiny from athletes, coaches, and spectators. In most sports, more male than female sport officials are recruited and retained. The limited research focusing on female sport officials suggests that their experiences are generally adverse. Since the nature of experiences is connected to one's likelihood of continuing that experience, further understanding female sport officials' experiences is imperative for learning more about their intentions to begin and continue (rather than quit) as officials. The purpose of this study was to explore the positive and negative experiences of female sport officials who operated in sports where the officials were primarily male. Nine sport officials participated in semi-structured interviews lasting 35 to 101 minutes. Thematic analysis was used to identify and code common themes within the data, many of which demonstrated clear links to the principles of Self-Determination Theory. The main themes discussed herein relate to (a) The Female Experience (pertaining to the context and environment in which they operated), (b) Facilitators (influences that assist with the responsibility of officiating), and (c) Barriers (circumstances or regulations that have had negative impacts on advancement and development). These themes highlight the inequality females are confronted within the sport officiating environment, but they also provide helpful tools to promote a more positive environment. By using these tools, female sport officials are more likely to continue and thrive as officials, rather than resign. Recommendations are provided for sport governing bodies, officiating

organizations, and sport officials, which might contribute to future policy changes that lead to increased recruitment and retention of female sport officials.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Introduction

Sport is an extracurricular, skill-based activity, whereby athletes compete against one another under a prescribed set of rules (Borge, 2021). The popularity of sport is unquestioned. In 2021, 232.6 million Americans took part in sports and fitness activities (Broughton, 2022). Meanwhile, in Canada, more than 8 million individuals over 15 years of age participated in sport in 2016 (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022). Furthermore, a reported three-quarters of Canadian children participate in organized sport (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022). These numbers represent only two countries, though we can deduce that sport is an integral part of most of the world's population.

When considering the number of competitions that occur within each country (e.g., regular competitions, tournaments, and championships), it is obvious that sport is prevalent in people's lives. Additionally, since sports are seasonal, competitions are taking place throughout the year. Given that sport is omnipresent, there is a need to ensure that there are enough qualified officials to adjudicate each sport. The Canadian sport system—like many other countries—is experiencing a steep decline in the number of sport officials (Fenton, 2023). Reasons for sport officials' elevated attrition rates include prevalence of abuse, lack of support from organizations, and lack of compensation (Fenton, 2023). Though comprehensive attrition rates of sport officials in Canada are not available, we can look to other countries to provide insight into the issue. For instance, in 2022, the National Association of Sport Officials (NASO) reported that registration for new sport officials reflected a downward trend (Kindig, 2022). This decline in qualified sport officials has been dubbed a “crisis”, which, if not addressed, will jeopardize the future of sporting events.

While the general population of sport officials is declining, the female sport official population is a minority group that is especially feeling the brunt of the shortage in the sport officials' crisis. In traditional team sports, only 10% of officials identify as female, with many factors (e.g., verbal abuse, sexism, and sexual harassment) underpinning this trend (Fenton, 2023). Sexist comments and misogyny are not exclusive to female sport officials in North America. Worldwide, female sport officials are reporting more abuse and harassment in their sport environments. Recently, female Aussie rules football officials reported their environment as a place where they faced incidences of sexual harassment, including being sent unsolicited nude photos by fellow umpires, and overhearing comments from male umpires about their breasts (Callanan, 2022). The abuse endured by female sport officials worldwide contributes to the rising attrition rates. Creating positive change to eliminate this abuse and harassment is possible with universal and permanent actions from sport organizations.

On a positive note, some breakthrough moments at the elite levels of sport offer hope to future female sport officials. Examples include the National Basketball Association having six female sport officials on their roster (Aschburner & Gilmer, 2022), the National Football League with three female sport officials (Conti, 2022), and FIFA selecting three female officials for the 2022 men's World Cup (Hill, 2022). However, much more is necessary to improve female sport officials' participation rates. Specifically, the need exists to learn more about female sport officials' experiences to understand why and how they overcome these adversities to remain as officials. By emphasizing this minority group, positive changes can be made throughout organizations to benefit sport officials across a variety of sports.

This thesis aims to highlight the experiences faced by female sport officials operating in sports where officials are predominately male. Chapter Two is an extensive literature review consisting of available studies based around the topic of female sport officials. Chapter Three is a manuscript that will be submitted to *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, which contains information regarding the study conducted, methods, participants, and results. Chapter Four will summarize all chapters, outline key findings, and provide a layout of how this research and future research might use these findings. Appendices include ethics documentation, the demographic survey, the interview guide, and participant quotes (categorized by theme and sub-theme).

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Chapter Two:
Literature Review

Literature Review

The main actors in sport are the athletes, coaches, and officials. The definition of “official” describes those responsible for contests on the field, court, pitch, or other competitive environment (Tingle et al., 2014). More specifically, the term “sport official” refers to referees (e.g., ice hockey, football, and soccer), umpires (e.g., baseball, cricket, and tennis), and judges (e.g., figure skating, gymnastics, and synchronized swimming). Sport officials are tasked with making quick and accurate decisions, maintaining order, communicating with athletes and coaches, and enhancing athletes’ safety—all while being under intense scrutiny from athletes, coaches, and spectators (Hancock & Ste-Marie, 2013). Without sport officials’ dedication to knowledge of the rules and regulations in any given sport, events such as playoffs, tournaments, and championships would be forced to discontinue. Sport officials’ career requirements are often year-round with sport contests occurring in a wide variety of outdoor and indoor sporting venues (Tingle et al., 2014). Understandably, with variety in sport settings comes variety in responsibilities and objectives each official is tasked with maintaining.

To delineate between levels of variability in their responsibilities, MacMahon et al. (2014) outlined three types of sport officials: (a) interactors, (b) reactors, and (c) monitors. Interactors attend to several cues during an athletic performance and have a high level of interaction with athletes as they are typically within the field of play. Examples of interactors include most team sport officials, such as a baseball umpire. Monitors (e.g., artistic sport judges) are sport officials who attend to several cues during an athletic performance and assess the quality of a performance, but have limited, if any, interaction with athletes. Finally, there are reactors (e.g., timers and line judges) who have

few responsibilities (in terms of number, not magnitude) and limited interaction with athletes.

Regardless of the classification of sport official, the nature and complexity of the sport officiating task might contribute to the lack of qualified officials in many sports (Carson et al., 2020). Without their knowledge and application of the rules, competitive sport would not exist. Further, sport officials—especially females—are vastly underrepresented as research participants. As such, continued investigation into this population is warranted, particularly as it relates to recruitment, retention, and attrition. An analysis of existing literature on sport officials by Hancock et al. (2021) found that most available research focused on the physiology of sport officiating, decision making, and stress. Pinpointed was the noticeable gap in research pertaining to articles targeting the recruitment and retention of officials, and, specifically, female officials (Hancock et al., 2021).

Recruitment and Retention

Unfortunately, little empirical evidence exists on recruiting new sport officials. From the research that has been conducted, we know that sport officiating is usually a second occupation pursued by sports advocates, many of whom are former athletes who want to stay involved with sports (Bernal et al., 2012). In fact, intrinsic motivation, giving back to the sport, new challenges, maintaining fitness, and developing competence are prime motivators to become a sport official (Bright et al., 2022; Furst, 1991; Hancock et al., 2015). Further, love for the sport and the social communities that evolve as a result of being an official are a source of enjoyment (Livingston & Forbes, 2016; Livingston et al., 2020). It is important to keep these motivations in mind when addressing the issue of

recruitment of sport officials. Sport organizations that are seeking to increase their officiating workforce would be wise to actively recruit new officials with a focus on underrepresented groups who might not seek out the position of their own volition. Through the prospect of mentorship, undecided individuals in underrepresented groups might be more inclined to submit an application. While mentorship occurs after joining the ranks, it is evident that being recruited for the role and knowing a mentorship relationship might exist enhances the likelihood of individuals becoming sport officials (Nordstrom et al., 2016).

Once recruited, the next concern is retaining sport officials. While more research exists in this area, there is a concerning trend surrounding sport officials' retention. According to the NASO, registration of sport officials in the United States declined 30% in 2021 (Niehoff, 2021), with previous reports that one-third of all sport officials quit after their first year (Titlebaum et al., 2009). Such numbers represent an increase in sport officials' attrition since the early study of attrition rates by VanYperen (1998), which noted a 20% attrition rate in Dutch volleyball officials (VanYperen, 1998). More subsequent analysis reports higher attrition rates of 30% in Canadian ice hockey referees (Deacon, 2001). In fact, annual attrition rates of up to 30% of sport officials from some mainstream sports have remained relatively unchanged for more than a decade (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). In Canada, the number of adult Canadian sport officials decreased by 15% from 1998 to 2005 (Canadian Heritage, 2013). More recently in Canada, the number of ice hockey officials dropped from approximately 33,000 in 2011 to 24,000 in 2022—at 27% decline (Hockey Canada, 2011, 2022). Similarly, this decline can be seen in soccer officials with approximately 21,000 reported in Canada in 2016, but

only 13,000 in 2021—a 38% decline (Canada Soccer 2017, 2022). Explanations of these attrition rates include psychological factors (e.g., threats of physical abuse), difficulty in working with a partner official, confrontation with coaches, making a controversial call, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, job dissatisfaction, poor organizational support, lack of recognition/appreciation, and task complexity (see Forbes & Livingston, 2013).

Considering the statistics surrounding sport officials' attrition, it is not surprising that several researchers have explored sport officials' retention. In these studies, several important insights have been noted. Continued participation by long-term sport officials has been accredited to the sense of community within officiating (Livingston & Forbes, 2017). By increasing the number and quality of training opportunities provided each year, it can help increase the feelings of preparedness in sport officials and enhance their connections to the officiating community, which is likely to improve retention (Kellett & Warner, 2011; Sunde et al., 2023). Involvement in strong mentoring programs to increase sport officials' development and experience was also a key factor in increasing officials' likelihood to remain involved (Nordstrom et al., 2016). Increased socialization among officials appears to facilitate mentorship-based relationships, providing officials with a fellow, more experienced, official with whom they could discuss any issues they might encounter (Sunde et al., 2023).

To better understand the motivations of long-term sport officials, Livingston and Forbes (2016) conducted a study examining sport motivation, perceived organizational support, and resilience among this population. Participant responses indicated that approximately 80% of long-term sport officials were former or current athletes in the sport that they were now officiating (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). This indicated that a

sustained passionate disposition for the sport was the main motivation for these long-term sport officials. Research on sport discontinuation has typically centred on athletes in their respective sports; however, with the sport officiating shortage becoming more prevalent, it is imperative to include sport officials within this category of research. Knowledge gleaned from such research has the potential to reduce sport officials' attrition rates.

The data surrounding sport officials' recruitment and retention sheds light on a global issue—the noticeable shortage of officials across all levels and varieties of sport. Since the existing population of sport officials is predominantly male (Forbes et al., 2015), female sport officials embody an important and underrepresented minority and should be considered as a priority group when considering new ways to recruit and retain officials. Because there are so few female sport officials in the profession, finding ways to successfully recruit and retain them could lead to an influx of officials that helps to address the shortage. Unfortunately, major barriers and societal obstacles prevent females from entering the profession and represent contributing factors for why females discontinue officiating. Female sport officials face overt and covert exclusion and discrimination among other barriers within the officiating environment—regardless of their level of experience or seniority—due to their gender (Rawlings & Anderson, 2023). Some identified barriers include workplace incivility, inequitable policies, and gendered abuse (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). Thus, engaging in empirical research with female sport officials is necessary to better understand this important minority group. Such efforts could lead to increases in evidence-based practices that more successfully recruit and retain female sport officials.

Female Officials

Regardless of recruitment and retention efforts made by organizations, in most sports, more male than female sport officials are recruited and retained. This makes understanding the lack of female sport officials a priority. Hancock et al. (2021) conducted an analysis of literature of 386 articles related to sport officials. While the sample of articles ranged from 1971 to 2018, results of this analysis yielded only five published articles about understanding the experiences of female sport officials (Hancock et al., 2021). Recently, there has been an influx of research on female sport officials. From these studies, research on female sport officials' experiences has centred around four main themes: (a) female officials' perceptions of their abilities, (b) lack of respect directed to female officials, (c) female officials' perseverance through negative experiences, and (d) female officials' reasons for dropout. The following section highlights important areas of the existing literature as it relates to the aforementioned themes.

Female Officials' Perceptions of Their Abilities

Baldwin and Vallance (2016) proposed that female sport officials are automatically viewed as less capable than their male counterparts, as sport is seen as a masculine activity. Five female rugby referees participated in interviews to share their experiences with officiating male sports teams (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016). The participants in this study were aware of their token status as female officials within this male-dominated environment, but also described having difficulties gaining the respect they deserved from coaches and players (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016). Many participants reinforced that gender should be a non-issue when a referee is out on the field; the rules of the sport are not going to change whether they are enforced by a male or female

official (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016). Baldwin and Vallance (2016) further stated that participants highlighted many coaches and players simply do not respect women in rugby union, as they see it is a male domain in which females—coaches, players, or referees—do not belong. The perspectives and comments from male coaches and players led to participants feeling scared and isolated due to lack of resources (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016)—which puts into question their capacity to remain confident in their abilities.

Forbes et al. (2015) explored the experiences of four female soccer officials in the United Kingdom who officiated in male soccer matches. The authors collected data through observation during matches as well as semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that females in their study often found that their competence (i.e., perceived ability) as soccer officials was questioned even before they had entered the field of play (Forbes et al., 2015). This was exacerbated by wide variety of perceived sexist abuse directed toward the female soccer officials. To counteract these comments, female officials were observed ignoring or downplaying these remarks, among other techniques. This led the researchers to conclude that to deflect this abuse, female soccer officials created a persona designed to block these comments while officiating all-male soccer games.

In a qualitative study by Reid and Dallaire (2020) on female soccer referees' (N = 15) experiences, participants described that when sport leaders, coaches, athletes, spectators, or family members showed gratitude of their officiating skills, it contributed to feelings of appreciation and recognition. Nevertheless, these same officials felt that they continuously needed to prove themselves as competent referees who were able to effectively carry out the task of being soccer referees—something they believed was not

the case for males. This was related to the participants' perceived need to prove that gendered stereotypes do not apply to the female officials (Reid & Dallaire, 2020).

Finally, Tingle et al. (2021) conducted a study looking to destigmatize and normalize conversations surrounding mental health and female sport officials. Twenty female sport officials participated in interviews sharing their experiences and how they have impacted their mental health, but also how they impact their ability to officiate (Tingle et al., 2021). For example, one participant was denied the opportunity to officiate because the coaches would most likely feel uncomfortable having a female official (Tingle et al., 2021). Though this was not specifically a reflection on her ability, the situation led to the participant developing feelings of self-doubt, which heightened her anxiety and lowered her confidence to effectively perform as a referee (Tingle et al., 2021). This shows that self-confidence in one's abilities can be damaged by both internal and external influences.

Lack of Respect Directed to Female Officials

Important to the successful retention of long-term female sport officials is their ability to have confidence in their officiating skills. Some male sport officials, managers, and broadcasters discount the ability of female officials, showing a lack of respect toward females in the role (Forbes et al., 2015; Reid & Dallaire 2019; Sunde et al., 2023). A qualitative study by Reid and Dallaire (2019) explored female soccer referees' experiences with respect. Fifteen Canadian female soccer officials were recruited, observed during a match, and then interviewed post-match. The researchers found that most participants faced sexism, threats of hostility, lack confidence from athletes and coaches in their ability to officiate, and refusal from game-time participants to respect

their authority on the field (Reid & Dallaire, 2019). Participants gave examples of being berated on the field, having their decisions undermined, and physical intimidation (Reid and Dallaire, 2019). This lack of respect for female sport officials is one of the main mechanisms that reinforce the idea of subordinate status within the officiating domain. Most participants began to fixate on, if not expect discrimination and constantly felt the need to prove themselves (Reid & Dallaire, 2019). Seven of the 15 women that were recruited by the researchers explicitly stated that they had to establish their ability to referee, their knowledge, their fitness, and their toughness each time they stepped on the pitch (Reid & Dallaire, 2019).

Schaeperkoetter (2017), a female basketball official, took an autoethnographic approach to examine her basketball sport officiating experiences, directly comparing them to the current trends in sport-specific feminist research. Schaeperkoetter (2017) concluded that the lack of respect received from players contributed to her negative feelings about sport officiating, such as less control and lowered self-efficacy. The author gave specific examples of her experiences with cat-calling and unsolicited flirtatious gestures on the court. Schaeperkoetter (2017) mentioned that being female, as a general theme, acted as a negative factor in how she was perceived as a sport official. The experienced lack of respect from players and fear of failure were two major contributors to stress levels, ultimately leading to voluntary discontinuation of officiating. If the goal of sport officiating organizations is to improve recruitment and retention levels, the lack of respect experienced by female sport officials needs to be addressed.

While all sport officials receive some degree of verbal abuse, female sport officials receive more abuse based on their sex or gender (Webb et al., 2021). This was

especially true for female sport officials in male-dominated sports (Webb et al., 2021). Webb et al. (2021) interviewed 12 female soccer officials aiming to gain an understanding of their mental health and the effect that performance and the operational environment had upon female referees' mental health. Results uncovered a toxic, abusive, male-dominated work environment that included sexist and derogatory language causing negative impacts on the mental health of the female participants (Webb et al., 2021). The participants highlighted particular issues such as barriers to progression, receiving comments based on being a female sport official, and unfair treatment in comparison to their male counterparts (Webb et al., 2021). Some experiences described by the participants included having their competency as an official questioned by players, with some examples having to be escalated to a disciplinary hearing (Webb et al., 2021). Participants recalled other examples where they were treated with a lack of respect, including homophobic comments and sexual harassment (Webb et al., 2021). These experiences damaged the mental health of the participants on a regular basis, and the only reason for why these participants had to face this abuse was that they were female sport officials in a male-dominated sport (Webb et al., 2021).

Female Officials' Perseverance Through Negative Experiences

Unfortunately, verbal, sexual, and physical abuse is commonplace for female sport officials (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014, 2021; Webb et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there is a small group of females who have persevered through the negativity that comes with being female sport officials.

Nordstrom et al. (2016) shed light into the workplace of females in sport by recruiting eight female participants who officiated American football and have held and

persevered in this role within a male-dominated industry. The focus of their investigation was to take a different approach to exploring the decline in female participation in sport by examining their workplace conditions. Themes that emerged from this qualitative study included Gendered Experiences, Sense of Community, Mentoring, and Passion for Officiating and Football. Gendered experiences encompassed the challenges, resistance, and stereotypes the female participants faced because of their gender (Nordstrom et al., 2016). Within this theme, participants described their experiences with feeling prejudged about their ability to officiate while also describing the environment as the “good ol’ boys network” (Nordstrom et al., 2016, p.13). The sense of community theme emphasized participants’ feelings regarding unity with their fellow officials (Nordstrom et al., 2016). All participants agreed that having a sense of community as an official was necessary to be successful (Nordstrom et al., 2016). The third theme, mentoring, emphasized and reinforced the importance of having a one-on-one relationship with a more seasoned official than themselves (Nordstrom et al., 2016). With all the unique approaches to the mentor-mentee relationship described by participants, it was universally agreed to be fundamental to their success as officials (Nordstrom et al., 2016). The fourth and final theme discovered by Nordstrom et al. (2016) related to participants’ passion for both officiating as well as the sport. Participants described officiating as more than a job; their passion for their positions and love of the game significantly contributed to their reasons to continue (Nordstrom et al., 2016). It is evident, then, that the sense of community, mentoring, and passion for officiating contributed to female sport officials’ perseverance in the role.

Some of themes from Nordstrom et al. (2016) reflect similar perspectives that were described by female sport officials in the study by Tingle et al. (2014). In both studies, participants described feeling disrespected in their positions, and both emphasized the importance of mentorship. Furthermore, all the participants expressed the need for more research. Participants from Nordstrom et al. (2016) expressed their knowledge of the gap and the benefits that more information would provide to future females interested in the position. The participants felt if there was more exposure and information available to females, more may consider officiating football (Nordstrom et al., 2016).

Despite negative experiences caused by gendered stereotypes, verbal abuse, and physical abuse, some female sport officials are still motivated to begin their careers and continue in their role. Perceived relatedness appears to be a primary motivator for female sport officials to persevere through their negative experiences (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Reid & Dallaire, 2020; Tingle et al., 2014). When studied, many female sport officials referenced their sense of community within the minority group as a major aid in their perseverance through sexism and stereotypes (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016; Livingston & Forbes, 2017; Nordstrom et al., 2016). This strong sense of community might help female sport officials manage the stress associated with the demands of being an official (Nordstrom et al., 2016; Schaeperkoetter, 2017) and the stress caused by negative gendered experiences (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014). Female sport officials especially valued recognition and validation from athletes, coaches, fellow officials (Reid & Dallaire, 2020), or mentors (Nordstrom et al., 2016) to help them feel as though they belonged.

Conducting research into why and how these females have coped with this abuse and persevered to officiate at elite levels of sport is a necessary and worthwhile cause. Discovering the underlying motivations that female sport officials possess can ultimately encourage prospective officials, thereby increasing recruitment and retention. It is also critical to explore the motivations behind discontinuation as well, since the alarming rates of female sport officials' attrition will continue if the contributing factors are not identified and reduced.

Female Officials' Reasons for Dropout

Tingle et al. (2014) aimed to learn why female sport officials voluntarily chose to leave their roles. The study interviewed eight former female basketball officials from five geographically diverse states in the U.S. about their workplace experiences (Tingle et al., 2014). Not surprisingly, their findings yielded themes of lack of mutual respect (mainly from male counterparts), perceived inequity of policies, a lack of role modeling and mentoring (for and from female sport officials), and experiencing more gendered abuse than their male counterparts. All these experiences were contributors to their voluntary departure.

Sunde et al. (2023) recently conducted a survey on 186 female sport officials across several sports. The results indicated that participants' likelihood of continuing as sport officials was predicted by their sense of autonomy (i.e., more autonomy led to continuation). Participants also indicated that having a sense of community and being involved with programs designed to further their education within sport enhanced the likelihood of continuation, as those experiences enhanced feelings of intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Sunde et al., 2023). This is similar to previous research, whereby

female sport officials' perceived relatedness and commitment to the sport were identified as strong indicators of intentions to continue as sport officials (Gray & Wilson, 2008). Whereas these results focus on intentions to continue, one can infer from them that if basic motivational and psychological needs are not met, the motivation to continue as sport officials' likely wanes, with dropout becoming more prevalent.

Over the past two decades, participation in female sport has increased significantly across the world (Tingle et al., 2014). However, the increase in sport participation has yet to translate into increased representation of females in sport leadership positions including coaches and board members (Tingle et al., 2014). This underrepresentation of females in sport leadership positions can lead to a disconnect in the female sport officiating community, resulting in an overall deflation in ambition and involvement from up-and-coming female sport officials. While understanding the underrepresentation and experiences of female sport officials is imperative for recruiting and retaining more officials, it is also necessary that we discover the motivations behind the female sport officials who have chosen to pursue their career despite the described systematic barriers.

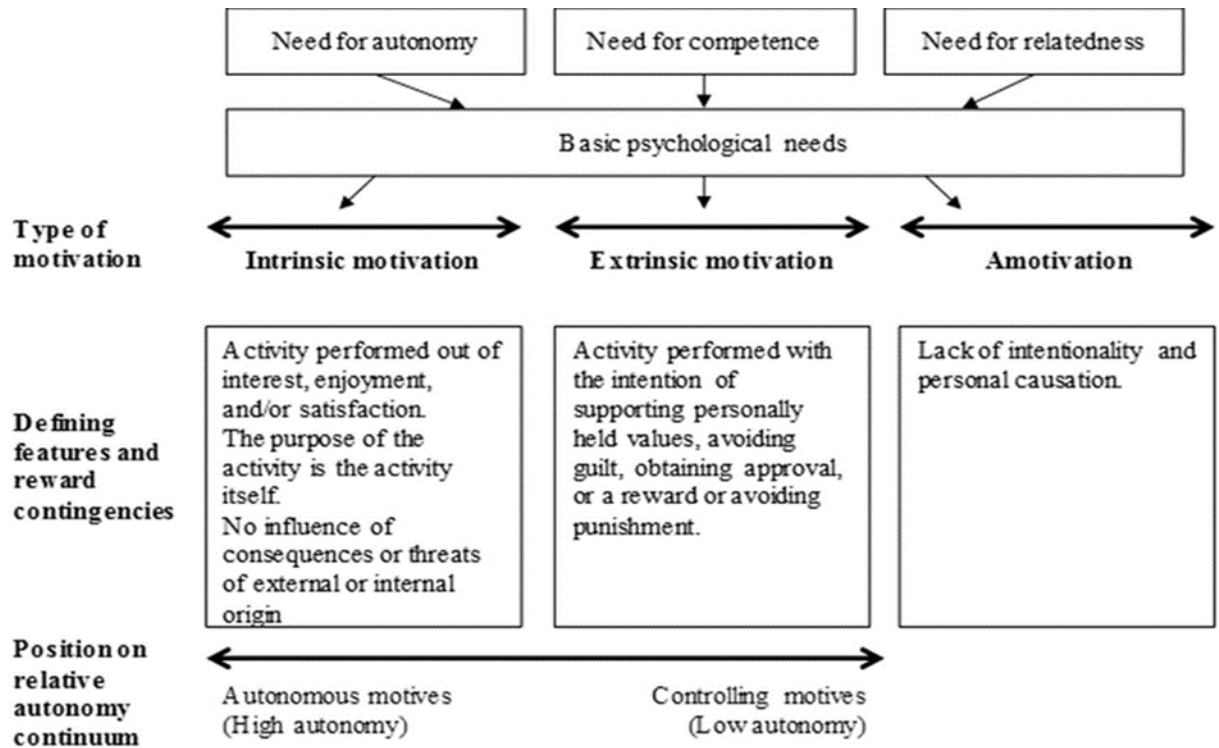
Self-Determination Theory

The nature of an experience is connected to one's likelihood of continuing that experience. Therefore, understanding female sport officials' experiences is imperative for learning more about their intentions to begin and continue (or discontinue) as officials. The reviewed literature above has connections to principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT (see Figure 1) is an empirically derived theory of human motivation and

personality in social contexts that differentiates motivation in terms of being autonomous and controlled (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Figure 1

Self-Determination Theory



Note. This figure illustrates the basic psychological needs, defining features of the types of motivation, and position in the relative autonomy continuum of Self-determination theory (Tiago et al., 2017; adapted from Ryan and Deci, 2007).

SDT aims to uncover how individuals internalize their environments and how that internalization process contributes to fulfilling fundamental psychological needs (Webster, 2021). There are three basic psychological needs described in SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to a feeling of self-governed behaviour that matches the individual’s interests and values. Autonomous actions are biologically distinct from controlled behaviours, but both are dependent on specific mechanisms

(Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan et al., 1997). When one's autonomy orientation is stronger, actions based on interest and value have an internal perceived locus of causality as it related to autonomy across all domains and contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Competence refers to one's perceived level of ability within a particular context. Positive feedback satisfies the competence need, whereas negative feedback diminishes it—thus having the positive and negative effects on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Perceived relatedness is defined as meaningful social connections made within a particular social setting (Gray & Wilson, 2008; Symonds & Russell, 2018). The need for relatedness inclines people to develop satisfying relationships, but that high-quality attachments and relationship satisfaction also require satisfaction of the autonomy need within the relationship (La Guardia et al. 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2022). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are basic psychological needs that are universal and essential for the psychological well-being and optimal functioning of all people (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

To demonstrate how SDT is connected to female sport officiating research, recall the previously mentioned study by Sunde et al. (2023). Therein, the authors surveyed 186 female sport officials and explicitly connected their findings to principles of SDT. First, autonomy (as measured by scores on the Basic Needs in Sport Satisfaction Scale (BNSSS)) was significantly and positively correlated with likelihood of retention (as measured by the Referee Retention Scale (RRS)). This means that if female sport officials feel a sense of autonomy, they are more likely to continue in the role. Second, competence (also measured by the BNSSS) was also shown to have a positive and significant relationship with the RRS. Thus, ensuring female sport officials feel competent in their roles (e.g., through educational opportunities) is important to

predicting intentions to remain as officials. Lastly, relatedness (also measured by the BNSSS) showed one of the largest effect sizes as it correlated to the RRS. This result indicates that having meaningful social connections is positively linked with the likelihood of continuing.

Given the results above, it is clear that SDT is a relevant theory for understanding female sport officials' motivations to begin, continue, and quit. This is evident mainly through understanding female sport officials' major motivations and how they are related to diminishing recruitment and retention rates. To improve these rates, researchers can use the three basic universal needs of SDT as a foundation, working toward understanding the reasons for voluntary continuation in the field of female sport officials. In this study, SDT was used to inform the interview guide, and while the results are not deductively coded using SDT, explicit ties will be made when informing the discussion section.

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlights the current issues female sport officials have offered to share in previous research. Through analyzing both qualitative and quantitative studies, previous researchers have been able to identify important themes that bring attention to significant concerns within the environment of female sport officials. It is imperative to understand the basics of motivation in the officiating context to improve the officiating work environment. While current research on female sport officials is not abundant, the existing literature offers some insight into ongoing problems within sport and sport organizations alike. By using these existing articles as foundation, we are able to springboard future research studies such as this one.

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Chapter Three:

Manuscript

Manuscript

Understanding the Experiences of Female Sport Officials in Male-Dominated Sports

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Abstract

Sport officials are tasked with making quick and accurate decisions, maintaining order, communicating with athletes and coaches, and enhancing athletes' safety. In most sports, more male than female sport officials are recruited and retained. The limited research focusing on female sport officials suggests that their experiences are frequently negative. Further understanding female sport officials' experiences is imperative for learning more about their intentions to begin and continue (rather than quit) as officials. The purpose of this study was to explore the positive and negative experiences of female sport officials who operated in sports where the officials were primarily male. Nine sport officials participated in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify and code common themes within the data, many of which aligned with the principles of Self-Determination Theory. The main themes discussed herein are (a) The Female Experience (pertaining to the context and environment in which they operated), (b) Facilitators (influences that assist with the responsibility of officiating), and (c) Barriers (circumstances or regulations that have had negative impacts on advancement and development). These themes highlight the inequality females are confronted with in the sport officiating environment, but they also provide helpful tools to promote a more positive environment. By using these tools, female sport officials are more likely to continue and thrive as officials, rather than resign. Recommendations are provided for sport governing bodies, officiating organizations, and sport officials, which might contribute to future policy changes that lead to increased recruitment and retention of female sport officials.

Keywords: sport management, women's issues, qualitative, referees

Understanding the Experiences of Female Sport Officials in Male-Dominated Sports

The basic elements to have a successful sport include athletes, coaches, organizations, and qualified sport officials (i.e., referees, umpires, and judges; Hancock et al., 2021). Depending on the sport and their role, officials have varying degrees of responsibility; however, commonalities include upholding integrity, maintaining order, making accurate decisions, establishing communication, and ensuring athlete safety (Carson et al., 2020; Hancock & Ste-Marie, 2013). Given the range of responsibilities—and the scrutiny/abuse sport officials face—it is not surprising that sport officiating is a complex task. This complexity likely contributes to the lack of qualified officials with which many sport organizations are confronted (Carson et al., 2020). Since the presence of qualified sport officials is integral to competitions, it is critical to learn more about the motivations and experiences of sport officials. Having this understanding will allow for a more in-depth comprehension surrounding the methods used by officials—especially female officials—who have persevered and discovered long-term success in officiating. By focusing on a minority group such as female sport officials, this has the potential to offset current issues with recruitment and retention and create positive change throughout all varieties of sport officials, ultimately leading to an increase in recruitment and retention and decrease in attrition rates that might alleviate the officiating shortage.

There is limited research on the recruitment of sport officials. Previous researchers identified that the main incentive to become an official was related to intrinsic motivations (Bright et al., 2022; Furst, 1991; Hancock et al., 2015). Specifically, seeking basic human needs such as social interaction, enjoyment, and passion enhanced motivations to officiate (Livingston & Forbes, 2016; Livingston et al., 2020). Whether

these needs are met through officiating depends on sport officials' experiences, which could be positive or negative. Thus, learning more about sport officials' experiences could offer more insights that sport organizations could leverage when recruiting new officials.

Retaining sport officials—which has received slightly more empirical research than recruitment of officials—is also quite challenging for sport officials. Over the years, there has been a consistent downward trend in the number of sport officials who are retained from year to year (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). Some recent examples include a 30% decline in registrations seen in the United States in 2021 (Niehoff, 2021). Moreover, Canadian sport officials were also on the decline with a decrease of approximately 9000 ice hockey officials (a 27% decline) from 2011 to 2022 and a decrease in approximately 8000 soccer officials (a 38% decline) from 2016 to 2021 (Canada Soccer 2017, 2022; Hockey Canada, 2011, 2022). Some reported reasons for these attrition rates include psychological factors, lack of appreciation, and poor organizational support (see Forbes & Livingston, 2013 for review), which again speaks to the need for researchers to explore sport officials' experiences to learn more about these trends and offer practical resolutions to sport organizations.

Understanding sport officials' experiences is imperative to support new ideas that create a more positive environment where sport officials are able to develop and thrive instead of discontinuing. Whereas most of the existing literature on sport officials targets male participants (Hancock et al., 2021), studying female sport officials as participants could offer significant benefits. In team sports, only about 10% of officials are female; therefore, making changes focused on increasing female recruitment and retention might

lead to more long-term sport officials (Fenton, 2023). Contributing factors to the current decline in the female sport officiating population include gendered abuse, inequitable policies, and workplace incivility (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). Therefore, understanding females' experiences in officiating roles is vital to contributing towards an environment where social equity within the officiating community is achieved (Tingle et al., 2014).

Female Sport Officials

Despite the efforts made by organizations to increase recruitment and retention, the trend still exists that more male than female sport officials are successfully recruited and retained. Moreover, this makes research with regards to female sport officials a priority topic. When the existing literature was analyzed by Hancock et al. (2021), only five out of 386 articles focused exclusively on female sport officials. Although there has been a recent influx of articles, there is still very little research available that specifically pertains to female sport officials. Through analyzing the existing research, articles highlight common topics faced by female sport officials such as female officials' perceptions of their abilities (Reid & Dallaire, 2020); lack of respect (mainly from coaches, spectators, and athletes) (Schaeperkoetter, 2017); perseverance through negative experiences (Nordstrom et al., 2016); and their reasons for dropout (Tingle et al., 2014). The following section will feature important areas as it relates to these themes.

Female Officials' Perceptions of Their Abilities

Female sport officials are often seen as less competent than their male counterparts (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016). Female officials, although they know they are competent, still find themselves questioning their own abilities due to lack of recognition from coaches, athletes, and fellow officials (Reid & Dallaire, 2020). As a result, female

officials have reported feelings of self-doubt, heightened anxiety, lowered confidence, and overall diminished mental health (Tingle et al., 2021). In an attempt to reduce these effects and cope with abuse, female officials would employ techniques such as downplaying, deflecting, ignoring, and adopting a persona (Forbes et al., 2015).

Lack of Respect Directed to Female Officials

Confidence is imperative to the development of long-term officials. When female sport officials are shown a lack of respect from their peers and employers, this damages their self-confidence (Forbes et al., 2015; Reid & Dallaire 2019; Sunde et al., 2023). Researchers have established that officials endure abuse from athletes, coaches, and spectators (Chiafullo 1998; Rainey 1999, Tingle et al., 2014). Lack of respect has been documented as sexist comments, physical intimidation, being undermined, and threats of hostility to name a few (Reid & Dallaire, 2019; Schaeperkoetter, 2017). Resentment towards officiating, as well as feelings of less control and lowered self-efficacy are among some of the negative impacts a perceived lack of respect can cause (Schaeperkoetter, 2017). The male-dominated officiating environment causes negative impacts on the mental health of female sport officials (Webb et al., 2021), with some eventually opting to quit (Tingle et al., 2014).

Female Officials' Perseverance Through Negative Experiences

Throughout the negativity, there is small percentage of female sport officials who find ways to persevere despite the vast variety of abuse (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016b; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014, 2021; Webb et al., 2021). While it is completely accredited to their individual abilities to create and employ coping mechanisms, having assistance from others through developing a sense of community is

highly regarded as a reason for perseverance (Baldwin & Vallance, 2016b; Livingston & Forbes, 2017; Nordstrom et al., 2016). Validation and recognition from fellow officials, coaches, mentors, and athletes also led to enhanced feelings of belonging (Nordstrom et al., 2016; Reid & Dallaire, 2020).

Female Officials' Reasons for Dropout

Exploring reasons of discontinuation is critical towards gathering information as to why dropout occurs. Voluntary departure of female officials has been found to be caused by lack of mutual respect, inequitable policies, gendered abuse, and lack of mentorship (Tingle et al., 2014). Without addressing where the problems occur, these issues will inevitably continue to contribute to the rising attrition rates. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the likelihood of remaining as a female sport official was attributed to feelings of job satisfaction, the opportunity for future education, a sense of community, and commitment to the sport (Gray & Wilson, 2008; Sunde et al., 2023).

Self-Determination Theory

Connected to the nature of experiences is one's likelihood of continuing that experience. Through understanding the nature of female sport officials' experiences, we can use this information to determine the reasoning behind their motivations to continue. The above research has connections related to the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a theory that is used to explain human motivation and personality in social contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2012). SDT differentiates motivations using three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Autonomy is achieved when one's self-governed actions align with one's interests and values. Competence refers to one's perceived level of ability within a particular context.

Perceived relatedness is defined as social connections made within a particular setting (Gray & Wilson, 2008; Symonds & Russell, 2018). These three basic psychological needs are universal and essential for optimal psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

Sunde et al. (2023) explicitly used SDT when studying 186 female sport officials. Specifically, the authors distributed the Basic Needs in Sport Satisfaction Scale (BNSSS; Ng et al., 2011) and Referee Retention Scale (RRS; Ridinger et al., 2017), aiming to identify correlates between the scales. Results for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (measured by the BNSSS) were all significantly correlated to the RRS. Furthermore, their regression analysis indicated that enhancing elements of SDT predicted the likelihood to remain as sport officials. From this, we can deduce that when basic psychological needs are met, there is a greater chance for successful recruitment and retention.

Collectively, it is clear that SDT is relevant to our understanding of female sport officials' motivations to begin, continue, and quit. Further insights into female sport officials' experiences could help develop new methods to increase recruitment and retention. In this study, SDT was used to inform the interview guide, and though results are not explicitly framed as SDT, connections to SDT are clear throughout the results and inform the discussion section.

Purpose

The existing literature describes an environment where sport officials are experts in their positions and have highly accredited knowledge of their respective sports that require rigorous training and skill sets. Sport officials are key stakeholders in competitive sport but have rapidly increasing attrition rates. Female sport officials contribute to a

minority population that is becoming especially difficult to recruit and retain, rendering it imperative to understand their experiences and motivations to officiate.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports to gain insights into their positive and negative experiences. By understanding female sport officials' experiences, the knowledge gathered can contribute to future policy changes in officiating and sport organizations, making the female sport officiating environment a more positive space to increase the levels of recruitment and retention of female officials. Further, the information gathered can contribute to future research in the field of sport sciences by understanding the experiences encountered by female sport officials. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative design was used; therefore, no hypothesis is given.

Methods

This study and all the procedures described herein were approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland (ICEHR #20230430-HK). The ethics approval letter can be found in Appendix A. The following sections describe the methodological components in more detail.

Paradigm

All quality research should have a guiding perspective or lens. Herein, we adopted the pragmatic paradigm, which guided all research decisions (Dewey, 1931; Morgan, 2014). The pragmatic paradigm is a philosophy that centers on finding solutions to practical and complex real-life issues (Giacobbi et al., 2005; Salkind, 2010). In this approach, the goal of pragmatism is to create knowledge that can be accessed and applied

by participants or individuals who resemble the participants (e.g., other female sport officials) (James, 1907; Maxcy, 2003). Since the goal is to create tangible solutions, pragmatists avoid taking a specific epistemological position, instead arguing that any practical outcomes from the research ought to be considered knowledge (Giacobbi et al., 2005). In a similar vein, pragmatists adopt a relativist ontology as truth is whatever works for participants in a given situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Poucher et al., 2020; Tikly, 2015). By conducting research to further understand the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports, the results gathered through this research have the potential to impact both sport organizations and their officials. The choice of a pragmatic paradigm was deemed appropriate wherein pragmatism could be implemented throughout all processes from start to finish. This research addresses a real-world issue and all methods employed throughout align with the pragmatic paradigm to achieve the common goal of providing results that will function with respect to real-world solutions. Where these female sport officials' experiences occur in their place of work and everyday lives, it is appropriate that the selected paradigm be structured to incorporate these circumstances and embody this framework.

Participants

Using utilization-focused sampling (Patton, 2012), we recruited female sport officials in our region, and 9 volunteered to participate. This was chosen since utilization-focused sampling includes the process of working with primary intended users to render judgments regarding how well the evidence of their claims is supported when working to discover outcomes and impacts (Patton, 2012). Utilization-focused sampling aligns well with the pragmatic paradigm wherein they both aim to discover solutions based within

real-life evidence. Criteria to participate in this study included being at least 19 years old and to self-identify as a female. Participants' average age was 34 years. Participants were required to hold a current position as a sport official in a male-dominated sport. In order for their respective sport to meet the criteria for "male-dominated" it had to—at least within their association—have significantly more male than female officials. Participants officiated in softball (n = 3), basketball (n = 2), ice hockey, swimming, dodgeball, and soccer. Average officiating experience across all participants was 10 years. Since all participants lived in Newfoundland and Labrador (where the research team lived), the first author conducted in-person interviews.

Data Collection

All participants completed an in-person demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). Following, participants engaged in in-person, semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 35 and 101 minutes, with an average length of 65 minutes. The interview guide (Appendix D) followed Patton's (2002) recommendations. First, there were background questions that allowed participants to share about their initial entry into officiating as well as a general overview of their officiating experiences (e.g., "What do you enjoy most about officiating?"). Next, we asked experience/feeling questions that pursued more specific and situational experiences (e.g., "When in the competition environment, what's it like being a female sport official?"). The last section of the interview guide allowed participants to offer advice for future female officials and provide the researcher with any additional information they felt necessary (e.g., "Was there anything I haven't asked you about your experiences that I should have?"). The researcher used open-ended conversation probes based on existing literature to direct and elicit information within the

interviews. Additionally, the researcher recorded all interviews and took field notes throughout.

Data Analysis

After all interviews were complete, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was employed to organize these data from the transcripts. Thematic analysis is the act of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data and includes six phases (Braun et al., 2016).

The first phase was familiarization with the data, which occurred during transcription. This involved thoroughly reading all interview transcripts and beginning to take notes that were deemed relevant to potential codes. Second was generating initial codes and looking at the initial ideas that appeared interesting from the transcripts. The goal of this step was to start the extraction process and identify key points for analysis. Third was searching for themes, where the ideas from phase two were categorized based on common themes. To do this, the codes from phase two were examined for potential relationships and placed into groups (themes) that expressed those relationships on a broader level. The construction of the themes was achieved through inductive coding, though connections to the SDT framework (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are clearly identified in the results and discussions section. Fourth was reviewing themes; the focus of this phase was to ensure that the extracted data fell into the appropriate themes, and at the end of this stage, the themes fell in line with the data set. Fifth was defining and naming themes, which allowed for the development of the story that each theme represents. Finally, sixth was producing the final report, where the themes were brought together in a final analysis. The inclusion of a combined results and discussion

section aligns with the pragmatist paradigm, ensuring tangible results for participants and other female sport officials, with less focus on theoretical implications.

Methodological Quality and Rigor

Methodological rigor in this study was established through methodological coherence, reflexivity, and a critical friend. Methodological coherence ensures that all research decisions consider the study purpose and paradigm (Mayan 2009). To facilitate coherence, the pragmatic paradigm was used to select participants, create the interview guide, implement thematic analysis, and guide how the results were written. Reflexivity is when the researcher critically reflects on how they respond to the participants as well as the topic itself (Jones et al., 2014) and was established through taking notes during interviews, along with journaling reflections between interviews. Lastly, the use of the critical friend furthered methodological rigor by assisting in the coding and theme development (Brewer & Sparkes, 2011). The role of the critical friend (a graduate student familiar with qualitative analysis) was to vet 20% of the codes, along with all themes and definitions to enhance the accuracy of the interpretations and the level of critical analysis within the results.

Results and Discussion

Three themes were produced through the analysis of the participant interviews: (a) The Female Experience, (b) Facilitators, and (c) Barriers. Each theme contains multiple sub-themes that are explained below.

Theme: The Female Experience

The first theme discussed is “The Female Experience.” Within this theme, female sport officials offered in-depth information pertaining to the context and environment in

which they operated. Though the information provided was primarily about their sport officiating experiences, it also included some description of other environments, such as their home lives. For this theme, there were four sub-themes: (a) Participants' Backgrounds, (b) Experiences Specific to Female Officials, (c) Generalized Experiences, and (d) Reasons to Continue as Officials.

Participants' Backgrounds

Every participant had a unique story to share with regards to their officiating experiences, which were grouped into this sub-theme. Each of their backgrounds gave insight into their initial entry into officiating, while detailing their day-to-day routines as female sport officials. Similar to past literature (e.g., Bright et al., 2022), initial entry into sport officiating typically began in adulthood, after playing the sport throughout their youth, "I played hockey throughout my whole life, and I finished up my university career and was looking for ways to stay in the game" (P2). Others joined later in life, with some crediting their children for their segue into officiating, "My daughter started swimming in Ontario and at her first meet they were looking for timers. So, we had to take an online timers' course and then get on deck" (P7). Despite the circumstances around how participants chose to enter officiating, they all shared a common love for their respective sport, "Basketball [has] been such a part of my life, I'll never truly give it up... I don't think I'd ever truly quit" (P9), which has been documented elsewhere as well (e.g., Livingston & Forbes, 2016).

Female sport officials indicated that home life played a significant role in influencing their background. One example of this was when officiating had familial ties, "I got started because my Mom is an umpire, and I was interested. I used to watch her

umpire when we got to softball fields. So, I started to get interested and wanted to join” (P5). However, for younger participants especially, “officiating families” could sometimes pose issues, particularly around scheduling conflicts and getting rides to competitions, “When my sister, Dad, and I are [all] scheduled for games, the transportation to the gyms can be an issue” (P6). Even if participants did not come from a background of sport officials, each of their families expressed interest and offered encouragement pertaining to their positions, “My Dad is the only sports person [in the house]. My Mom knows absolutely nothing about it, but she’ll still ask how the game was... it’s only when serious experiences happen that [we’ll talk about it]” (P3). When female sport officials find themselves in a position where they are the parent within the household, officiating becomes more of an obstacle. Participant Seven shared how when she officiated a full-day swim meet, she still felt obligated to care for her family, “The rest of the family has got to pick up the slack because you’re solely focused on running the meet. I still have to get everything done and you know, there’s meals thought out and all that.” Livingston and Forbes (2017) found in their study with female officials that the practical demands of being an official (i.e., time spent away from family) led their participants to consider quitting. Participant Eight also acknowledged how familial responsibilities would impact her officiating experience, “If I were to quit, it would probably be if I decided to start a family or something along those lines, because I know that’s not easy.”

Regardless of the age or circumstances surrounding why they became an official, all participants found enjoyment within their positions in one form or another. This was expressed through their passion for their respective sports, or the way in which it brought

them closer as a family. One issue that became obvious in this sub-theme was when sport officials had increased commitments to non-officiating tasks (e.g., school, work, and/or children), they often felt a burden of responsibility to the officiating community, as well as their families. This was especially true for the female sport officials who had roles within their households such as wife and mother.

Experiences Specific to Female Officials

Participants felt that certain experiences were unique and exclusive to being female sport officials in male-dominated sports. Some of these experiences were related to participants' physical appearance, "I have been stood up and told 'You need to look more like this' ... I don't know that that would have been the same conversation had I been a male" (P9). Often, the female sport officials were pressured by athletes or coaches to change their decisions, which participants believed stemmed from a prejudged belief that females are easier to influence, "The assumption is there that they can persuade me because I'm probably easier to persuade. But I've never seen it with males" (P3). Other participants described times when their ability to officiate was scrutinized because they are female, "Being a female [official] in a male game is hard because [the] guys will try to show that they're better or show that they don't need a female to show them how a game goes" (P5). There was also a common undertone among the participants that their male counterparts saw them as outsiders and they needed to prove that they belonged, "Being a female in a male-dominated sport, the [male officials] have a lot of questions and almost quiz you on the rules. They want to make sure you know your ability" (P1). This is a common stereotype surrounding female sport officials' perceived ability. Often, female sport officials are assumed to be incompetent in their positions despite their

qualifications and expertise, thus further marginalizing them (Reid & Dallaire, 2019, 2020).

Participants recounted that because their experiences were so unique, they often only found true comfort in the presence of other female officials, “Men can be all ‘Oh, I totally get it; I understand’ but they truly don't. They're just trying to be supportive. I think we need more [female mentors] so that you don't feel alone. You feel that separation” (P9). Respondents emphasized that the demeanor with which other female officials approach questions and ideas during competitions had the essence of openness. Unfortunately, participants described that they were not met with the same attitude from male officials, “I’ve been on the ice a few times where you just need a quick second to chat [with your fellow officials], and a female [official] will take that second and bounce an idea [with you], whereas the guy [official] already has his mind made up” (P2).

Findings for this theme include a noticeable lack of females within the officiating environment as well as how their unique experiences have made an impact. Previous researchers have established that having a sense that you belong to the “in-group” can help to improve overall feelings around being a female sport official (Sunde et al., 2023) and this can be achieved through more implementation of more female mentors (Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014). More globally, these experiences relate to being part of a minority group and how these encounters are unique and specific to that group. Having a similar role model might enhance a sense of belonging. Therefore, while it is encouraged to be unique and have individuality, it is also important to feel as if you belong.

Generalized Experiences

Participants also had experiences that were likely similar to male sport officials, which could be positive or negative, however, these experiences could still lead to different outcomes (e.g., perceptions of psychological and physical safety). The most common negative shared experience was abuse, which is not unique to female sport officials. All participants had negative experiences to share. For example, Participant One stated:

We ended up tossing three people out of the game. At that point, it was defaulted. After the game, one of the bystanders that was watching came up and threatened us, [saying they were] going to run us over, and all over a game of softball, [where] you only win a t-shirt.

In some situations, participants described situations where they were not on the receiving end of abuse, but rather, bearing witness to it, “I was the linesperson in another game, and I witnessed a coach yell at a U13 player in a very demeaning way. It was completely inappropriate, and that particular young player actually left the bench screaming” (P1). While the severity of the negative experiences ranged from participant to participant, abuse was experienced nonetheless, “[I have] not seriously thought about quitting, but like those negative experiences, they take you aback a little bit” (P6).

Participants also shared positive experiences that made them feel as if they were valued, “I would say the referee-in-chief saw potential in my skillset, and because of that I’ve been able to climb the ranks” (P2). Participant Five found positivity through their own growth as a female official, “I’m getting better of being more confident and showing people to respect me ... it’s hard to get respect because you’re umpiring in a man’s sport, and they think they’re superior.”

Although these experiences exist for male and female officials, it is important to be mindful of how similar experiences might lead to different responses or outcomes. The example of abuse above is, sadly, common, but could also have a more profound negative influence on female officials' psychological safety. When one's psychological safety is threatened, this threat is perceived differently between males and females with females often feeling less safe when faced with potentially dangerous situations. The level of positive support and positive experiences needs to be impactful enough to dilute the negativity in order to see long-term success in female sport officials.

Reasons to Continue as Officials

Long-term retention of female sport officials is a major obstacle. This sub-theme focuses on influential reasons that have helped participants in maintaining their positions as female officials. All participants believed longevity in their officiating positions was a result of passion for their sport, "I continue, and I think it's because I've reached a level where I've put so much into it and I still love the sport. I still love the environment. I feel like I can contribute" (P7). Aligned with past research (e.g., Kellett & Warner, 2011), Participant Two emphasized having a sense of community and being unified as a team contributed to her longevity:

I felt like the officials, like when you're on the ice, it is perhaps the greatest team effort that I've ever been a part of. Any given game, I feel that like I could be on with someone I've never ever met before, but once you're on the ice, like you're a teammate and making sure that the game goes smoothly, which I think is a pretty unique feeling, but also, I think when you're within that bubble of the rink,

everyone's there to do a good job, whether you're male or female... So, like you know, that kind of keeps you coming back.

Others attributed the benefits of regular exercise as a reason to continue, "Getting into officiating and getting back to being physically active has been an encouraging factor for me" (P6). Underlying throughout all participants was a sense of pride in their accomplishments as female sport officials through their abilities to make changes of both small and large impact:

I did eventually become a board member. It was good to learn, the background of what things are like dealing with Dodgeball Canada, and then slowly working my way up to being President there...starting my own non-profit organization is what really gave me that high with dodgeball. Because it made me feel like I had a huge accomplishment (P8).

Serving a need in sport also played a part in officials continuing in their positions, "I sometimes think maybe I can quit or not do it next year, but [softball] really needs umpires because some retire or quit. I want to be there to help out" (P5). The need for officials is felt on all levels of each sport organization; the reality is that without officials, sport can no longer continue, "You can't run a meet without a referee. Even if you had all those [timekeepers], you can do nothing without a referee, and some meets you can't do anything without a level five referee" (P7).

Being motivated to continue as a female sport official requires a variety of motivations including passion, teamwork, physical benefits, and the need to contribute. Regardless, all participants felt a sense of pride, achievement, and community within their respective positions influencing them to persevere.

Summary of the Female Experience

The four sub-themes were (a) Participants' Backgrounds, (b) Experiences Specific to Female Officials, (c) Generalized Experiences, and (d) Reasons to Continue as Officials. Results herein provide several insights into female sport officials including frequently becoming sport officials in adulthood, often balancing work life with their officiating careers, believing many of their experiences differed from their male counterparts, experiencing abuse, and attributing retention to sense of community, pride, and love of the sport.

The findings in this main theme have several connections to SDT. For instance, becoming officials seems like an autonomous choice based on intrinsic motivation and love of the sport. Additionally, it was clear that female sport officials encountered situations where their competence was called into question by others (e.g., athletes or coaches), which could negatively impact intentions to continue as officials. Lastly, participants noted the benefits of feeling like part of a community, which aligns with the principle of relatedness. Clearly, the results here can be viewed through an SDT lens, which researchers and practitioners ought to consider.

Through increased efforts from organizations, the feeling of isolation among female sport officials can be decreased. Increased recruitment and retention efforts through advertisements creates an autonomous choice for prospective female officials to join. By allowing autonomy to dominate the decision, higher rates of recruitment and retention can be expected. Organizations should also consider scheduling events such as social outings on a regular basis to increase the social dynamic (i.e., relatedness) within groups of sport officials. In doing so, more female officials will feel as if they belong to

the “in-group” and less like an outsider in a male-dominated industry. Along with planning events, contributing more efforts into how officials’ schedules are created with an emphasis on respecting other jobs, families, and school schedules would provide a more accommodating atmosphere and lessen the burdensome feeling depicted by participants. Simultaneously, by having more officials on-hand, this would also help to minimize scheduling conflicts. Researchers could also investigate how to solve the scheduling issues by developing and experimenting with a program that is inclusive of officials’ respective responsibilities.

Theme: Facilitators

This theme, “Facilitators”, refers to influences that assist with the responsibility of officiating and that can be used to make recommendations and potentially influence change at the organizational level. Herein the following five sub-themes are (a) Mentors, (b) Training and Education, (c) Organizational Support, (d) Coping Strategies, and (e) Experiences as a Seasoned Official.

Mentors

A mentor can be an individual or group of individuals that have made a lasting impact towards the development of the participants as officials through offering advice or comfort during their officiating careers. Each participant described their individual experience with mentors ranging from family members to other officials, both male and female. Although experiences differed from participant to participant, all identified that mentors were fundamental to their development (see also Nordstrom et al., 2016).

Participants described their experiences with mentors as positive and essential to their development as officials, “I would say both female and male have offered advice or

mentorship. When you're on with someone who's better than you, it just causes you to elevate your game" (P2). Some participants also shared how their roles as officials transitioned them into mentoring positions, "I always try to ensure people—if they want to learn—we're always here, we're free, we're here to support you" (P8).

A common concern in the literature (e.g., Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014)—which was also noted herein—is that the officiating shortage means mentors are harder to come by—especially female mentors. Participants who have not had the opportunity to be mentored by another female official in their field often wondered what it might be like, "If I had a female [mentor], I think there would definitely be a different perspective coming from years of officiating... it would be kind of interesting to get the perspective of more experienced female referees" (P6). Participant Three discussed how having a female mentor as a young referee in a male-dominated field would have provided her with more of a source of comfort:

Sometimes it's kind of scary going up to like a strange man and they're giving you criticism on the game and you're like 'Who even are you', right? Well, that's what happened to me when I was like 12. This man came up and he was like 'Hi, I'm so-and-so. I just watched your whole game and now I'm going to give you some tips'. [But with] women, they are more motherly, more approachable.

There seemed to be a general consensus throughout interviews that criticism, when delivered by a female official, was often delivered in a more approachable manner, "The harshness of conversations is different between men and women. So, [male mentors] are straight to the point whereas a female mentor, they would try to word it so where you're not offended – you don't put your back up" (P4).

Mentorship was universally appreciated among participants, all of whom emphasized how their experiences as female officials were improved through guidance of any kind, regardless of the source. Having mentors is fundamental when the goal is to retain and develop the skills of female sport officials.

Training and Education

Training and education are carried-out through organization-created opportunities. These opportunities are designed to assist with the advancement of skill or knowledge and the importance thereof.

Commonly, clinics are typically the main resource provided to offer this kind of advancement. Participants explained how going to clinics shaped their viewpoint of what it means to be an official, as well as the fundamentals within their respective sports, “Refs are a very closely bonded team, and I would fully agree with that based on my experiences. I remember that comment being made in my first clinic or one of my early clinics” (P2). Participant Five emphasized how much she valued her opportunities to attend clinics and learn, “I kept going to clinics. I joined online clinics too because of COVID happening. So, I had to do online stuff, and it was fun like getting out more and learning and meeting new umpire friends too.” Tingle et al. (2021) also found that their participants enjoyed using camps and clinics as tools to convey information as well as express any concerns they have about the officiating environment they are currently working in.

Having a lack of clinics means having lack of knowledge mobilization to inform of new policy changes, as well, it hinders the advancement of lower-level officials, “In Newfoundland, it’s up to Swimming Newfoundland and the director of officials to

constantly be putting out clinics and constantly be moving [officials] through, and they need to be doing that” (P7). Clinics are also beneficial wherein they offer an opportunity for officials to raise awareness about any concerns they may have pertaining to the officiating environment. Because of this, Participant Four took the initiative of hosting clinics herself and encouraging other officials to voice their concerns, “I actually work [environmental concerns] into my presentations during my clinics and I really go over the extensive harassment, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse policy because that’s written.” In fact, recruiting new female officials may be more attainable if these more experienced officials were to host female-only clinics like Participant Four, “Some females are uncomfortable because they feel like if they ask questions the guys will make fun of them or make them feel stupid. So, I offer women’s only clinics and I get a good turnout for that.” This creates a safe learning space for current and aspiring female officials. By using resources like clinics consistently, more information can be mobilized and applied efficiently.

Organizational Support

The following sub-theme provides examples where interventions or actions by organizations led to positive experiences for participants. Participant Six spoke about her experience as a newcomer and how the organization showed her a welcoming environment, “They’ve been really great in terms of like teaching you and like supporting you in like a new environment.” Some participants gave examples of how organizations have already been attempting to make efforts to focus more on female officials, “They put a lot of like...what’s the word...emphasis, on female refs in the past few years, which is nice. So, there’s going to be opportunities anyway, hopefully” (P3).

While there were many instances when organizations showed efforts to improve the overall environment, participants noted that sometimes, organizations' earnest efforts to include female officials fell short. For example, Participant Four explained, "This year was the first year that the company supplied uniforms for women... So, that was nice to go to a tournament and feel feminine and not look like a stick or like Gumby or SpongeBob." She continued, "I've been asking them for years, like 'Why aren't you just getting women's pants?', and they said, 'The demand isn't there'" (P4). This showcased how organizations eventually responded to participants' needs, but also areas where more work could still be done (i.e., responding faster to female sport officials' needs). Similarly, a few participants explained how their competition assignments could be beneficial for showcasing female officials, but fell short of meeting individual expectations for advancement:

Sometimes when it comes to local assigning and stuff like that, it's, 'Well, we'll put you on the girl's tournament this weekend and out [of] the boys'. The boys is [geographically] closer to me. So how come I can't do that one? I agree, I think it is important for females to see female officials because they do see a lot of male officials. But you know, just because I'm a female doesn't mean I should be typecast to all female games (P9).

Having genuine support from your organization is fundamental for a working relationship. Several studies have shown that once female sport officials perceive they are no longer valued by their organization, it significantly contributes to their decision to quit (Livingston & Forbes, 2016). While some participants described experiences where their needs were met after approaching the organization, some experiences depicted an

environment where organizations fell short. Previous research has suggested that offering incentives could strengthen the relationship between officials and organizations (Gray & Wilson, 2008). By working to improve the relationship between sport official and organization, needs from both parties can be met more efficiently.

Coping Strategies

It was extremely important that interview questions included inquiries into how participants coped with the stress of their high-demand positions. Previous research has shown that some officials lacked the knowledge of how to address the abuse and harassment they encountered in their fields and were uncertain of how to seek support (Webb et al., 2021). Throughout the interviews, all participants shared different strategies that helped them get through tough days. This sub-theme highlights some of the methods the participants used to work through difficult situations faced during their careers.

One common avenue the participants used when seeking support was talking about their experiences with other officials, “You can have a chat with them after the game, decompress, see what’s going on and just have a little quick chat” (P1). Through communication among their fellow officials, participants have been able to share experiences with individuals who can truly relate to their experiences:

It is a team effort. Even in a meet management role, you can call upon an official to help you deal with a coach. When you’re a starter, you have the referee you can consult with. When you’re an official, it doesn’t matter—you just come and talk to somebody. So, there’s never that...[idea] that you have to know everything, or you have to be afraid to ask questions. There’s always a chance or someone to talk to, or there’s also always a parent who’s willing to listen to you complain (P7).

While relating to experiences with other officials is an excellent way to decompress, participants agreed that having another female official to confide in was most desirable, “I feel more comfortable speaking with other female officials. I was at an instructor’s clinic earlier the fall and there were three female officials and the rest, I’ll say 15 or 20, were males” (P2). By confiding in other officials as a coping strategy, there are fewer instances when officials find themselves bringing negative experiences home with them.

When officials bring their experiences home, seeking comfort from partners and family is often another mechanism used to decompress, “I talk to my sister and my dad and they were both like, ‘If you want to keep doing this, you can’t let that bother you; move on’ and then, you know, go to your next game with a fresh mind about it” (P6). In addition to family, many participants said that their partners would also listen to their experiences within the officiating environment, “At home, I will vent to my fiancé about little things... Sometimes you just have that little bit of irritation when you go home, but once you vent about it, you’re like, ‘Okay, I’m good’” (P8).

For beneficial coping, it is important that female sport officials have resources available to express frustrations and stressors in a healthy way, especially through speaking with other female officials who have similar experiences and share psychological perspectives. While most participants had positive support networks at home, it is incumbent upon sport organizations to teach and facilitate coping skills in an effort to provide such skills to all officials.

Summary of Facilitators

A facilitator is a design or natural process that makes it easier to complete a task. In this instance, participants provided examples of what facilitators were available to help

them continue in their roles as female sport officials. Mentors were highly credited for their emotional and technical support; clinics were essential for learning fundamental skills and assisting with advancement within the position; and friends, family, and partners played a role in emotional console and encouragement.

Within this theme, several connections can be made relating facilitators to SDT. The feedback from participants pertaining to the use of clinics to enhance training and education shows a clear increase in competence, or at the very least, a desire to improve competence. By having more opportunities to learn, the participants increased confidence of their own abilities, but also made meaningful social connections, which strengthened relatedness. Social connections and feelings of relatedness were also seen to increase in female officials who had/have a mentor. Research has shown that when people are autonomously motivated, they display higher interest, which is fundamental for retaining and accumulating more long-term/seasoned officials (Ryan & Deci, 2022). It stands to reason that by increasing feelings of competence and relatedness, such feelings of intrinsic motivation (i.e., autonomy) would naturally increase as well.

One example of an adjustment that could be made by organizations to alter the current issues hindering facilitators would be to implement a mandatory mentorship program upon entry. Such a program could pair new female sport officials with other female sport official mentors as often as possible for optimal outcomes. To further support female sport officials, it is recommended that regular female-only clinics be held—or at least clinics with female instructors—to provide a safe space where they feel comfortable to voice any issues rather than internalize these matters that could potentially lead to discontinuation. Having female-only or female-led clinics might build competence within

the female sport officials, which is important to recruitment and retention. While advancement is a positive bonus of clinics, it is more important that clinics are offered to provide opportunities to develop vital skillsets and advance officials' knowledge of the officiating role, thereby leading to potential advancement opportunities. As well, through clinics, there are greater opportunities to provide more resources and coping mechanisms to any officials who may need them. This also benefits officials on a personal level, and can lead to higher rates of continuation, additionally benefitting organizations.

Theme: Barriers

Barriers in this study are circumstances or regulations that have had a negative impact on advancement and development as a female sport official. Sub-themes include (a) Negative Environmental Influences, (b) Unfair Treatment, and (c) Organizational Barriers.

Negative Environmental Influences

Negative influences impacted participants within their environment, "You can tell there's a completely different atmosphere when they have a male refing and a female refing" (P3). Previous research by Tingle et al. (2014) showed that the result of an antagonistic environment made female sport officials feel as if it was difficult, if not impossible, to be embraced as a part of an officiating community. These influences can create an uninviting environment that make being an official feel less appealing:

Sometimes I'd rather hear my name, rather than like 'Hey ref'. I'll actually go up and say that to coaches 'Hey, I'm [P3]. I'm going to be refing your game today' but they don't acknowledge you. I'm a human being just like all these other male refs and you know their names (P3).

Similarly, many participants expressed that they are not taken seriously in their positions, “The men have a hard time listening to a female tell them what to do. They know that I have the experience, but they don't take criticism well. They're like ‘Yeah, I know.’ Then why aren't you doing it?” (P9).

Diminishing self-esteem can be a side-effect when consistently being undermined and challenged in any position, “It's always in the back of my head like, ‘I want to do good’ because I am in the minority in this position. I do feel a bit of added pressure” (P6). It's especially discouraging when organizations are not showing signs of making the environment a more progressive place, “It's time for a change of guard at this point where the people in these positions aren't men. You have to pass the baton and hopefully, there's finally female executives who are making the decisions on behalf of females” (P2). When female sport officials operate in a toxic, negative environment, complete with abusive and sexist incidents, it poses a threat to their mental health (Webb et al., 2021).

Officiating in a challenging environment can have a negative effect on performance and in turn reduce female officials' perception of their abilities, which can ultimately lead to discontinuation. The difficulties the female sport officials confronted within their environments highlight that the environments in which they work can be cold and uninviting. If the goal is to try and recruit and retain more female sport officials, addressing these grassroots issues should be a priority.

Unfair Treatment

This sub-theme highlights participants' experiences with inequity and inequality within the female sport officiating setting. Experiences with being treated unfairly varied across participants. Participant Two experienced facetious comments, “I came off the ice

and a guy was like, 'Wow, you can skate'. But it wasn't – like he almost – it's almost like they're not sure what we're getting into. Like, 'We got a female in the room.'”

Oppositely, Participant Four received more vulgar comments, “I had someone charge after me and call me a ‘Fucking cunt’ and [threaten] they were going to hit me... someone had to restrain them... he only got a three-game suspension for it.”

Sometimes being treated unfairly has nothing to do with the position of female sport official at all; it is personality-based:

There's sometimes – I don't know if this is the right word, but personality discrimination. Whether you're a cheery, giggly, person or you're a serious person, those things should not matter, but often, you may have done everything right but because you were too serious on deck, you [get negative evaluations].

That's very limiting feedback, but they just don't know how to give feedback and that's the best they could come up with (P7).

Being evaluated based on your demeanor within the competition environment because there was no other feedback to give is irrelevant. Sadly, many participants experienced feedback on their “ability to officiate” that had little to nothing to do with their actual skillset. For example:

As a woman, I have been told, because of being a woman I need to put two bras on. I've been stood up next to Mrs. Fitness Canada and told, 'You need to look more like this'. I don't know that that's happened to men. They did say, I ran the floor well, but I needed to have a better look, then my court presence would be more, you know, taken more seriously if I looked a certain way (P9).

Unfortunately, comments like this are commonplace. In fact, over three-quarters of participants in this study had at least one experience with harassment that had no ties to officiating whatsoever.

Targeted aggression towards female officials was managed differently depending on participants' tolerance levels, "[The male catcher was] right next to me, and he's like, 'Who the hell are you blowing [indicating the participant was performing sexual favors for the opposing team]? Why are you calling that a ball?' I said, 'Excuse me?'... I tossed him and they lost the game" (P1). This interaction demonstrates how a seasoned official was psychologically equipped to handle such situations without experiencing long-term negative consequences, whereas newer officials might be reticent to take such actions.

Demonstrated throughout this subsection, we can see that unfair treatment comes in many forms. Sadly, although they are all examples of different experiences, one commonality each of these experiences share is the repercussions for these actions were either insufficient or nonexistent. There is no reason for a female sport official or any other official to be subject to this type of environment. Zero tolerance policies should be strictly enforced with clear guidelines for this type of behavior to cease within sports organizations as well as on the field.

Organizational Barriers

Barriers at the organizational level exist through creating and enforcing rules and regulations that are not viable and inhibit female officials from advancing or making change. Across several sports, scheduling was a common issue. How the schedule is created, and who is prioritized appeared to vary based on popularity and convenience, rather than ability:

I chose to play intermediate [soccer] to be able to ref [the senior provincial soccer championship]. I was the only female capable of reffing those games, I wanted those games, and [the organization] wanted female officials to ref these games. All of a sudden, I'm not getting any games. That doesn't make any sense to me. I sent an email, didn't get a response. I wanted to ref and they didn't give me the opportunity. They kind of just left me hanging. I was like, 'Okay, cool [sarcastically]' (P3).

Coinciding with scheduling being questionable, many participants brought attention to the idea of officiating being a "boys club" alluding to the idea that organizations are run by males who prioritize the requests and needs of their male officials:

I try to make that effort to work with the younger officials, but you request it, and you don't get it. I ask, 'Can I please work with some of the young female officials?' and I'm assigned with a man. It's the old boys' club and the boys get what they want. And I'm not just saying this because it's a female thing. It's a basketball thing (P9).

All of the female sport officials in this study agreed that having a female mentor, was, or would be, beneficial to their development and the development of future female officials. Preventing this from happening only hinders any kind of progress.

Advancing within certain organizations has also proven to be a challenge for some participants. Some organizations use online programs to advance their officials to a higher officiating status, some organizations choose to use both online and clinic-based programs, but some organizations require that they oversee the advancement of their officials in-person from start to finish through the use of clinics, which can be a time

consuming and less than ideal practice, “To move forward, you depend heavily on the [upper-level officials] and the directive officials, heavily. Without putting on clinics, you don’t get experience teaching clinics, and you don’t get to take the clinics. You are fully dependent on that system” (P7). For officials to reach their individual goals, it takes time, passion, and dedication. To be devoted to their advancement, some participants sacrificed their time off work, time with their children, and even some holidays—all with their next goal taking priority. When a decision is made to not advance an official, typically it is reasonable. However, when that decision is made based on personal vendettas, it exposes a degree of unprofessionalism:

I applied to be umpire in chief and I was the only applicant. Then someone who was not benefiting our program called in and said if I was the umpire in chief, I would personally destroy the program. So, my interview was based off that and not my resume (P4).

Climbing the ranks is designed to test your knowledge and give opportunities to advance. When programs related to advancement are not used correctly, officials are not able to advance. When advancement options appear to be inaccessible, new female sport officials will not be enthusiastic about applying.

Summary of Barriers

According to the experiences of the female sport official participants, several barriers contributed to a negative working environment. Negative environmental influences came from several avenues including from other members on the field. Similarly, unfair treatment with varying degrees of vulgarity was evident. Finally, the organizational

barriers highlighted different obstacles that hindered the development of the female sport officials.

With this theme, connections to SDT are evident. Notably, negativity affects psychological well-being and impedes individuals from satisfying the three basic psychological needs. Beginning with competence, one's perceived ability can be damaged through psychological abuse, demonstrated throughout the examples given by the participants. Relatedness can be negatively influenced by barriers such as unfair treatment and barriers within organizations (e.g., having officials evaluate each other). Finally, autonomy can be seen through participants feelings and understanding surrounding advancement and promotion within their positions as officials. Participants expressed how they did not always have a clear pathway provided to them regarding how to progress in their positions, thereby dampening feelings of autonomy.

To counteract these negative environmental impacts, organizations should consider having more females in decision making positions. Having a female in a position of power would benefit organizations who are aiming to reduce barriers for female sport officials. Organizations are also urged to strictly enforce their zero tolerance policies aimed at curtailing officiating abuse, and we suggest steep penalties for violations of such policies when the abuse is grounded in sexist or discriminatory actions. Further, organizations need to have clear advancement plans and equal opportunities pertaining to higher-level organization-related positions. The criteria by which to obtain these positions should be as objective as possible, with the process made known to all officials within the organization.

Conclusion

Understanding the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports is imperative to improving the environment for all officials. Through interviews with nine female sport officials who have been successfully recruited and retained for the purposes of this study, three themes were deduced. The female participants' experiences shed light into what it means to be a female sport official and the challenges that are unique to this demographic; facilitators highlighted influences that have aided with the responsibilities of officiating and promoted continuation; and barriers exposed areas within organizations that need improvement to create a more positive working environment for all officials.

With Ryan and Deci's (2022) SDT, we can dissect and understand these results as they relate to the basic psychological needs of autonomy (e.g., feeling self-governed), competence (e.g., perceived ability), and relatedness (e.g., sense of belonging). It is only through the understanding these basic psychological needs that we can identify the true motivations behind female sport officials' reasons for long-term success in their positions. By understanding this, we can prioritize strategies that ought to be successful and implement them within organizations in an attempt to counteract declining recruitment and retention rates and increase long-term continuation.

A key tenet of the pragmatic paradigm is generating knowledge that can be used by participants or those like them (e.g., other female sport officials) or who have influence over them (e.g., officiating organizations). Below is a list of recommendations, based on the results of this study.

1. In an effort to enhance perceptions of community, officiating organizations ought to schedule social events and team-building activities that are inclusive and welcoming for female sport officials. Doing so creates a

sense of relatedness among officials, which might potentially have a favorable impact on intentions to continue as sport officials.

2. To attempt to increase rates of recruitment and retention, the implementation of mandatory mentorship programs for new female officials should be considered. In particular, offering female mentors to new female sport officials has shown to be a fundamental process in the development of long-term female sport officials, while also enhancing perceptions of relatedness and community.
3. Regularly scheduled clinics increase learning opportunities (i.e., competence) as well as provide an environment for officials to address any issues and concerns. By also providing regularly scheduled female-only clinics (or at least clinics with female instructors) it leads to a safer, less scrutinizing environment for female officials to feel comfortable asking questions and addressing issues with their peers.
4. Including females in decision making positions within organizations is truly the best way to have an individual who can empathize with the experiences female officials endure. Having a set amount of positions within organizations that are only to be filled by qualified female applicants should provide some balance when making and approving new policies.
5. Enforcing zero tolerance policies related to harassment, violence, and threats towards officials with stricter penalties would decrease the likelihood of reoffences as well as first-time offences. Newer, more firm

policies would not only apply to athletes and coaches, but spectators and other officials as well.

6. Implementing transparent and objective pathways for advancement allows for female officials to have a better understanding of how they can progress within their position and what that timeframe might look like. By providing an open access, easily accessible plan to female officials, this gives them the opportunity to make an autonomous decision about their advancement.

The importance of implementing and enforcing policy changes such as these is not only to better the environment for current and future officials, but to positively influence the officiating environment and ultimately allow new policies to be more inclusive and benefit all officials. This is important to the officiating community as recruitment and retention numbers need to increase more now than ever.

Limitations and Future Research

Due to the limitations of conducting an interview style study in a small province, findings may not fully encompass and reflect the multitude of obstacles within the day-to-day lives of female sport officials. Also, by expanding into a larger geographic region, more sports that might not have been included in this study could have the potential to participate and have recognition. In this study, the criteria for a sport to be labeled as “male-dominated” required that more male officials were currently registered than female officials within the respective sport. By broadening future research into more populous areas, the potential for a sport to be considered “male-dominated” is increased exponentially and therefore can yield a wider variety of female sport official participants.

The basics of SDT revolve around needs and motivations (Fowler et al., 2019). By using SDT in future research surrounding sport officials in different officiating settings, more can be discovered about the motivations behind beginning and continuing. By focusing on areas such as active sport officials, these data can provide more current and relevant motivations that can be valuable when looking for new strategies surrounding recruitment and retention.

Future research into the topic of female sport officials might also consider conducting intervention-style studies. By leading an intervention study, this could assist in the development and enforcement of new female-centered policies within a sport organization. In fact, policies aimed at enhancing the female sport official's experience could create a more inviting and opportunistic environment for all, which might benefit recruitment and retention of female and male sport officials.

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Chapter Four:

Conclusions

Conclusions

Sport officials are not only essential to fair gameplay, but rather all gameplay in general. Without qualified sport officials, competitions will be forced to stop. Current retention and recruitment rates are trending downwards more dramatically each passing year; therefore, the time to take action to combat these negative numbers is overdue. As there is already a shortage of sport officials, focusing on the minority group of female sport officials within that population might lead to potential solutions to this crisis. This led to the specific purpose to understand the positive and negative experiences of female sport officials who operated in sports where the officials were primarily male.

Through individual semi-structured interviews with nine female sport officials who operated in male-dominated sports, three themes were identified: The Female Experience (gives context to the operational environmental); Facilitators (influences that have aided participants with the task of officiating); and Barriers (influences that have negatively impacted advancement or development). Throughout, several sub-themes were also identified to strengthen each theme. These themes, sub-themes, and participant quotes were used to showcase the experiences of female sport officials' experiences being in male-dominated sports. Some of the main results included a lack of females in decision making positions in organizations, communication barriers between organizations and officials, a lack of mentorship for new and existing officials, and a lenience on zero tolerance policies surrounding inequitable treatment of sport officials both on the field and within organizations.

As this research employed a pragmatic paradigm, the focus in the manuscript presented in Chapter 3 was less about theoretical implications and more about practical

solutions. Nevertheless, participants frequently described experiences that were closely aligned with principles of SDT (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness), and it is important to focus more on that theory here. SDT has been used in several studies to discuss how sport officials' motivations contributed to their desire to continue in the field. For instance, Gray and Wilson (2008) linked relatedness to their findings on track and field officials. Similarly, Symonds and Russel (2018) connected autonomy to their results on sport officials from small colleges and universities. Reid and Dallaire (2020) related competence to the results of their study on female sport officials. Few other theories have been used in sport officiating research therefore, the decision was made to continue using SDT for this study as well. In the current study, autonomy was noted in several places including a desire for more clear pathways for advancement and more advertisement encouraging female officials to join. Competence was also present within the results thorough increased training and education opportunities. Finally, relatedness was exhibited through meaningful social connections and feelings of community between the female sport official participants and other officials. SDT is a useful theory for explorations into sport officials provided the study pertains to meeting their basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When looking to discover an individual's motivations for a continued activity, SDT is the best option especially if the purpose of the study relates to increasing recruitment and retention or understanding experiences.

Through the results yielded from this study, recommendations were developed for sport officials, sport organizations, and future researchers (see Chapter 3). It is only with changes such as these that we will begin to see positive changes within organizations that

improve the working environment for female sport officials. Not only could such changes assist in combatting the declining retention rates of female sport officials, but beyond the organizational standpoint, implementing positive changes can improve the overall officiating experience for female officials. By creating a positive environment where female officials feel safe and understood, the benefits will reach beyond the female sport officiating community and ultimately create positive change throughout the organizations as a whole.

Principal Researcher Reflection

Writing this paper and conducting this study has been the best and most rewarding challenge. Having the opportunity to be the sounding board for all the participants in this study has been a very rewarding opportunity. The goal for this research is to create positive change within sporting organizations resulting in a safer and more positive working environment for female officials—ultimately benefiting all officials. With a more welcoming environment, the hope is that recruitment and retention rates will increase helping to solve the officiating crisis.

Through analyzing the existing literature, it was obvious that there is very little research available surrounding female sport officials exclusively. Of the literature that does exist, it is clear that sexism and lack of respect towards female officials are all too common. Therefore, through this research study, and hopefully many more in the future, more female sport officials will have the opportunity to share their experiences and make positive changes within the sport officiating environment.

Through attending and presenting at conferences such as the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology and the North American Society for the

Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity, I have come to appreciate that many other academics appreciate this work and express the same enthusiasm as I when discussing the issues. In addition, I presented this work to Sport NL at an annual meeting and will offer a workshop in Fall 2023 to share the results with sport organizations and their officials. Through these knowledge translation sessions, I can ensure the results get to the individuals who operate at the grassroots levels of sport.

As a student, I have a newfound appreciation for the articles I have been reading and citing over time. I understand the time and effort put into each paper I search and consume. I have learned more Microsoft Word shortcuts than I ever thought imaginable and disregarded most software programs that could have made my life easier. In my defence, I did not know they existed. However, through engaging with the data in such a hands-on way, I came to appreciate the detail with which I understood my results. Ultimately, this experience has broadened my understanding of academia.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

ICEHR Number: **20230430-HK**

Approval Period: September 9, 2022 – September 30, 2023

Funding Source: SSHRC [RGCS# 20220361]

Responsible Faculty: Dr. David Hancock; SHKR

Title of Project: Understanding the Experiences of Female Sport Officials in Male-Dominated Sports



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

September 9, 2022
Ms. Alice Theriault
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
Memorial University

Dear Ms. Theriault:

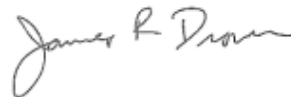
Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* for **one year**. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must

submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **September 30, 2023**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the ***Applications: Post-Review*** link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,



James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. David Hancock, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
Physical Education Building, #2023A, St. John's, NL, Canada, A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864 8129 Fax: 709 864 3979 www.mun.ca

Title: Understanding of the experiences of female sport officials in a male-dominated sport

Researchers:

Alice Theriault (Graduate Student, Memorial University, aatheriault@mun.ca)
David Hancock (School of Human Kinetics & Recreation, Memorial University, dhancock@mun.ca)

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Understanding of the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports.” To participate, **you must reside in Newfoundland and Labrador, identify as female, be 19 years or older, and be a current sport official**. This study is **NOT** an employment or organizational requirement.

This form is part of the informed consent process, giving you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. To decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the primary researcher, Alice Theriault, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent. It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

My name is Alice Theriault, I am a graduate student at Memorial University. I am leading this study examining the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports as part of my Master's thesis project.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of female sport officials in male-dominated sports to gain insights into their positive and negative experiences. Understanding the experiences of female sport officials could help organizations affect positive change for female sport officials, including, but not limited to, recruitment and retention.

What You Will Do in this Study:

You will be asked to complete one demographic survey to gain a basic understanding of your identity. You will also be asked to attend one interview. The interview will be audio recorded so that when I analyze the results, I can accurately report your answers verbatim.

Compensation:

Upon the conclusion of the interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card to compensate you for your time. If you withdraw after beginning the interview, your \$25 compensation will be sent to you via e-card.

Length of Time:

The demographic survey should take 5 minutes, and the interview 60-90 minutes.

Withdrawal from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, simply let the primary researcher know, and you may leave the interview. If you choose to leave during the interview, your survey will be securely destroyed and your responses will not be used in the study. You can choose to withdraw your participation up to one month after the interview as well. Simply inform the researcher; your survey will be securely destroyed and your responses will not be used in the study.

Possible Benefits:

Although the immediate benefits of your participation in this study are minimal, it is anticipated that this study will broadly improve our understanding of how to recruit and retain female sport officials, which could lead to positive changes within your organizations.

Possible Risks:

The interview questions might bring up distressful feelings; if they do, you are free to leave the interview at any time and withdraw your participation. If you feel you need to avail of counselling services as a result of the interview, consult the Newfoundland and Labrador Mental Health Crisis Line (24-hours and toll free) at 1-888-737-4668. It is possible that a data breach occurs. Every effort will be made to safeguard your data (see next section) and we will assign participant numbers (e.g., P1, P2...) to minimize the risk of identifiable information being discovered.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data/recordings from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. The interview will be held in a private location. Information collected from the interview will contain identifiable information through the use of the audio recording. Collected audio recordings will be transcribed by a third-party confidential transcription service. The demographic survey will not be accessible to anyone outside of the research team. All collected data will be contained on the password-protected laptops/computers belonging to members of the research team. Prior to the publication of the study, all personally

identifiable information will be anonymized/aggregated; thus, confidentiality will be maintained.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. The interview process will not be anonymous; however, participation will not be made known to anyone outside the interview or research team. All collected data will be contained on the password-protected laptops/computers belonging to members of the research team. Further, results will be presented without personal identifiers that ensures anonymity.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

Demographics will be collected via pencil/paper questionnaires which will be stored in the locked office of Dr. Hancock. All electronic data/recordings will be stored on the research team members' computers/laptops, which are all password-protected. Only the research team will have access to the data. Data/recordings will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. At that time, all electronic files will be permanently deleted from the research team members' computers and laptops.

Reporting of Results:

Results of this study will be reported with direct quotations, but will not contain personal identifiers. However, it is possible that informed readers could deduce who participated in the interview. Results are to be published/presented in a scientific journal using open access so that participants may view the article without a subscription. The link to the article will be shared via Dr. Hancock's Twitter account (@profhancockmun). You do NOT need a Twitter account to access the link.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

After results are analyzed (approximately August 2023), this study constitutes the Master's thesis of Alice Theriault, therefore results will be written in the final thesis paper that is added to the QE II Library repository (<https://www.library.mun.ca/cns/>) for open access. David Hancock will also post a one-page infographic to his Twitter account (@profhancockmun) to share results. You do NOT need a Twitter account to access results.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Alice Theriault (aatheriault@mun.ca).

ICEHR Approval Statement:

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have

been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent:

By completing this form, you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been advised that you may ask questions about this study and receive answers prior to continuing.
- You are satisfied that any questions you had have been addressed.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation from the study by choosing to leave the interview at any time, without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that you are allowed to not answer questions that you do not wish to answer.
- You understand that the data/recordings contain identifiable information, but will be reported in anonymous/aggregate form with direct quotations; an informed reader might deduce your participation.
- You understand that your responses **can** be removed up until one month after completing the interview.

By consenting to this research study, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities. Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

I have read and understood the informed consent form. I confirm that I identify as female, am 19 years of age or older, am a current sport official, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Demographic Survey

Short Demographic Survey

- 1) Age
- 2) Where do you live?

Please answer the following questions based on the sport you identify as your “primary sport” for officiating. You may skip any questions if you are uncomfortable answering.

- 3) How many years have you officiated?
- 4) What is your current certification level?
- 5) How many competitions do you typically officiate in a year?
- 6) What level of competition do you most frequently officiate in a typical year?
- 7) What is the highest level of competition you officiate in a typical year?
- 8) What is the highest level of sport you have ever officiated?

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Introduction – Thank you for joining me today to offer your insights into your experience as a female sport official in a male-dominated sport as part of my Master’s thesis project. This interview will be recorded with audio. You may skip any questions if you are uncomfortable answering. You are allowed to leave the interview at any time; please let me know and you may leave the interview. Before beginning, do you have any questions?

Background Questions

- 1) Could you please say your name, and which sport you officiate?
- 2) Can you tell me about your initial entry into officiating?
- 3) What do you enjoy most about officiating?
- 4) What’s your best/worst officiating experience?

Experience/Feeling Questions

- 1) When in the competition environment, what’s it like being a female sport official?
 - a. Experiences working mostly with male officials?
 - b. Experiences of gender bias?
 - c. Experiences of discrimination?
 - d. Experiences with unfair performance criticism?
- 2) What about outside the competition environment; what’s it like being a female sport official?
 - a. Issues with sport/officiating organization?
 - b. Experiences belonging to a group that is mostly male officials?
 - c. Experiences with gender bias?
 - d. Experiences with discrimination?
 - e. Experiences with unfair performance criticism?
- 3) How have you navigated these situations, either in or out of the competitive environment?
 - a. Other officials?
 - b. Officiating organizations?
 - c. Friends and family?
- 4) Given your experiences, what has led you to continue in your sport?
 - a. What, if anything, led you to at least think about quitting?
- 5) What role did mentors (male or female) have in your development as an official?
 - a. Do you feel there is a difference between having a male mentor or female mentor?
- 6) Can you give me an example of a time when you felt a strong connection with your fellow officials and organizations?
 - a. Do you feel there are differences between male officials and female officials pertaining to your organization?
- 7) How, if at all, does officiating affect your work/home-life?

Summary Questions

- 1) What can governing bodies do to increase the number of female officials?
- 2) What advice do you have for females who are considering becoming officials?
- 3) Was there anything I haven't asked you about your experiences that I should have?
- 4) Do you have any further comments you would like to contribute?

Appendix E: Quotation List - Theme: The Female Experience

Sub-Theme: Participants' Backgrounds

Actually, back when I was 17, I started umpiring fastpitch softball. So, I started at a younger age group and then I graduated to the level two of fastpitch and I did that for quite a few years and then eventually I stopped being competitive, playing competitive fastpitch and I went over to the slo-pitch side. So, then I decided to umpire slo-pitch and it just went from there. So, I've been umpiring for 30 years. (P1: Background: Deciding to officiate)

My preference, I don't enjoy doing the male games. Certain male games, they're really competitive male games because they're – they just have hotheads and they go at each other. Not so much me, but they go at each other too much, and it just – (P1: Personal preference)

Lots. So, way back when I was 17 and I wanted to be an umpire, this gentleman called Ed Hong, he plucked me up and he said, "do you want to umpire for a summer?" I said, "absolutely" and he just paved the way for me, and he's since passed away, but he was phenomenal. He was out there on the field with me for the first I don't know how many games, to just get your feet wet and learn the ropes as such. So, that was fastpitch. (P1: Background: Role of mentors)

Like we have no children, but I know that the other couple of female umpires that I umpire with, they do have kids. So, they can't do as many games or they can't – the pressures of home are more than what it is, and maybe that's why we see more male umpires too. I don't know. (P1: Homelife: Households with less responsibility)

Other than time away from home, that's probably the only thing. (P1: Homelife: time away)

Because realistically, the best thing that you could do is after the game is done, they'll say "Jesus, who umpired that game?" If they could say that, you did a good game because realistically, you don't want it to be a fiasco. (P1: Reasons to quit: Inability to make good decisions)

But other than that, I think if my body gave out or if I couldn't do it to the best of my ability. If I started to – if I couldn't call a good game, I wouldn't be able to do it anymore. (P1: Reasons to quit: Physical wear and tear)

After that scenario a few years ago with the lady threatening to run us over, that was a close one. [redacted] talked me down, my partner talked me down from that. (P1: Reasons to continue: Partner support)

Which I think is – I think a lot of kid – people start when they're younger. Usually in minor hockey, they'll start the time clock or start officiating in around whatever – I think at the age of 15 or 16 you can start reffing. But I didn't. I didn't start until I was like 24-25. (P2: Background: Getting into officiating later than the average)

Yeah, undergrad, yeah, after my undergrad. So, I didn't start officiating really until I was like 25. (P2: Background: Age getting into officiating)

But, yeah, I don't think it really – I mean, sometimes if you had a bad game, you might take that home mentally. (P2: Work/Homelife: Taking bad games home)

And if you have other hobbies and stuff, it can be challenging, but no, I would say this year, I'm probably reffing more games than I have in the past. (P2: Quitting: Impact of commitment: Challenging with other factors)

Yeah, so, yeah, sometimes I feel like I struggle to make as many games as I'd like, just I mean, I do have a number of hobbies. So, fitting in reffing, I guess, is one of them. (P2: Work/Homelife: Personal scheduling conflicts)

The only person and that I was able – other than the other two female officials was someone through – I guess long story short, had known me through my work, my professional life. So, as soon as I kind of introduced myself, he was pretty quick to draw the line between the two points of how we knew each other. So, that opened up like a whole other conversation. (P2: Sharing experiences: Coworkers)

Yeah. And I had another situation when I just started a new job and the guy, my closest colleague, really close friends, but when we first got started, we were heading out over the road for some work and we had a truck and I had the keys and he asked me, he said "are you comfortable driving the truck?" and at the time, I

was like “yeah” but then it hit me after and I was like, if a man – would he have asked a man that question? No. “Are you comfortable driving the truck?” It’s like yeah, it has four wheels. (P2: Sexism: Workplace)

Yeah, I mean, it’s a time commitment too, getting to the rink. (P2: Quitting: Time commitment)

So, like I hold that to a very – I hold my skating to a very high standard. That’s why I like reffing. (P2: Reasons to continue: Love of skating)

Maybe depending on the association you’re working with, like you know, I am in one referees’ association currently where at the moment I’m not feeling great about it, but I’m not going to give up officiating completely because of it, whether I stick with – go to a different association or not, but like I’m still with my minor hockey association. So, I mean, as long as I can – like I enjoy skating. (P2: Reasons to continue: Love of skating)

Now, I don’t know if some of the male officials – like when I’m usually on with females, like I don’t know if there’s an age difference too. Like some of the female officials I’ve been on with are typically I’ll say 25 plus. So, you’re a bit more confident. You’ve had a number of games under your belt. Whereas some of the male officials I’ve been on with have been a bit younger. So, sometimes their ability to handle situations might just be a little weaker in that sense because they’re younger and they might clam up a little quicker because they’re not confident in their own abilities. (P2: Different ages and experience levels)

Honestly, there’s not many opportunities for people in Newfoundland anyways to like go away or anything like that. So, actually that actually caught me off-guard when we went away. But, honestly, there’s not much like discrepancy outside. It might be like in other provinces, but in Newfoundland, it’s kind of just whatever. Like there’s not much going on for us anyway, whether you’re a woman or a man. (P3: Demographic challenges)

There’s some ups and downs of reffing, but I’ve always had thick skin, so it’s kind of fun to deal with it and discipline people sometimes. (P3: Having a thick skin)

Refereeing is more like in the evening time. So, like I can work in the morning and then go ref like two games, like five to eight or whatever, and it’s like no problem, but like it’s tiring. Like in the summertime especially, like you’d work more hours in the summer anyway, just because there’s no school. But like I would never want to ref like two games after like a six-hour shift, like never ever, be like no, I can’t do that. (P3: Work/Homelife: Can be tiring juggling officiating and work)

Originally, I did the umpire course in 2012. Because I live in Shea Heights and there was a lot of youth programs there, I wanted to be able to make sure that the kids in my community had an official so they wouldn’t lose a chance of playing games, and the teacher of the course actually got me to start umpiring men’s fastpitch immediately because of my age and my softball background. So, I didn’t get to officiate much in my community and went straight into men’s fastpitch here in Newfoundland. (P4: Background: Later start)

For me, when I first started, I was questioned a lot because nobody – like I lived away for 15 years. Like I was pretty known on the scene before I left and then when I came back, a lot of people who were my age remembered me, but there was a lot of younger people who didn’t know who I was. So, I’d get questioned on calls and things like that, but it’s the same players every year. So, I’ve built a friendship and a professional sporting relationship with them all. Like they talk to me and I work labour and delivery, so a lot of them – because I only officiate men’s softball here. So, a lot of them are now at the stage of life where they’re having children and I’ve been present for some of the babies and things like that. So, I’ve developed a lot of great relationships with some of them. (P4: Background: Initial entry)

So, I grew up playing sports with boys and, you know, hanging out with boys. So, I feel like I fit in more with boys. But, I mean, I still get along with – when I go to a tournament with girls. But I’m not uncomfortable if it’s all men, you know. It just doesn’t bother me because that’s the way I grew up. (P4: Background: Mainly male interactions)

But during the summer, it takes over my life, and like I said, my husband is very patient, and I jokingly said I thought about officiating hockey and he said, “absolutely not. You’re not officiating any other sports except softball, because that’s just too much.” But like I said, he’s very patient. My son loves playing softball and my twins want to play softball. So, we’re a softball family. (P4: Homelife: Family support)

My poor husband, it’s like we have reverse roles because a lot of families, it’s the man that’s the official and the wife toddles everyone around, where he’s the opposite. He does a lot of the grunt work for me and the meals, because men’s league is at six and eight. So, I’m usually out the door quarter after five. So like,

meal prep and stuff like that, it's usually on him if I'm doing games at night. Good chance it's hotdogs, burgers, nuggets or fries. (P4: Homelife: Husband wears two hats)

Well, my whole life I was – I played sports and like I said earlier, I have a cousin that played pro hockey and we're only two months apart, and everyone – my whole life is like “oh, if you were only a boy. If you were only a boy, you and Harold would be doing this. You and Harold would be doing that.” I'm like I'm not a boy. I played sports just as hard as he did, and I played – I did everything. Like one year whenever we play the Moss tournament, we'd get the same awards. We'd have the homerun titles. We'd have the bagging – so, like all the awards we got, you'd swear we were twins because we won everything the same every year. It was very funny. But growing up, everything was “oh, if you were only a boy.” I'm like why should that matter? It shouldn't matter. Drives me crazy. (P4: Background: Being compared to male athletes in the family)

And the issue is to me, the people that took it seriously know I can't be bought. I'm not someone that – I'm not a yes man. Like if I don't agree with what's going down, you're going to know it. I'm not a lapdog kind of thing. I'm very – if it's not helping the game, I'm not going to be for it. If it's something that – like doing what I do is not for a piece of paper or to say hey, [redacted]'s an umpire of this and umpire of that on paper. No, I'm hands on. (P4: Being passionate)

Absolutely. So, like I said, during the summer, it takes over our life. Like this – I did so much ball that I had a – I strained my IT band, I believe. I haven't officially had anyone tell me that's what it was, but every physical therapist at tournaments and stuff like that says “yeah, I think you strained your IT band.” So, I've actually taken off from playing this fall, this winter from basketball and volleyball, to let my knee fully heal so that I don't have continued injuries in the future. So, like my weekends now are my weekends off. So, we can go do things and it's fantastic. It's a nice break. (P4: Having a break: Pleasantly different)

So, I'm very – I have friends call me selfless. I don't ever do anything to gain anything for myself. I obviously do tournaments and stuff because I want to get better and you know, that's what I get. I earn – I've never been given anything. I've earned everything I've received. (P4: Being selfless)

Yeah, and I'm happy. I have an amazing husband. I've known him since we were eight years old. He allows me to do all this stuff because if he didn't support me, I couldn't do any of it. My parents are majorly supportive. (P4: Reasons to continue: Family support)

Other than that, exhaustion sometimes because our numbers are getting lower. (P4: Quitting: Exhaustion)

So, like I did almost 200 games this summer, plus five tournaments. So, like I'm wearing myself thin, plus I'm a model and I'm a full-time nurse. So, like I'm – I burn the candle at both ends. Like I literally work weekend nights so that I can officiate in the afternoons on the weekends because we don't have enough people. So, exhaustion is the only thing, and like every now and then you'll get someone that's just really mouthy and like “why am I doing this?” and I used to joke that I must be – like I must hate myself because I worked in Emerg, no one likes you there because you're not seeing them fast enough, you're not taking them seriously enough. I used to coach ball. Parents don't think you know what you're doing. And then I officiate and half people hate you there. So, like I really must not like myself. (P4: Quitting: Exhaustion)

And then, like I said, I officiate – if I'm working, I'm doing ball in between sleeping and working. Work life, well I'm – if it's slow, I can use the time at work on computer to do like the database or look up manual things or write exam questions, things like that. This last week, I had the game on at work on computer so I could watch Team Canada playing because mostly – they're in New Zealand, so most of their games were like 11:30 at night or three in the morning, whatever when I'd be working, so it was perfect. (P4: Work life: Engaging with sport at work)

I got started because I was – my mom was an umpire, and I was like interested. I used to watch her umpire when we got to softball fields. So, I started to get interested and wanted to join. So, she even trained me a little bit, then she started taking me to clinics, met some of her friends and they've been showing me how to umpire too, and I started umpiring, but more like T-ball for kids to get used to like being around people. (P5: Background: Family influence)

But I just stay because I like to make my mom happy and it's a good thing to do summertime since I'm out of school now. (P5: Reasons to continue: Family influence)

Well, my mom told me a lot of stories of her umpiring and I really want to join her. (P5: Reasons to continue: Family influence)

I sometimes want to like think maybe I can quit or not do it next year, but my mom really needs umpires because some keep retiring or quit, but I want to be there for her and help her out because she has to deal

with a lot of stuff every summer of umpiring. So, I'll be in her front line helping her dealing with umpires and always helping her. (P5: Reasons to continue: Family influence)

But we're still staying strong and we survived another year of softball and I'm ready for another year of it. (P5: Optimism)

My mom tells me that one day I can go on a trip too like her and meet other umpires and they'll give me tips and show me tricks and stuff too. I can't wait. (P5: Optimism)

It doesn't matter if you're a female or male, we'll still help you out and teach you the ways to umpire. (P5: Becoming an official)

So, wasn't much of a difficulty in my life, but now I have a job, so I don't know if next summer will be difficult of handling my job and umpiring the same time. Yeah, it'll be a new challenge to face when it starts. (P5: Balancing work and officiating)

Since grade six, and then I played two years into university in Women's Metro League in St. John's. (P6: Background: Athlete history)

My father actually officiates too and he talks about how that they're always looking for female officials. (P6: Family ties)

Okay. Well, I started two months ago through the process of training. We did weekly online sessions for like information and teaching the hand signals and stuff like that. So, as soon as I knew that I was going to start officiating, I was actually able to get in games pretty quickly. So, yeah, I've been – I've had two games every week now since the end of October. (P6: Background: New official)

Yeah, I guess like kind of talk to my dad about this. He's been like my biggest motivator in sports for everything. Like we play like co-ed softball together, we're on a pool team together. He coached me like throughout the years playing basketball. So, yeah, he's always been like kind of someone I've looked up to in the sports environment. So, seeing him going out and officiating and, you know, his like subtle encouragement, like "why don't you try it?" Like so that's kind of what's got me into it and keeps me going in it. (P6: Reasons to continue: Family ties)

Honestly, like positively. Like I have been really enjoying doing the officiating, like I said. Like I'm more physically active now that I've started officiating, so you know, that always boosts your mood and makes you feel better. And it's great that I'm able to do like this internship and like I'm still motivated to go officiate after. So, if anything, I would say I've had more positive, like benefits to my work and homelife. (P6: Work/Homelife: Positive impacts)

The only issue we have is when me and my sister and Dad are scheduled for games, the transportation to the gyms, that's really been the only like conflict. But it's more so just, you know, very minor. But yeah, but other than that, it's been all positives. (P6: Homelife: Transportation conflicts)

Yeah, I guess like kind of talk to my dad about this. He's been like my biggest motivator in sports for everything. Like we play like co-ed softball together, we're on a pool team together. He coached me like throughout the years playing basketball. So, yeah, he's always been like kind of someone I've looked up to in the sports environment. So, seeing him going out and officiating and, you know, his like subtle encouragement, like "why don't you try it?" Like so that's kind of what's got me into it and keeps me going in it. (P6: Reasons to continue: Heavy family ties)

My daughter started swimming in Ontario and at her first meet they were looking for timers. So, we had to take an online timers' course and then get on deck. (P7: Background: Children's team needed officials)

Well, no one else does it in my house. So, you know, I got to make arrangements for – you know, for like availability of a car and you know, I'm going to be gone for the – like I might be home for three hours in the day of a meet where you have the morning and the evening meets. (P7: Work/Home life: Transportation)

And if it's a whole weekend thing – when I was meet manager, it would be the whole weekend, and you know, that's just – the rest of the family has got to pick up the slack because you're not – you're wholly focused on running the meet. I still have to get everything done and you know, there's meals thought of and all that. (P7: Work/Home life: Preparing family)

It's a lot of time. You know, it's – everybody has a long week and if you have the weekend off, the last thing you want to do is be on deck at six a.m. until 10:30 and then back again at three until seven, and rinse and repeat for Sunday. And sometimes Friday. (P7: Being an official: Time devotion)

The highest level in swimming is a five. That's a master official. That's a referee. There's two levels of referee, four and five. Master official referee is five. There are higher levels beyond that. Like you could

become a FINA official. That's a whole other set of requirements. But for all intent and purposes, level five is the highest. I've currently a level three, have been a level three for three years. Because of the pandemic, there has been really nothing to get us to move forward. But I can operate as a referee now because I've done all the courses, but I just need to – when I'm on deck, I need to have a level five there as well. So, I'm operating at a level four, but I haven't gotten my level four badge. (P7: Background: Climbing the ranks) I guess I originally started officiating probably the five years or so ago. And that was actually with a league that [redacted] kind of had I did it more on a volunteer basis as a board member type ordeal and kind of got involved in it that way. And then eventually started our only- three years ago and then I've kind of been the president of league for that, and kind of officiating in that regards too. (P8: Background: Volunteering) I have seen sometimes, depending on the volunteer, we always have to make sure like- if we've seen stuff throughout the years that we kind of mentioned to them, like, "Okay, well, if you're good buddies with a friend on this side of the court, we'll probably have them be a linesman on the other side of the court", or vice versa. Sometimes we've had backlash from people saying, "Oh, this call was made because of so-and-so" or like, you know, they think we're bias against their team kind of thing- which is never the case. (P8: Being biased)

If I were to ever quit, I think there would only be like, maybe, I guess, three reasons. One would be I play so long until I'm so injured and sore and everything else. (P8: Quitting: Injury)

Second reason, I think it'd be old age. (P8: Quitting: Old age)

Or, the other thing probably would be if I decided to maybe like start family or something along those lines, because I know that's not easy. (P8: Quitting: Starting a family)

I just joined to make some extra money while I was in university. That's kind of why I joined and kind of how it started. (P9: Background: Started as a university student)

It doesn't really affect your work in any way. Well, I'm a physical education teacher, and I think it's given me a tougher skin, like I've said before. So it's definitely helped me with work- being in the classroom with, you know, dealing with the behaviors of students and not letting it get to me. Because I've heard- I've been called things I've been, you know, so I think it, I think it has helped me become a better teacher. (P9: Work life: Better teacher)

And my home life, I think just my husband supportive, but I don't think it really changes anything there. (P9: Homelife: Supportive partner)

My husband's you know, he's like, my number one supporter, he sometimes says, "I don't know why you do this", but then he knows when I come home, how happy I am when I've had a great day. And, you know, you get the compliment you've worked so hard to try to call a fair game and that kind of thing. So, you know, I do vent to them about stuff, and they're supportive. And I mean, my husband lets me go to all these tournaments. And because he knows it's something that's important to me, and that I enjoy the good times more than the bad times, for sure. Yeah, I can't. My family is very supportive. Yeah. (P9: Having family support)

Sub-Theme: Experiences Specific to Female Officials

Maybe the men don't experience that as much. The pressures of homelife and children, that's another downfall of being a woman in this. (P1: Homelife: Female officials' familial duty)

Right? So, normally the ladies, they come and ask me stuff, not only because they have questions because they don't understand and that's half the reason why they question, I guess, and their comfort level with me, because I probably know them outside of the ballfield. You know, we just have that level of friendship, acquaintances, you know. (P1: Gender bias: Female athletes more comfortable with female officials)

You can pretty much deescalate any situation, just as long as you're calm. As long as they treat you with respect – I treat them with respect no matter what. As long as they treat you with respect, they can be yelling their head off, coming at you, whatever, and I'm just like "we're just going to calm it down. We're just going to have a conversation. So, what's your issue? And we'll have a chat about it. If we can't figure out what's going on, well, then we'll come to consensus to agree to disagree. But other than that, let's just lower the levels." (P1: Deescalating situations as a female official)

I don't know if I'm reading into that situation too much, but yeah, I think I've been on the ice a few times where it's like you just need a quick second to chat and a female will kind of take that second and bounce

an idea, whereas like the guy already has his mind made up. (P2: Mentors: Easier to talk to other female officials)

I mean, and this isn't about officiating, but I'll bring up the other night just because it's so fresh, at this water polo game I found myself in. But the first quarter, the ref had me walk behind him on the deck to show me the rules, and after – when it was happening, I was like okay, like sure, I've watched – I watch water polo once every four years on the Olympics. So, okay, maybe there's something I'm missing. But after I got home, again talking to my sister, it kind of hit me, it's like he would not have had a man for the first quarter of that game stand behind him and him show him the rules, you know. (P2: Unfair treatment as a female athlete)

But when I was in the New Brunswick area, the Atlantic region, there's definitely more female officials at a high level. Like we usually had one or two per game and they were all like really good. Now again, I'm comparing my like university versus minor hockey, but yeah, there's more female representation I'd say on the mainland, at that time, but I think there's definitely been gains made more recently for female officials here on the island. (P2: Experience with female officials)

But yeah, the female official who's kind of in that lead position for the province, early on when I just started, I had got in a couple of games with her at like the Newfoundland Winter Games or something and she's very to the point, like “you need to work on this, this, this and this.” It was just between periods, and like within the third period, it was like okay, got it. So, like it's comments like that. (P2: Mentors: Having a female mentor)

But you see it in other sports, which is great. Like every time I turn on like say football on a Sunday like I'll see one female official out there, which is really nice. (P2: Female officials in professional sport)

You probably saw the article like two weeks ago, there's a couple young female officials that got to officiate junior B for the first time in Newfoundland. Yeah. So, one ref and one linesperson, both female, were in games I think two weeks ago for the first time in Newfoundland's history in the junior B league. So, yeah, you could probably look it up. I think it's Leah Rideout and Claire Howie. (P2: Female officials in media)

In the league, yeah. But you know, I say like when I turn on the TV and I see a female official in a football game, I mean, there's – and FIFA– (P2: Female officials in professional sport)

I guess I do feel more comfortable speaking with other female officials. Like I was at an instructor's clinic, like I mentioned there, earlier the fall and there was three female officials and the rest of the I'll say 15 or 20 were males. (P2: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other female officials)

Yeah. Well, I guess to that point, I've never – when I've been evaluated, it's mostly been at high end female tournaments, so I'm dealing with all females in the room. (P2: Evaluations: All female evaluators)

I think they've – I've seen some positives in, you know, increasing the female representation in like large female tournaments. You know, I think that's – like I said, growing up, I only recall one female official here in the city. But now, I think females are being more exposed to it. So, there's that. At the lower levels, you know, making sure females are representative. (P2: Governing bodies: Increasing female representation)

Yeah. Yeah, I think sometimes if I'm on the ice and I have questions, perhaps a female is a bit more easier to kind of run that by, whereas a male is kind of like he already has his decision in his head of what the answer should be. (P2: Mentors: Easier to ask females questions)

Yeah. And like I think I mentioned before too, like being able to network professionally, I think opening up the door to other female officials, being able to have discussions with them and perhaps help them just outside of reffing to, I think that's important. (P2: Becoming an official: Networking with other female officials)

Anyways, so to that point, I think – like I think that's really cool. But on the other side, it's like okay, there's women reffing NFL games. I think we can handle junior B. (P2: Female officials have the requisite ability to officiate high level sport)

So, like when I ref female games, there's like not as much action. Yes, there's some like tackles, whatever, but it's never as like serious and stuff. (P3: Being a female official: Female games)

Yes, for sure. They definitely use that to their advantage, absolutely. (P3: Gender bias: Being pressured to change your call)

And that's another thing too I'm going to add. When I'm on the lines, a lot of them say like “oh, hey, linesman” but they'll change to like “oh, sorry, lineswoman.” So, they do – some of them do make the

connection, like oh, it's linesman, but you're a female, so I'm going to say lineswoman. Some coaches — like when I started refereeing, it was linesman. It didn't really like impact me. But like as like the gender thing went on, I was like "oh, maybe it does impact me." Like I'm glad they change it to like linesman — lineswoman. Like I've always — like when I started refereeing, it was linesman. It didn't really like impact me. But like as like the gender thing went on, I was like "oh, maybe it does impact me." Like I'm glad they change it to like linesman — lineswoman. But like, it's AR now. Like they actually made the switch. (P3: Equality: The importance of proper terminology)

But like when you get to like the male game, it's very — like much more competitive and they're — they like to chirp and be very vocal with each other and like the team versus team thing and the coaches are way more verbal. I don't know why, but they always have something to say, no matter what you do. So, it's just a completely different environment. (P3: Being a female official: Male games)

Yeah, but like and some of the male coaches too, but like they don't come up to you and like "oh, hey", like no. But the females do. Like, I don't know, like I just feel like way more connected with the female coaches and they like take the time out and be like, come greet you or whatever. Like "oh, yeah, going to ref a good game today or what?" or whatever. (P3: Female coaches are more personable)

So, like I don't know, I just — like I said when I first sat down, like to see — I'm really proud of those two girls for the hockey. You know, step up and have the — I'll say the ovaries — ovaries are way tougher than balls and testicles. But, like that's the gender bias right there. Right there, like all this promotion, these two girls refereed a junior hockey game. But when anyone else in another sport does anything else, it doesn't matter. Why? Because it's hockey. It shouldn't matter what sport we're doing. It should matter the fact that you know what, we're breaking barriers as female officials. So, I don't know, it's getting there, and I really appreciate, you know, your research project because when I read about it, someone sent it to me on Twitter, and I immediately emailed you when I saw it. I was like yes, you know, something's going to come out.

Like female officials get to be heard because like you said, it's a male-dominated — and it's not a male-dominated sport. It's just officiating is a male-dominated community. So, to me that's the way — because my sport is male-dominated, but it's a male — a female-dominated sport. (P4: Women supporting women)

Well, this year was the first year that the company that supplies uniforms — well, we can purchase uniforms through Head, uniforms for women, because it was always the same men's pants, which are just square. So, these are more shaped for women where they have like extra — not extra, like it's shaped for females, like hips and thighs and stuff. It's different with thighs. So, that was nice to go to a tournament and feel feminine and not look like a stick or like Gumby or SpongeBob, like square. Well, I've been asking them for years, like why aren't you just getting women's pants, and he said the demand is not there, but when I went to buy the pants, everything was sold out. (P4: Gender bias: Just recently got female uniforms)

In my profession, I've worked with all kinds of people, a lot of men, and I'm in accounting and finance and lots of men. I've never personally had issues. I can pick up small things like you know, things that many people point out as women, and this is just small, but being talked over, being interrupted. I get that. You can get that in sport or in a professional environment, and not all women get it, but I've experienced it and, you know, I'm getting better at dealing with it. We just got to learn to better tell people to let you finish your point. It takes confidence though, right. But there are men who are like that too, right, and there's women who do it to men. (P7: Being in a male dominated environment: Learning confidence)

I want to make sure it doesn't happen for somebody else. That is going to destroy them or make them walk away from the game. (P9: Feeling responsible to make change)

But I'm given women's game after women's game after women's game. Which is great, I love it, I find it actually more challenging. Because there's a lot more contact to judge where the men in the air can like, maneuver their bodies, you know, that kind of thing. But in the women's game is actually more challenging. I find the men's game is actually easier to call the balls and strikes, but there tends to be like more rim play and that kind of stuff. (P9: Female games more challenging for officials)

And I don't know that they do it intentionally. Because I think it is also important for females to see female officials. Because they see a lot of male officials too. So it's good for them to see. (P9: Important for female athletes to see female officials)

You know, and we had a, it's funny, we're having issues, the coaches in the province wanted a meeting with our commission, because they were saying that their referees were treating female coaches differently.

That's a whole other side of the story. And I've seen that too. So there's, there's so many more issues than just being a woman official. But there's also issues being a woman coach. (P9: Female coaches experiences)

Yeah. And I haven't had that- another female as a role model or anything like that. So it's important that we develop some females so that we can get female mentors and have shared experiences, because, you know, men can be all "Oh, I totally get it; I understand" but they truly don't. They're just trying to be supportive. Yeah. So I think we need more so that you don't feel alone. You feel that separation a little bit sometimes. (P9: Female experiences are female)

I do want to be that mentor for younger officials and for them to know that I'm here if they need to reach out. Because I like there's like, one official, maybe that's been around longer than me, but I'm the highest female in the province, like level wise. So I definitely have a lot of experiences to share with younger officials. I've been through a lot, as you've heard, so I just want to be that, you know, sounding board for them if they need it. (P9: Becoming a female mentor)

Sub-Theme: Generalized Experiences

Whenever we're out anywhere, [redacted] like "how many people do you know?" I said, "[redacted] I don't know." But everyone will always say "hey, [redacted], how's it going? Have a good evening. What are you up to? You doing any games the weekend?" or whatever and I go on and [redacted] looks at me and she's like "[redacted] I don't even want to" – just sick of asking who these people are. Yeah, ball. To the point where they know [redacted] now. They're like "oh, do you know if [redacted]'s doing any games the weekend?" You know. (P1: Homelife: Being approached outside of the competition environment)

But I also like – as the older I get, the less I'm playing, but it still keeps me in the game and keeps me social with everybody that's around. (P1: Enjoyment: Social outlet)

I said, "listen," I said, you know, "you can take my clicker" which is the balls and strikes or whatever, "and you go out and try to find a game and you umpire it and you'll understand the stresses that lie within the game." I said, "I challenge you before the next time you start to give an umpire some hassle, to go and try it yourself." I said, "there's lots of volunteer umpires around. I volunteer umpire around for great charities." I said, "there's lots of opportunity for you to try it and go try it and see what kind of pressures that you see." (P1: Standing up for yourself)

So, we had a couple of old-school umpires that questioned too much of what this individual had going on and actually brought them to tears and didn't want them to play. (P1: Negative experiences: Witnessing discrimination)

The negative. If I have someone that just wants to berate me outside, after the game is done, I usually go over and I sit on the bleachers or whatever and I have a chat with them. (P1: Dealing with confrontation)

But they're just so competitive, their inner workings are so competitive that when they disagree with you on something – they can disagree, and they can ask as many questions as they want. They can even raise their voice or be mad with themselves, but once you cross the line of swearing on somebody that's an officiant, that's when you get the warning and that's when you get tossed. (P1: Dealing with abuse)

But that five percent or whatever that lose their mind, that could be just a competitive streak that they have. Like we know some people that they're so competitive that this game means everything to them. But meanwhile, it's only a game, you know. It's only a game when you're playing just a normal tournament, game or what have you. (P1: Aggressive athletes)

Yeah, yeah, much more approachable, I guess. But I'm like that with everybody. The boys will tell you, the girls will tell you, when they see me coming on the field, they're like "hey, [redacted]" like, you know, "how's it going? Good day, great day, crap day?" whatever. So, it's pretty good. You got to have a good relationship with them. (P1: Strong relationships)

They just got to realize that, you know, it is a competitive sport. But you know, they're just competitive people. (P1: Competitive people in competitive sport)

So, the game was done. We ended up tossing three people out of the game. At that point, it was defaulted. After the game, one of the bystanders that were looking at it was a relative of one of the players. She came up and threatened us, going to run us over, and all over a game of softball, which you only win a t-shirt, at this point, at this tournament. (P1: Negative experiences: Threats from spectators)

So, they would have a tendency to ask you questions and just almost quiz you on the rules when you're just sat down watching the game like they are, and they're like "[redacted], what do you think of that call? Like what do you think?" Like you know, they just put you in the situation. (P1: Perceived ability: Quizzing)

And they were more than happy with that and at the umpires' meeting, I stood up in the middle of all these hairy-arse men and I said, "as a gay woman in this place," I said, "I do not want anyone to question nor put someone beside themselves to the point of tears about their sexuality." I said, "that should never happen again." I said, "I've been doing this way too long. I put up with all your jokes and your innuendos and all this kind of stuff, but this stops now." Anyway, and as I was saying that, the convener was coming in the door about to say the same friggin' thing. (P1: Positive Experiences: Validation)

Fastpitch, when I was younger, I'm guessing I was about 19 or 20, we were doing a tournament, a junior men's tournament in St. John's at Victoria Park. I was doing the plate. My partner was doing the – or no, I was doing the bases. My partner was doing the plate. And there was a call at home that he – in retrospect, he totally flubbed, but in saying that, he stuck with his call, and again, the same thing occurred. The other team comes out and asks for your opinion and I'm like "this is not – unless he comes to me, you can't come to me and ask me questions." I said, "ask him to go ahead" and he said, "no, my call is my call. That's it. I'm not going to ask [redacted]. It was my call. I seen it perfectly and this is what happened." So, they got royally upset with him and at that time, I mean, you're talking 20, almost 30 years ago, it was a lot more heated. It was a Provincials competition. The team was from out of town. They threatened the Homeplate umpire, not me, the Homeplate umpire and said, "we'll see you after the game." They were waiting in the parking lot with bats. The police were called and escorted the Homeplate umpire off the field and I, of course, went with him anyway. So, that was interesting. So, they got banned from the tournament. Lots of stuff happened. (P1: Negative experiences: Abuse from disgruntled teams)

Now, go to my best thing. When you are officiating, and you know of a player that probably just started to play and they get up to bat and they hit a homerun and they just started to play. I remember this plain as day. Like they were probably two weeks in, just a natural ability of a sport, and they get up and it wasn't over the fence, it was in the park homerun and they get up and they're just like – and they're continuing on running and they don't really know that they're continuing on running. They're like okay, okay, but anyway, their coaches are saying "no, go, go, go" and they get over and they come home and they're just like ecstatic and they're like "holy crap, I can't believe this happened. Like I'm brand new to the – to playing the sport and this can happen and I'm the hero of the game", which is great. (P1: Positive experiences: Seeing players thrive)

And then you see other players that brand new to the sport, never caught a ball before, ball hits out to the outfield and they come up and they catch it, and they're elated. They're jumping around like crazy and you feel so happy for them. Like it's unbelievable. It's a great sport. (P1: Positive experiences: Seeing players thrive)

What I find the worst is quite a few years ago when you're umpiring the plate and so, you're at Homeplate, so, you're calling the balls and strikes and stuff and you got this guy, and it was men's Provincials, and he was back catching, so, he's right next to me, and he's like "who the hell are you blowing? Like why are you calling that a ball?" I'm like "excuse me?" He said, "who are you out here screwing or fucking?" and all this stuff, and I'm just like "excuse me? What are you saying here?" To the point where the batter turns around and looks at me and they're like "buddy, give it up. You don't know who – like [redacted], are you okay?" Like, you know, and I'm just like "no, one more word out of you and you're tossed" and he did, and I tossed him and they lost the game because they never had enough players, and I'm like – and all the players came up to me after the game and said "[redacted], I'm so sorry." I said, "listen", I said, "I have no issue with anybody walking on this field. But if you're not respectful -- I respect everybody, but if you're respectful, that's not going to work here." I said, "I don't want to hear about – anything about oh, doing sexual favours for someone. First of all, you don't know because I would never. Secondly, you should never bring that up in any type of conversation. If I was a man back here, would you say the same thing?" and they're like – he said, "no." I said, "exactly." I said, "think of that", and anyway, so that was lots of experiences over the years. But it doesn't happen anymore. (P1: Accusations of sexual favours)

And you're like "I just did that" and you know that this is what they're thinking in their head and you see the love of the sport at that point. Then you're just like yeah, that's why. That's a great feeling. (P1: Positive experiences: Seeing players thrive)

Anyway, after all was said and done, I went back to the convener of the tournament and I said "listen," I said, "this happened." I said, "I don't want to see this lady at the softball field anymore" and we banned her from the field whenever SPN is having a tournament. She can't be on the field. She can't be near the field. She can't be looking at it. And if she does, the team will automatically default. So, that was the – what

happened after the fact. So, realistically, the SPN or the convener body had our back as well. So, they went along with the same thing. Now, so that was slo-pitch softball. That was about six or seven years ago. (P1: Organizations: Supporting officials' decisions)

So, you know, you got to realize that all these players, yes, you're officiating, but they kind of got your back too when something's not very good that's happening. You know what I mean? (P1: Athletes assisting officials)

Yeah, like walk it off. Like that's – yeah. So, that in itself. Also, when you bring in the whole LGBTXYZ community – I call it XYZ, no offence, but I'm part of the community, but that's – I know that they add letters all the time and I can't keep up. But no, I find that when you – the old-school mentality of the male will always have something to say about that community and – I will say that 90 percent. 100 percent probably when I'm not around. But 90 percent when I am around, and then I'll give them the side eye of don't be at it, you know. But it also comes to the fact that they – you know, it's just part of it, I guess. (P1: Negative experiences: Older officials having outdated opinions)

People get really heated in certain tournaments and certain play and certain players against certain players. So, it's an interesting thing. (P1: Negative experiences: officials' perspective)

But I – when I found this, I think it had more of an effect coming from someone in that community, the LBGT+XYZ, whatever we're called now, than what it did from somebody else coming in saying the same thing. And all the jokes stopped, everything stopped. Like it was all a whole joking experience and I just – I was just like enough, that's enough, like this is – you can't be at this. (P1: Positive Experiences: Making a difference)

Yeah. Like I've done games before and the national affiliation came to me one time and I remember in Nationals and it was the ladies Nationals and one of the ladies got nailed. A ball came off the bat and she got nailed in the face, like the ball right in the middle centre of her face, and we stopped the game, went out. She broke her nose; she broke, I don't know, quite a few things. And of course, in that kind of situation, Nationals, you're on a timeline and what have you. So, everyone was like “oh my God, [redacted], what are we going to do?” I said, “listen, I'm here all day. I don't care how long this takes. We just got to make sure she's okay.” We get the ambulance called. Get her some ice. So, we call up and get some ice. Call up and do stuff like this and get it all ready, make sure she's okay. Ambulance comes, EMT comes and gets her and brings her off on a stretcher. Everything's good. Listen, we'll do an accident report for insurance and liability and all this kind of stuff. I said, “we'll get that figured that out” and I never heard anything else after. A couple of weeks after that, I get National, the national affiliation SPN sends me an email and says, “[redacted], I just want to forward you on this email from one of the players that had an accident during Nationals.” I'm like, okay, and in the letter to me, she said that “and I also want to say thank you for representing us in such a good fashion.” I'm like, all right, and then at the bottom of the email, it was just like “I can't thank [redacted] for her professional ability, as well as her empathy and help during my time of need” and you know, after so many surgeries and blah, blah, blah, blah. (P1: Organizations: Positive feedback)

Yeah. You'll always have the bystanders, but they're bias anyway because of whatever team that they have. So, they're going to – you're going to hear them chirp behind you when you're behind the backstop and whatever. It's just normal. (P1: Bystanders)

Oh yeah, she had surgery. Her whole face was oh, brutal. Anyway, so it was just basically the player and her teammates wrote a letter to SPN Nationals to say “listen, [redacted] went over and beyond of what she needed to do, and I can't thank her enough, and I just want to let you know”, and that had to be the best thing I've seen in a long time. Like you know what I mean, like – God, had to be about ten years ago. But yeah, it was a good feeling. But listen, the injuries that you see on that field, you have no idea. (P1: Organizations: Positive feedback)

Yeah, no, I've had some pretty nice experiences with reffing. (P2: Positive experiences)

Skating, yeah. I like moving. (P2: Enjoyment: Physical activity)

Yeah. And again, I guess to that, like of all the sports teams I've played on, I felt like the officials, like when you're on the ice, it is perhaps the greatest team effort that I've ever been a part of. (P2: Sense of community)

And then worst, perhaps I was reffing a game. I guess I was personally dealing with some issues and I just – like I wasn't in the game and I knew I wasn't in the game and I knew I was out of position and there was a dodgy goal and I was out of position. I called it a goal, but the opposing team didn't think it was a goal. So,

like the coach wanted to speak to me and all this stuff, and when they kind of get in your ear and then you're kind of in your head and you're already in your head, I would probably like – yeah. (P2: Negative experiences: Questionable decision)

Okay. So, that's one, I guess. To round that out, I don't think there's anything I left – yeah, I was personally dealing with stuff and I know like, you know, when you do those reffing clinics, you know, one of the things they suggest is that you come to the rink and you try and leave those things behind, but sometimes that's tough. (P2: Negative experiences: Antecedents)

So, yeah, I was kind of in my head and I was out of position, I knew I was out of position, but you kind of got to make the call anyways. But I was – I feel that I was right in my call that I made anyways. (P2: Negative experiences: Questionable decision)

When the coach gets in your ear, then you're kind of like – it does – you start clamming up a little bit. (P2: Negative experiences: Questionable decision)

Yeah, any given game, I feel that like I could be on with someone I've never ever met before, but once you're on the ice, like you're a teammate and making sure that the game goes smoothly, which I think is like a pretty unique feeling, but also yeah, I think when you're within that bubble of the rink, everyone's there to do a good job, whether you're male or female. (P2: Sense of community)

Yeah, I don't know if it's just one – yeah, I feel like every game there's a pretty good connection, whether you're male or female on the ice. (P2: Sense of community)

Yeah, it certainly happens, but no, I think again, it comes back to, I mean, you're there to manage the game and game flow and being a unified group only helps with that. (P2: Sense of community)

Yeah, I would say when I'm on the ice, I've always – I always feel like it's a solid group. (P2: Organization: Sense of connection)

Another bad experience I had was I wasn't ref – I was the linesperson in another game, and I witnessed a coach yell at a U-13 player in a very demeaning way. It was completely inappropriate, and that particular young player actually left the bench screaming. (P2: Negative experiences: Witnessing abuse)

But sometimes I think, yeah, like you're almost trying to get – I don't know, like trying to be a part of like the cool group in school. I think like trying to like make a statement of like why you should be included. (P2: Perceived ability: Fighting to be included)

It's just if you make that one mistake is then like is that when the tower kind of falls, like. (P2: Perceived ability: Mistakes)

Yeah, yeah. But I would say, no, generally like, yeah, like I've mostly had good experiences on the ice with other officials. (P2: Positive experiences: Other officials)

But the referee in chief for the province was there, who I built a pretty strong relationship with because he's based out of Corner Brook and he's just happy to see everyone and he treats everybody the same, which I think is great. (P2: Positive experiences: Equality within the organization)

Like one year you're level three, next year you're level four and the next year, you're invited to like an instructors' clinic. So, like you know, like they're building – like they're investing in you. So, I mean, that's always a reason to come back or to stay involved. I mean, if they've invested in you, you want to kind of give back kind of thing, give back your time or whatever. Yeah, those are my reasons. (P2: Feeling appreciated)

And I think I was a new official, I think I was only like a couple games in, and I didn't do anything about it and the ref, I don't think he really knew how to handle it. (P2: Negative experience: Managing abusive situations)

I don't actually think so. With performance, we do get assessed, like I said, and we've had like national assessors come down and everything, but like if I'm on – in the middle or on the lines or whatever, roles reversed, and there's guys on my lines, guys in the middle or whatever, I can't really – it's the same assessor for everyone anyway, but you can actually go and read – you can read my assessment and my two AR's or they can go in and read mine. But they're all very even. Like there's nothing said towards me that wouldn't be said to anyone else. Like it's very generalized. (P3: Fair performance criticism)

Yeah, we have an end of year like ref party, which is nice, like we all get together or whatever, and like I said, like after final weekends or whatever, it's like end of year kind of thing, like after like the big games, like after varsity games, like after MUN Seahawks, and then like Challenge Cup, Jubilee, like we'll all go in the ref room and then there's like – it's like game after game after game. So, it's always a bunch of people

in the room. And then like when you finish your game, you'll like have a beer or whatever, a drink or whatever, and it's all like you're best buddies. So, it's really nice. (P3: Organization: Sense of connection) Yeah. Like there could be like nine refs in there, like ten actually – no, eight, like four for each game. But like one group comes off and then they'll have a drink or whatever, and then the next group is coming in to get ready to go for their game, whatever, and it's like a big family. It's nice for a change. (P3: Sense of community)

Like the assigner, there's one person that takes that role. So, a few years back – they always switch up some years, the assigning position. So, a few years back, one guy, he wasn't the biggest fan of me, and he started giving me like lower level games. So, he's basically another ref. He's like a senior ref. So, he's been reffing for a good number of years, like I don't know, maybe 25-30. I'm reffing for seven years, like I said. So, he was giving me like easy games, like female games, and then like I wouldn't get assigned the male games or the higher up games. I was like I'm literally 17 years old, please, like give me games that I want to do. So, that was a little annoying because I was very capable of doing it. But my friend would, the other female. She would get it, which is kind of bothersome, but it is what it is. (P3: Negative experiences: Organizations with personal vendettas)

Probably. Actually, probably, yeah, like for sure. You can tell like when I go to ref, whatever, and the two – like it might be me on the lines, the only girl, and then the two guys. The two guys will be greeted, but I'll just kind of be like on the side. (P3: Lack of acknowledgement)

I think like outside, if you were to go with like the coaches' route, a lot of the female coaches – I mean, there's not many of them, but like it's always nice to see like "oh" – they know your names. It's like "oh, hey, [redacted], you're coming to ref my game." I'm like "yeah, you know who I am", but if I go ref a male's game, they're like "oh, like who are you?" and they don't take the time to like know who you are, or stuff like that. (P3: Gender bias: Dehumanization)

Like when you go to shake hands like – all the coaches will say something like – not all the coaches, but most of them are like "oh, great game" or whatever. But I had one game one time that I made one call and the coach was not happy with it. So, we discussed it after the game, thank God, because that's like the proper thing to do, not like in the middle of the game. Like that's whatever, at that point in time, my call is made, so just leave it for now. But he came over and he was like "maybe you should check with your superior about that call" and I was like that is like complete disrespect, like he was like "oh" – he was so like saucy. He was like "you should probably check with someone about that" and I was like "what?" Like it was like – it was he like talked down to me so bad. I was like "why did you just call him my superior?" Like, ooh –. I was like "dude", it was so weird. Like it was just a weird conversation. Like he shook my hand. He was like "great game" and then like five minutes later, he was like "can I talk to you for a minute?" and I was like "yeah, sure", I don't care. He was like "I need you to check with your superior about that. You might need to call someone on that" and I was like, it was one bad call. Like get over it, man. The game's over. You lost. And he was like "yeah, check with your superior." I don't know, like my mind always goes to like a male when they say "superior", but that's just me. and I was like "do you not trust a female's judgment?" basically was like where I went with that. It was like "would you say that to a man?" Would he go up to a male ref and be like "you need to talk to your superior about that"? Like I don't think he would use that attitude on a male. (P3: Negative experiences: Sexism)

Sometimes, yes. There's a few guys that are a little biased and are like "ah, you're a female", blah, blah, whatever. (P3: Gender bias: Comments)

Some of the players actually might have. Like I could probably recall like – like when I ref like older men's soccer, like intermediate men's, they're like 40s-50s, they'll be like "oh, come here, honey" or something. "hey, chick" or chickee or whatever. I don't know. Like what else do they say? Sweetie. Love. "Okay, love, what's the time there?" I'm like, no, stop. Yes, I wouldn't say like people like my age, like 17-18, they don't really say anything because that's just weird. Yeah, but yeah, it is the older crowd. Like it's like "oh, sweetie, you're reffing our game tonight?" and like "yeah, I am." But yeah, it is the older crowd. Like it's like "oh, sweetie, you're reffing our game tonight?" and like "yeah, I am." I don't think that's what they mean, but like it's almost like – because like my pop says that. So, it's just kind of weird at that point. My pop's like "oh sweetie, come here", but like when like random strangers that don't even know me are like "oh, hey love", I'm like no. Ducky is another one. Yeah, it's kind of like disturbing. It like throws you off a bit. (P3: Awkward terms of endearment)

Oh yeah, absolutely. I'm kind of like well, like I'm also a human being. I'm here to ref your game too. It's not just these two men. Like I'm like come up to me, acknowledge me. (P3: Feeling invisible)

Oh, another one is so, the guys like to like play with your arms. You can't extend your arm and like push someone. But, the coaches, most coaches are not referees obviously, but the coaches think the guys can play with their hands up like this, and I'm like no, you cannot do that. You can do shoulder-shoulder, fine. But if you're putting your hands up like this, that's a foul. But they don't recognize that. They're like "oh, the boys are just going shoulder to shoulder." No, they're not. It's a foul. (P3: Negative experiences: Being challenged by athletes/coaches)

Yeah. But like they love to play with their arms up like this. Literally looks like they're flying. But I'm like, no, put your arms down. They're like "oh, I'm just using my shoulder." I'm like "no, you're not. Your arm is straight." (P3: Negative experiences: Being challenged by athletes/coaches)

So, like we do equipment checks obviously. So, they take like way longer to get ready. Like when I say, "yeah, have your starting 11 on the line", it's probably about 5-10 minutes later they get going and then when the guys do it, it's like "hey, captains, let's go", they're all ready to go, out on the field almost, and I have to wait like an extra 5-10 minutes, just because they're there. (P3: Sexism: Disrespect)

They don't have the respect, right. It like throws you off almost. I'm like "hey, I want to get this game done, started," whatever and they're taking their sweet time. (P3: Sexism: Disrespect)

Basically, like sometimes, it's probably like bad on my part, but I don't even go and check on them sometimes. I'm just like "you just flopped. Get up." But they always look for fouls on you though. Like if they go and like be all dramatic about it and fall or whatever, they're always like "oh, my player's down, my player's down. He just got tripped. Why didn't you blow it?" He just flew. Like he just flopped on the ground. I'm going to come back and give him a yellow card. Flopping is a yellow card, by the way. (P3: Negative experiences: Being challenged by athletes/coaches)

Very well-known coach, yep. Most people do not like him anyway, no matter if you're 16, 50, it's just not a great experience when he's coaching. (P3: Negative experiences: Dealing with repeat offenders)

Oh yeah, absolutely, yeah. Like and normally it is like me and the other girl and then like – I'm trying to do the math here now. I said eight, right? Six other guys. Or it could be just me, but like it'd be no difference to me, if I was the only girl or there could be like 20 other girls. I think they would act the same anyway. That could just be my personality again. (P3: Sense of community)

Oh, another point is they always like – like a lot of the males don't like acknowledge your name, but like sometimes I'm glad they do because when like I'm in the middle or whatever or like a male's in the middle, they're like "oh, come on, Mike" or like Mark or whatever, but they don't say my name because they don't know my name. (P3: Benefits of being unacknowledged)

No. But like it's kind of like good sometimes because like they can't be like "oh, it was a shitty call, [redacted]." I'm like "you don't know my name, so you can't even say anything." (P3: Benefits of being unacknowledged)

But like sometimes I'd rather hear my name, rather than like "oh hey, ref, that was a bad call." Like I do have a name. It's not ref. They call me ref all the time. But it's like it's back to that point where they don't like acknowledge you as a human being. It's like "oh, hey, [redacted], I'm your referee today." Like I'll go up and say that to like coaches that don't know me. "Hey, I'm [redacted]. I'm going to be reffing your game today. So, if you need anything, call me by my name", not like "oh, hey, ref, just want to talk to you for a second." I'm like "I have a name." I'm a human being just like all these other male refs that you know their names. And I told you my name. So, it's like nice sometimes, but like my name isn't ref, so. (P3: Negative experiences: Being dehumanized)

But then it swapped over and the new assigner that I had last year, he ended up being – he was my mentor for five years before. So, basically, he knew what I was capable of and he started giving me games that I was more than deserving of. So, that was nice. (P3: Organizations: Positive administration change)

Yeah, we have an end of year like ref party, which is nice, like we all get together or whatever, and like I said, like after final weekends or whatever, it's like end of year kind of thing, like after like the big games, like after varsity games, like after MUN Seahawks, and then like Challenge Cup, Jubilee, like we'll all go in the ref room and then there's like – it's like game after game after game. So, it's always a bunch of people in the room. And then like when you finish your game, you'll like have a beer or whatever, a drink or whatever, and it's all like you're best buddies. So, it's really nice. (P3: Organization: Sense of connection)
I enjoy the aspect of giving back. (P3: Enjoyment: Giving back)

I was like I just carded the wrong player. Like they're both blond. They were back on to me when they made the foul. So, I was like same dude. But like I don't think he would have reacted the same if it was like one of the older guys in the middle. Like he probably would have yelled, but he wouldn't have ran on the field and like got up in your face, absolutely not. (P3: Perceived ability: Mistakes)

So, probably some of my best moments is when like some coaches come over after the game and tell me I've done a really good job and the game was well controlled and everything. (P3: Positive Experiences: Positive feedback)

But my worst experience was with a coach, a very well-known coach and I gave one of his players a yellow card and then I proceeded to give another one of his players a yellow card and then I mistakenly gave it to the wrong player, thought he was the same guy, and he ended up having two yellows and then I gave him a red, and it turned out being the wrong guy. So, I mixed up their numbers and he actually ran onto the field and started yelling at me when I was 16 years old, I think, and I ended up crying after. (P3: Negative experiences: Verbal abuse)

Yeah, but a few – oh my gosh, back another few years ago, it was a female assigner and she was reffing for a long, long time and then when she retired from reffing, she was doing all the assigning and it was me and the other female – there was a few others at that time too. So, it might have had an effect with the loss of females, I don't know, when they switch over to a male assigner, I don't know, but she basically gave like any game I could ever imagine. Like any game that I wanted, I would get it because she was very supportive of like female referees and we were very short on them and we still are. (P3: Organizations: Females in decision making positions)

But he loves me. He's like "oh my God, I remember you. You're a great ref. We're going to have a great game" whatever, and I'm like "awesome, like you remember me." And he like says something random, and I'm just like laughing on the field, and he's like "don't be laughing at me" or whatever. But like, at least you're acknowledged. Like you're just accepted. But like I've never had an issue with him ever. He's never come up to me and been like "what the heck did you do?" like some other coaches have. So, I'm like well, we're cool, man. (P3: Being respected)

Like one of the compliments I got, and I can't remember who it was – oh, a guy named [redacted]. He's from Ontario, amazing man, like the most positive man I've ever met, and he said "[redacted]," he said – because there was an interview and things were hurtfully said and I got upset and he called me because I asked him to, and I explained the situation with that interview and stuff and he said, "[redacted]" he said, "the first time I met you was 2015 at the Blue Convention", the umpire convention, "and someone asked a question and you stood up and answered it" and he looked at his friends and said, "she's going to be a big person in our community" and he said, "that was 2015 before – when you were just an umpire." He said, "I've known since I've met you that you're going to be a big builder for our community and an advocate for our sport", and he said, "I've never seen you in any other light than what I saw you then and to hear what you've been going through," he said that "it really hurts me, because" he said, "I know how hard you've worked and what you've been doing to get where you're at and it's hurtful to see that someone that has no idea of the amount of time and effort you put into things has the power to upset you like that." So, like it is noticed elsewhere. (P4: Positive experiences: Compliments)

So, I do have a huge support group and I'm not afraid to ask for help when it comes to that stuff. If it was for myself, I probably would. I wouldn't be able to ask. But when it comes to like making sure the program is doing well, anything like that, it's – you know, like I say, more power in numbers. (P4: Sense of community)

Yeah, and it was one of those, like come on get off – like give it up, move on, whatever. But then when the girl I was sharing a room with expressed to me that she had been – he had been really aggressive with her, like inviting her to his room and things like that, I was like okay, this is a bit much, and then we were out in public and he grabbed me from behind and my friend from Nova Scotia was with me and he reported it. And so then, there was lawyers involved and it was – it was a pretty extensive interview and mediations and things like that. So, hopefully he's getting treatment, but – yeah. (P4: Organizations: Dealing with repeat offenses)

I would personally destroy the program. So, my interview was based off of that and not my resume. So, like my – I had almost a three-page letter of what my softball experience in the year. Like literally the – I don't know if you saw the article where I got my level five. That article that was released by Softball Newfoundland was my umpire and chief resume. That's – like all my failures, all my successes, everything

that's in it, that was what I wrote because I'm not – I'm transparent. Like I can't – I have no poker face. I can't lie. If I even try like to – like if my kids do something and it's funny, I have to turn away so they can't see that I'm laughing because I can't keep a straight face, because what they do is funny but it's not – you know, it's bad. Like you can't be doing that kind of, and then I got to turn my face because it was so funny. Like I don't have the ability to hide what I'm feeling or thinking. My face is very expressive. So, I stepped back and like I was told I was the only applicant and I was told all these different things. So, when – like I'm not a fan of politics. I'm a fan of the game and I'm a fan of promoting the game and growing the game. I still play. So, when you're told – and like I literally drove to Corner Brook and all I asked from them was to pay for my hotel and the gas, like the gas tank, not even mileage, just pay for my gas. That's all I asked for, so I can go out and do a clinic because they hadn't had one in years, and they were trying to grow their program. So, like you don't see anyone else doing that and giving up their weekend to do that and things like that. Like I gave up – not this year, we did a lot of Zoom conferences, but last year, I – from the middle of March, Mother's Day was the first weekend I had off from doing clinics, and then it was Father's Day when I stopped doing clinics. Like every weekend I was off – because I'm a nurse, I work every other weekend – every weekend I was off for two and a half months, I was out doing clinics, and it was like it didn't matter. (P4: Organizations: Being underappreciated)

Yeah. This is off topic, but I was – a lot of this had to do with in 2019 I went to an officials conference and an official that I had worked the conference with – or a tournament with grabbed me by the breasts and then later grabbed me by the rear, and was reported and he was banned for a year and then they came in with a "you're terminated." He had a mental health diagnosis and was being treated. So, that's the only reason why he wasn't terminated permanently. (P4: Negative experience: Sexual assault)

So, but I haven't been discriminated against myself, but I have seen other women that have been harassed more or the discussions have been longer because they're female, in my opinion, than a man. Like they'll go up, ask question and leave, majority of time. But like you can go back and watch any kind of international tournament, you'll see the coaches talking longer with the female umpires than you will with the male umpires, and I don't think they realize they're doing it, but they do it. (P4: Witnessing sexism)

Oh, I cried for two days. Like I was so heartbroken, absolutely heartbroken. So, like I – well, and I've lost a lot of weight. I've lost like 50 pounds, and like this was at 9:00 at night that I left the interview and I was like – I told my husband, I said, "I got to go for a walk" and I went for a walk, like an hour and a half, just around downtown and where it was well lit, and by myself and on my phone just venting to my friend from New Brunswick and like crying and just – not crying from being upset, temper, pure temper that someone would be that spiteful to do that. Like I could never do that. (P4: Organizations: Sabotage aftermath)

The worst moment of my career, I was an official for all of three years and I was on the bases and two batters in a row, two runners in a row took a leadoff, which I called dead ball, they're out, and I had someone charge after me and call me a fucking cunt and they were going to hit me and someone had to restrain them, and you know, the verbal abuse was disgusting, and he only got a three-game suspension for it, and that was back in 2015. (P4: Negative experience: Being attacked)

Yeah. Yeah, all of my partners called me to make sure I was okay, which was – and it was just the support. Like it's not -- like we had an umpire last summer passed away and like the whole league did a moment of silence. Like we just stood there and someone took a picture of it and sent to his wife. He was only 56. Like the umpire that we've had that have passed that were really involved, they all seem to be young. Like stop. And young as in like 40s, 50, 60s. That's still pretty young. So, it's like, you know, when one – like when Rick Gifford died, one of my friends called me and was pretty upset because he was a nice guy and like you send your condolences and if there's any kind of fundraising or whatever, like we all support each other. So, there's – it's the biggest family I got. (P4: Sense of community)

So, I get to be a part of my sport that I absolutely love but in a different manner and I get to travel for free and my absolute best friend lives in New Brunswick and I met her at the Canada Games. So, the connections I've made from just being an official – oh, just being an official, are worth more than any money that I've ever made. (P4: Enjoyment: Making connections)

A lot of times like it's weird. Like as an official, like even watching the men's Worlds this week, I've worked with Genevieve who did so many games. So, like when I watch a game, I'm watching it, but I'm also watching the officials. (P4: Fellow officials: Feeling a strong connection)

I'm proud of watching the officials and like watching the Olympics, watching Genevieve and Frankie, the Canadians. Same thing, just watching them and knowing that, you know, one of these days, I can be there,

and I have the opportunity to do that. So, like anytime I watch any kind of tournament or whatever, it's just that pride of being in that group because they make you feel like you're a part of a family. Like you're the Blue family like if you're a Softball Canada umpire. So, that's the main probably. (P4: Fellow officials: Feeling pride)

There is – this is where I be careful because there is a – there's a lot of provinces that have problems with the provincial sport authority or whatever and the umpire committee. A lot of – like Softball Newfoundland, we – I applied to be umpire in chief and I was the only applicant, but they weren't sure if I was what they wanted. They didn't know if I had what it took to be the umpire – like we have a set document of these, where you have to be and have to have and have to have done to be umpire in chief. And I've done all the things the last several years, helping the previous umpire in chief and then someone who was not beneficiating our program was told that they didn't want him to be doing any more clinics and so, he called Softball Newfoundland and said if I was the umpire in chief, I'd destroy our program. (P4: Organizations: Being sabotaged by another official)

I had these big God-awful glasses. I cried on the diamond because I was just like – just frightened to death, even though I was – 2015, I was 36, so I wasn't young, but every partner I had – well, I had one mom in the field say “don't listen to him, [redacted]. You got this. Keep your head high. Don't listen to him. You got it. You're doing great” and then everyone of my partners – because I was the only girl, female, every single one called me to make sure I was okay, and then they took me off that team's games for majority of the rest of the season, just so that I wouldn't have to worry about him being an idiot or whatever, and you know, every single one of them called me to make sure I was okay. So, I felt like I was supported, which was, you know, it was the sun ray, sunshine out of the storm kind of thing. (P4: Positive experiences: Emotional support)

The best officiating experience I had, I didn't realize I had it but I was – I officiated this summer – I officiated a lot this summer and there has been some political issues between the sport body and the officiating program, but I was an extra official for the senior men's and masters tournament here in St. John's this summer, and I officiated 11 out of 19 of the masters' games, which was a lot, and at the end of the tournament, the catcher for the team that won, in front of the president of Softball Newfoundland, hugged me and said I was the best fucking official he saw the whole week. So, that was the absolute – like I floated the whole night. (P4: Positive experiences: Recognition and praise)

So, my starting out career, it was I had to prove myself because I'm in a male-dominated sport, official wise, but Newfoundland is the only province that has a male-dominated gender for softball. Every other province, it's female-dominated sport. So, Newfoundland is the only place that has men thriving over women. So, it's something that we're working on, but – so, it's different for me because when I go to Nationals, it's the only time I get to officiate female softball, which is kind of funny, which I have – everyone else has the opposite. Most people only officiate women's ball and then like for men, you can only get your level five at a senior men's tournament. So, there's a lot of men that don't get to officiate high level men's ball and then they have to officiate a high level men's ball to try and earn their level five, which like this year, there was only one person who was successful and there hasn't been anyone since 2019 because of Covid. So, there was six people attempting to get their level five and only one was successful. (P4: Organizations: Hard for male officials to advance)

No. Each umpire just treat me the same way as I treat them, respect and always help me out with umpiring and we just hang out. Really nice. (P5: Positive experiences: Mutual respect)

Well, I think me and my – I know there's a few other female umpires. I haven't met them all, but I think they're really nice. (P5: Sense of community)

Being a female in a male game is kind of hard because I think like guys will try to show that they're better or something like that, or show that they know how to play the game and don't need like a female to show them how a game goes. But I just follow the rules and just make sure the game is fair. (P5: Sexism: Dealing with toxic masculinity)

And bad ones is dealing with players and coaches because they think they know the game. Like they think they know the game and say rude stuff to us, and they think that was safe, that was fair, but they've never been trained to be an umpire, so they don't know what they're talking about. (P5: Negative experiences: Being challenged by athletes/coaches)

Yeah, we always hang out. We just had a – we actually had a little dinner actually at the Bigs. We had a fun time actually. And it didn't really matter if we were all like different genders. They showed me respect and had a great time with me. (P5: Positive experiences: Mutual respect)

But it's still hard to get other umpires because some had to retire. Some quit because of the violence from players over how they treat us. (P5: Negative Experiences: Witnessing abuse)

But competitive ones for men, it can be like challenging because when it's close to the season's almost over and teams really, really want to win, they will be kind of a little aggressive or show little tantrum like talking back or throwing their bats or even the coaches like walking up to us. (P5: Negative experiences: Player aggression)

Well, I know one male that used to be an umpire, but he didn't want to be no more. He plays softball now and well, I don't know if he's just trying to be on my good side or not. Every time he's on the field he says "hi, how you doing?" Like "good." Like I know some of the guys there, but my mom don't really like him anymore because one time my mom was doing Keto and he kind of flipped it up and said, "I guess Keto is messing with your eyes too" and was – Really rude to her, yeah, and I just was surprised because we used to be friends but now, I don't know anymore. So, yeah. (P5: Negative Experiences: Witnessing abuse)

Yeah, I really like sports, softball and it's great to get out more. (P5: Enjoyment: Getting outside)

It's just hard to deal with players that don't respect us and if they say something wrong to us that--some umpires would just quit because that abuse. (P5: Lack of respect)

But it's not fun when it's a heat wave and you're in a bunch of gear. And there was like one time at Lion's Park or Wyatt Park, I mean – not Wyatt, the one by Dominion. There was like a big – it was like a big heat wave and I was in my gear. All like wearing black pants, black uniform, black socks and shoes, everything dark, and I was just sweating like a waterfall. I felt like I was going to pass out or have a heatstroke. It was not fun at all. (P5: Negative experiences: Weather)

Well, trying to think because a lot of players will quietly like talk back at us, like call – like this one time, a player hit the ball and they were running to first. It was 50/50, but the ball is there first. I called him out.

And it was one of those like tournaments and it was close to the end and it was like intense. [And] He walked up to me and said, "idiot" and I quickly looked at him, like "what did you call me?" and he said, "you heard me" and I said "you're out of the game", because I guess he just – because it wasn't because I was a female. It was because he was mad at the call I made. (P5: Negative experiences: Verbal abuse)

Yeah, and there's sometimes players will say the R word to other players and that player had to immediately be kicked out because of that. There's no reason to like use the word on an umpire. And I guess that player got suspended for a few games because of that language and his attitude, I guess. (P5: Negative experiences: Verbal abuse)

But they still – they say "not fair" or "come on, that's dumb" stuff like that, but not because I'm a female, that's because of the call. And I guess they've been doing it for years and just want the right call, I guess, and just get mad at something that I called. (P5: Negative experiences: Verbal abuse)

Right now, what I enjoy most is getting back into like the basketball environment. I had actually stopped playing basketball when Covid happened. So, this was kind of my way to get back into like the basketball community. So, I've really enjoyed just being back in the gym and being around, you know, the sport. (P6: Enjoyment: Getting back into sport)

Yeah, I don't have many kind of examples. You know, I'll be kind of leaving the gym and a couple of parents would come up and kind of be like "oh, good game, ref" or "thanks, ref", like just kind of – yeah, just friendly kind of remarks like that. (P6: Positive experiences: Outside positive reinforcement)

But like the best experience, yeah, just really like I'll have like a game and then afterwards I'll have experienced officials come up to me and be like "you're doing good" like, you know, "I can see improvement just from like your first couple of weeks to now." So, like getting that recognition that, you know, I'm improving and getting more comfortable doing games and stuff like that. Like that's – it's good to see. (P6: Positive experiences: Positive reinforcement)

Right now, I'll just go for worst first, but just because I know immediately my example, is dealing with like coaches and learning how to do that. Now, I'm new at it. Mistakes happen and stuff like that. So, I'm really cautious of trying to learn the right techniques and everything like that. So, when I get – you know, the coaches kind of on the sidelines, like "where's the foul call?" or whatever. That's kind of been hard. (P6: Negative Experiences: Coaches)

Yeah, yeah. In the moment, you know, it's kind of "oh my God, like I'm not doing it right. Like I could be better", but then afterwards and I reflect on it and then I take it as like that constructive criticism, you know. (P6: Negative experiences: Shaking confidence)

It's more so common remarks, like "oh, come on, like that's a foul. Like why aren't you blowing the whistle?" Like there's two sides. Like those kind of just typical things that coaches will say to refs. (P6: Verbal comments: Typical)

Not really. I've had a pretty good experience so far with players. Nothing really to complain about. Most times I do have really positive experience with the players, yeah. (P6: Positive experiences: No issues with athletes)

But other than that, like you know, the officiating community is like really supportive of the new officials right now. I know that we are kind of a smaller community and we are looking for new people to come in. (P6: Sense of community)

No, I've learned to tune out crowds, even playing. Like I would never listen to the crowd. But I have like an ear for coaches. So, I guess that's more so why I hear them. (P6: Selective hearing: Coaches)

I think it's respected. I think a lot of people, they respect that you spend a lot of time with the sport because they know their kid wouldn't be able to compete if you didn't have a volunteer. It doesn't matter whether you're a referee or not. You're a volunteer, and I think in swimming, parents who volunteer are very highly respected. (P7: Feeling respected)

Well, my best officiating experience, I'm at the referee level now, so it's a lot more stress but to get there, I had to go through every level. So, timer, head lane timer, turn judge, meet manager, starter. I'd say the best time I had was as meet manager. So, you essentially set up the meet. You set up the swims, the entries. You run the electronics, so make sure the touchpads are working and that the data is uploaded to Swim Canada. You interact with the coaches and the officials and the volunteers and it was probably my best experience in officiating. (P7: Positive experience: Enjoying a position)

I think every time I get on deck. It's a great feeling. (P7: Organizations: Feeling a strong connection)

The sport, I like watching swimming and the races, good interaction with people. It's usually parent-driven. It's all volunteer in swimming. So, everybody who's there wants to be there. They're not being paid to be there. (P7: Enjoyment: Environment)

Yeah. So, what we had to do was then run another session the following weekend, a set up. You have to get sanctioning and set up for a class one and it's essentially for two or three people who just needed to get the swims in. A swimmer will say it's not the same because you're not as pumped. You may not have all your competitors in the pool with you. You might be swimming alone. And swimmers will swim faster when there are – you know, someone who's able to keep up with them will push them. Because swimmers always swim faster – I'd say that's for all athletes. They perform at a higher level when they're in a competitive environment. So, you do it for them. It's just it's more effort and it's very stressful. (P7: Negative Experiences: Stress)

So, you just – it's just something you do and you're in the room and everybody's excited. They might be tired; they might be hot from the pool, but their kid – it's exciting. They're watching their kids. They're watching their friend's kids. They're – when we have meets at the Aquarena and the Seahawks come, it's so exciting, because for the little kids to watch those big people plow through the water, like it's great. And then, or one kid in a race gets a provincial record and the place goes up. It is exciting. It's very – when you leave, you know, it just goes all away, but while you're there, it's a really good collective spirit. (P7: Sense of community)

Yeah. Well, the athlete can get away with it. So, you know, the good athletes suffer because the people who are not following the rules are getting away with it because nobody's watching it. (P7: Consequences of unserious officials)

There's sometimes – I don't know if this is the right word, but personality discrimination. You know, there's some – a referee will say "no, I worked with that person. I don't like the way they do this. I don't think they should be in lane five" or "I don't want them to be my starter", you know, definitely that. (P7: Witnessing favouritism)

It could also probably also equal my worst experience because of a couple of times we ran short of time or went long. We were under constraints of the pool time and you had to tell coaches and swimmers that we were not running an event and some of them needed that event to qualify for a record or for a meet. So, a lot of unhappy people. But we had run long, and we were out of pool time. So, that was probably one of my

worst experiences as well. It makes you feel really bad, yeah, especially when some of them are little kids. I feel bad for all levels, but the older swimmers can deal with it better than younger swimmers. (P7: Negative Experiences: Pool time limitations)

We have a league right now with 10 teams and you know, it's been going great. You know, just to see people coming every, like, we have our league once a week on Sunday nights. And I mean, just to see people come in every week, and they're happy, and they're just kind of out and playing a sport, you know, just kind of something, you know, for them to get out of the house type thing in that regards. (P8: Enjoyment: Seeing people attend)

And I even find with regards to you know, you make a lot of friends, like, there's over 100 odd people in the league and I know a lot of people now from this too. So, I think all of that just combined kind of, you know, makes me enjoy it a little bit. (P8: Enjoyment: Friendships)

I guess in a sense to like I found throughout the years, dodgeball has really kind of, you know, gets you out, it kind of helps with your mental health. In that regard. I've had a lot of people even since COVID and that kinda, you know, say that to us, as well, throughout our league that they find that. And I guess I enjoyed it in that sense, you know. (P8: Enjoyment: Mental health)

I mean, when I'm officiating and stuff, it doesn't matter to me regardless, like, I'll put my foot down. I'm not like, "Oh, okay, well, I'll override that call" I'm like, "No, that stays." (P8: Being challenged)

Sometimes I guess maybe the best officiating times. You know, whether it's a fun team you're playing against a lot of times- couple times a year, we have a like a little championship at the end of our league, you know, then people are kind of get all excited and ramped-up off for that, kind of thing. So I think sometimes even just doing those games and you know, people are just trying to get that like win. And you know, there's like a rush to it in that sense. So I guess in that aspect, that's probably, you know, some of the better aspects or experiences maybe I've had with it. (P8: Positive Experiences: Friendly competition)

It can be a little bit stressful, I think. I know, originally, when I used to first start officiating, like, I did find it to be a bit scary. And this was prior to our dodgeball Newfoundland, Labrador League. I would say within my first year or so like, you really, you're kind of learning from other people like how to do this, because it's a volunteer thing. You know, you're kind of having to really understand your rules and your regulations. And, you know, because if not, people are like, "Oh, well, that's not in the rules", or "That's not a thing" or something. So like, you know, nobody's perfect. (P8: Being an official: Facing backlash)

So I just look at myself like, okay, it's just, you know, something I do on a Sunday night type ordeal.

There's probably been some pros with regards to you know, doing that and being part of the league and stuff to like, Take, for example, like, last weekend, you know, there's people on certain teams that I've become friends with throughout the years, and they had this birthday party thing they invited us to. So in that aspect, you know, there's been some positivity. (P8: Sense of community)

I'd say sometimes maybe with regards to the worst officiating experiences, there are sometimes- even though we do have a recreational league, a few years ago, we did have like people who did go to a national level league and whatnot. And I think sometimes in that aspect too, people kind of they are a bit competitive with that as well. Not everybody of course, we always highlight that this is a recreational type thing. But you know, you always get those couple of people and then you know, they give you backlash. You know, and that's never fun to take either so but at least with running your own league, you know, I have the authority to say well, you know, we're all here on a volunteer basis if this is attitude you want to give me there's the door. Been there, done that. (P8: Negative experiences: Cocky athletes)

I mean, as a female sport official, I have to say, like, I have been given a lot more opportunities because I'm a female. And there's only one of me here. So I've been fortunate in that respect to be given- I've done six summer national tournaments, I've done four U-Sport women's and five AUS playoffs. So I mean, very, very fortunate to be a female in Newfoundland with a small population of female officials. Because if I was a male, I don't think I would have been given those opportunities. So that's an advantage, because they've been pushing female officials and equality and equity and sport in Canada basketball. So, I think for me, that's helped. (P9: More opportunities due to lack of female officials)

I don't think that that's the issue, the friendship parts, it's just the on court stuff that I find in the politics, from the higher ups, but off court always included always invited to whatever's going on. (P9: Out of competition environment: Positive experiences)

After all of our MUN games, we go to the Governor and have a drink. I'm always included. You know, I can't say anything bad about a lot of the people I work with. I have some great officiating friends. You know, they include me. (P9: Being included)

But through the years, I've had so many opportunities, and I just have friends all over the country now. And that's what you remember about it. Like, you don't remember the game that you had where people yelled at you. But it's the friendships you make while you're on the court with your other officials and those relationships, and the times you have off the court. That's probably what is my favorite part of it. Yeah, just the friendships. (P9: Enjoyment: Friendships)

My best would probably be in 2020 before COVID, and everything got shut down. I was assigned to the U-Sports nationals, I guess it's kind of worst and best in one story. So that means I went to the Atlantic University sport playoffs, where it's kind of expected if you're going to Nationals that you get the final. I reffed alright. I didn't do anything bad to not get the final and they didn't assign me. So I was kind of like, you know, just felt like defeated before I was going to my nationals. And it was like, just like, you know, you kind of thought you're going to be somewhere and then you don't get it. But then I used it as fuel. And when I went to Nationals, I just reffed my butt off and ended up getting the championship game. So I reffed a U-Sport, women's national final. Definitely one of my most memorable moments after numerous times being told, "You'll never be there. You don't get enough games in Newfoundland. We thought you could do it, but we thought it would damage your confidence so we didn't put you there." So when somebody finally believed in me and put me in that position, it felt really good. And it was definitely an experience I'll never forget. (P9: Positive experiences: Persevering)

Okay, well, everybody knows me. "Oh, [redacted], how do you doing?" "Oh, good. Should I know you?" They're like, "Oh, no, you just reffed my daughter's basketball games." and being a female official I guess that stands out a little bit more. So, my husband jokes, "Babe, you're kind of a big deal" I'm like, not really. (P9: Sense of community)

Feel like when the season's over, and we have our AGMs and we sit down after and we have a drink. And we kind of reminisce on the season. Like it's one of my you know, especially when we're all in the hotel like because if we go to Central for it or something like that, it's just one of those- like, even after our MUN games is just one of those things sit down, you have a beer, you talk about life. Yeah, there's there's a lot of good, like reminiscing and, and stories and laughter about things that happened. That, you know, it might have been tough in the moment, you'll look back on and laugh. So, you know, there are those good times and, and that too. (P9: Sense of community)

Oh, I've been stood out. I've been told you need to look like this and everything. I've been told everything. (P9: Negative experiences: Facing scrutiny)

Personally, I don't know if it's been done on purpose or anything like that. But, you know, I've had experiences where I've reffed you know, many summer national tournaments and stuff and you get assigned based on your performance. And one incident stands out in familiar- I reffed a great tournament, and I got back up for the gold medal game. And one of the evaluators sat down and talked to me and said, "We had you there, but we thought it would damage your confidence. So we took you out." Like, was it because I was female? I don't know. But it really felt that way at the time. (P9: Discrimination)

I think the friendships that I've made. It's definitely not the people yelling at me. (P9: Negative experiences: Verbal abuse)

Um, I don't I don't know for sure. I know that, you know, a lot of it comes down to a lot of body and what you look like when you officiate. So as a woman, I have been told, because of being a woman I need to put two bras on. (P9: Negative experiences: Sexism)

I've been stood up next to Mrs. Fitness Canada and told, "You need to look more like this." And I don't know that that's happened to men. Like, maybe they've said, I think you could benefit from being more fit. But I had been stood up and told, like, you need to look more like this. And I wasn't a big girl. I was not- I just didn't have any muscle, like, I wasn't defined. Or maybe I just didn't have the body shape that they wanted. But I don't know that that would have been the same conversation had I been a male. (P9: Negative experiences: Sexism)

They said, I ran the floor well, but I needed to have a better look. And more court presence. And my court presence would be more, you know, I'd be taken more seriously, if I looked a certain way. (P9: Negative experiences: Sexism)

I mean, there's so many good times and so many "oh, what a great job you did today" and, you know, that kind of thing. But there's a lot of times when you get shit on. (P9: Highs and lows)

Sub-Theme: Reasons to Continue as Officials

The people actually. So, I love the game of ball, softball, no matter what version of it is, I enjoy it. (P1: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

It's a great experience, just as long as everything's good. (P1: Enjoyment: Love of the environment)

I don't think anything. No, I don't think. No, I don't think I've ever – for officiating, no, I don't think.

Again, I would say too I'm partially – I'm four or five years in, so I still consider myself relatively new, but I've never really had any reason to quit. (P2: Reasons to continue: Routine)

So, it's a tough role to be in, but yeah, I think at the end of the day, like I just love the sport and I love being part of it and I just love skating. (P2: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

So, like everyone starts out level one-two within the Hockey Canada framework for officials. But yeah, I think that keeps people – well, me, I think or anyone that has any sort of competitive or athletic mind frame that like you want to reach for the next goal or the next level. Certainly, I've wanted that, and I've achieved it. So, like you know, that kind of keeps you coming back too. (P2: Reasons to continue: Drive to climb the ranks)

If you're disjointed and stuff, I mean, and players, coaches, parents, people in the stand, they can pick up on that. Being a unified group almost keeps that at bay. (P2: Being unified as officials)

Yeah, yeah. Especially something I – yeah. Yeah, like I said, like I love the sport. As a kid, I spent a lot of time – again, this is outside the officials, but I put time in training for hockey. (P2: Background: Love for the sport)

I would say like I've been incredibly impressed with the province's – I guess with the referee in chief and those involved with officiating in the province for moving towards getting more females refereeing, refereeing at high levels, and in situations, I guess, with other male officials, I would – like I don't walk into a room with other officials and feel any less. (P2: Belonging as an official)

But with the officiating, I have to say like I only have – yeah, I've never felt – what's the word – uncomfortable or like felt that I'm like out of place in officiating situation. (P2: Belonging as an official)

I mean, the money's great; love that. (P2: Reasons to continue: Extra income)

But no, that's the – yeah, that's all you pay to play softball. And most of – like I think the most I've heard of is like between 75 and 100 bucks to play for an association and that's like house league all summer; you get a shirt, all this stuff, and then they'll put you in Provincials and you pay whatever it costs. Like Provincials is 350 bucks. So, you divide that up to your players and you just pay that for the tournament and that's it, and that's, you know, for your whole summer. (P4: Cheap fun)

Like I just had – even my co-workers at work, they had like a big potluck and congratulatory, you know, way to go on your five, because they knew how hard I was working for it. I'm constantly studying and reading articles and just, you know, I have an amazing support system that when I'm having a bad day, they're who I turn to and like, okay, you know what, it's just a situation. (P4: Reasons to continue: Coworkers support)

So, softball has been in my family for years and I love playing it myself. (P4: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

Just my love for the sport and like I said, I played senior women's as a teenager and like I've always been competitive and just the experiences and opportunities to try and help improve the game. I still love playing and I actually am hoping that next year I'll be going to the women's Worlds to play with a team that they're going to Hawaii. They won it this year actually out in Australia. (P4: Reasons to continue: Love of the game)

I'm not doing anything to get attention. I'm not a – oh, my husband came to pick me up. I'm not doing things to get attention. I'm doing things because I love the sport. (P4: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

So, a lot of people don't realize that, you know, yes, we're there to make calls and stuff, but we do impact the game. We don't ever want to do it negatively, but we do have an impact. All officials do. (P4: Officials are equally important to games)

But I can't look at it that way because I have more people telling me the good things that I've helped them with than I have bad. (P4: Reasons to continue: More good than bad)

I love that I get to be a part – a different part of the ballgame. (P4: Enjoyment: Having a different position)

Well, my favourite part is like learning because there's so much to learn about umpiring still; everything changed. Like get new uniforms and new teams every year too. So, we expect something new every year. But still the same players. (P5: Enjoyment: Changes each season)

I kind of mentioned it before, but just like getting back into like the basketball environment. Like I played basketball all my life and actually took a couple years away from it and being back has just been really great. Like I love the environment. So, yeah, that's – you know. (P6: Reasons to continue: Remaining in the sport)

So, you know, stepping away from that, from the sporting environment and then getting back into officiating and getting back to being physically active. So, that's kind of, you know, has been an encouraging factor for me as well. (P6: Reasons to continue: Physical activity)

So, knowing that like he was – he actually encouraged me to start officiating where I was on this internship and it's unpaid. Going into my like last semester, I wanted something to be able to like be able to pay for that. So, officiating was like a way to get like a bit of money for that, but it was also something that I would enjoy doing, right. (P6: Reasons to continue: Source of income)

But at least at the highest level where you have so few people, so it's not that – it's not such a burden, and there's an incentive and then you would have more people coming up through. Because you can't run a meet without a referee. Even if you had all those officials, you can do nothing without a referee, and some meets you can't do anything without a level five referee. (P7: No officials no sport)

If I'm going to volunteer in anything, like most people pick something to volunteer in, and this is where I spend my volunteer time. It's not hugely demanding. Like you know, I'll be on deck three to six times a year, you know, for meets. Each meet you're on deck could be between two and four sessions. But, you know, some years will be more busy, some less. But it's not hugely demanding. So, it's a good outlet for volunteering. (P7: Reasons to continue: Good volunteering outlet)

So, it was kind of like money and stay with the game that I loved. So, that's kind of where I started. (P7: Background: Financial incentive to continue)

Well, I think it's – my daughter's finished swimming. So, I have no reason to stay in the sport really. But I continue, and I think it's because I've reached a level where I've put so much into it and I still love the sport. I still love the environment. I feel like I can contribute. (P7: Reasons to continue: Love of the game)

When I first started, I guess I think it was around like 2016. I mean, I really liked it. I did eventually become a board member. And you know, it was good to learn, like the background of what things are like dealing with dodgeball Canada, and then slowly working my way up to being president there, and then even starting my own nonprofit organization. I think, really, starting my own nonprofit organization is what really gave me that, like, high with dodgeball I guess I'd say. Because it made me feel like I had a huge accomplishment. (P8: Reasons to continue: Rewarding)

But, you know, if it's something that keeps persisting, or people give us attitude, or different things like that, then that's like something we look at more like as a problem. (P8: Being an official)

But it's definitely helped me grow as a person. That's for sure. I've learned a lot about myself in the process. Definitely- thick skin. It's helped me develop a thick skin, which helps with work. (P9: Work life: Developing a thicker skin)

The friendships, it really is. Because if I let all those bad times, just take over everything that's good. It'd be sad that I let that happen. Because I have friends all across Canada, I could go to a city and be like, "Hey, I'm in town, do you want to grab a drink?", and I would know somebody to have a drink with. You know, males, females all across Canada, we come together. And when we're together, we're like a team. Like, we don't care who gets the gold medal game really, like you want to be there. But you're so happy for that other person. Because, you know, they've worked so hard to get there and they deserve their shot as well. But I've made lifelong friends. And that's really what keeps me coming back is those friendships I've built in that camaraderie. (P9: Reasons to continue: Friendships)

And like I said, friendships are one of the reasons I stay around the game. So and they're all there, a lot of them are men. Other provinces I've met females and stuff. So that's different, but here, I'm always included. So very fortunate that way. (P9: Reasons to continue: Friendships)

Yeah. But like, for the most part, there's a lot of days- It's just fun. It's, you know, the fans are great, usually. But there are those times that it is quite difficult. Yeah. Sometimes I wonder why I do it. And then I remember the good parts of it and that kind of thing. But there are definitely those tough days as well. (P9: Reasons to continue: Remembering the good times)

So I think just that a little bit, but I always came back to- no, I'll stick with it but I don't think I'd ever quit completely like I might stop refing university at some point, but I will still continue to ref and be involved in you know, more of a grassroots level if I could. Because there's always a place you know, once that competitive side isn't fun anymore, I think that's where I'll find fun again, with the little kids and the teaching of the rules to them a little bit like, all remember, we can't run with the ball. (P9: Enjoyment: Downgrading to keep happy)

And, you know, sometimes just being in the gym on the weekend around basketball and making basketball the best it can be. That's part of it too. I think. You know, I love the sport so much that I just want to do what I can to help it grow. (P9: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

Like because basketball is such a been such a part of my life, I'll never truly give it up. I think I might just focus my attentions, my intention at different age levels and things like that through instead, I don't think I'd ever truly quit. Think I just refocus my energies to something that could be make it fun again, if it felt not fun. You know what I mean? Yeah, I don't know if I'd ever truly quit. (P9: Enjoyment: Love of the game)

Appendix F: Quotation List - Theme: Facilitators

Sub-Theme: Mentors

When I got to slo-pitch, Bryden Budden, he's the umpire in chief now here, he's a really nice man and very knowledgeable of the rules and situational awareness of where you should be on the field and he's a great guy to bounce your issues or questions or anything, concerns off of. So, that in itself, and the community of the umpires, it's great to have little chats and umpire clinics and stuff to talk about some stuff that came up over the years. It's a good community. (P1: Mentors: Strong core community)

A lot. I don't know if that's a good answer. (P2: Mentors: Having a big role in development)

Yeah. Yeah, so about the referee in chief again, I've mentioned him before previously. Like he saw potential in me and through a couple of tournaments I'd done within like the area that I was living, so with that came other opportunities to ref at high levels very quickly. (P2: Mentors helping with opportunities)

So, I would say both female and male have offered advice or mentorship. And when you're on with something – when you're on with someone who's better than you, it just causes you to elevate your game anyways. (P2: Mentors: Improving your abilities)

And so, I really like being in those situations because I want to be better. (P2: Mentors: Motivation to improve)

Yeah, especially could. I mean, you kind of this – I don't know if it's token phrase, but like mansplaining and – (P2: Mentors: Sex differences)

So, yeah, I would say I've reffed with a lot of really good officials and I think that every time – every game I've done, I've walked away either learning something or thinking that's something I can work on, for sure. (P2: Mentors: Improving your abilities)

Oh yeah, definitely. They were like very supportive and everything and they're probably – probably like my dad's age, like 50s, 40s-50s, so they basically tried to stop him, but he's very well-known and has very bad behaviour. (P3: Mentors: Offering support)

So, they have a really good knowledge about the game and all of them are very supportive. (P3: Mentors: Offering support)

One of them was my mentor for like five years, so he's always been very supportive of me and he assesses me, comes to watch my games and gives me tips and tricks or whatever. (P3: Mentors: Supportive evaluating)

But luckily, I had two senior refs and they basically just comforted me and said it's all good, like they look alike, so it wasn't a big deal. (P3: Mentors: Comforting)

But then there's like the younger refs and basically, I'm their mentor because I've been reffing for much longer than they have. So, when the younger males come into the game, I try and give them my advice and everything like that. So, it's just like a giving back kind of thing. (P3: Mentors: Being a female mentor)

Like if I was mentoring a young female, I'd be like "I can connect with you because I'm a female too. So, like don't be scared to ref like male soccer, because like I was scared to ref my first male game." I was like oh my God, I'm going to get beaten up, like verbally. But basically, you can like connect on a different level. Like yes, I can connect with a man, like as a referee, but like – and then a man's personality is completely different than a female. So, I'm like oh, woman to woman, you can be like – I don't know, like more yourself, I guess. You can connect to like the disadvantages of being a woman. It's like "oh, I have these problems", but a male would never experience them, right. (P3: Mentors: Being a female mentor)

But, he would always like come out and be like – like come in the changeroom and be like, "oh, you need to do this during your game" or whatever. But like it was just general information that he would give like the next person anyway. He basically told me like "use your personality to your advantage" and like a bunch of stuff. (P3: Mentors: Offering advice)

It's three of us reffing this game and he pushes us to go like greet the coaches, whatever, and like tell them "Get your 11 on the line." It's not just him there, like his presence. His presence might be stronger because he's the middle ref, but he acknowledges us like to go – "go get your starting 11. Tell him to be out in five", whatever. (P3: Mentors: Teaching assertion)

But basically, when I started reffing, I was 12. There's a big tournament in Paradise, which is where I live. It's Sunsplash. There's probably like 120 teams. It's wild. It happens every year, but basically, they bring in mentors. I was actually a mentor this year, which was nice because I've never been one before. But it's like refs ranging from like 12 to 17, I think. If they're short, they'll bring in like the older refs or whatever, like myself. (P3: Background: Becoming a mentor)

Yeah, absolutely, and he was like -- oh, like I'm funny apparently. I don't know why, but he said I'm funny. He was like "yeah, just like whatever, use that to your advantage. Like make a joke to the boys every once in a while" or whatever. You're supposed to be like very vocal when you're reffing too, and like a lot of the girls you'll see are like shy when they ref male soccer. Or any soccer, but like specifically male, but I'm not sure and he was like "don't be shy. Talk to them. Like they're humans too." So basically, said like use that to your advantage and like get to know them and whatever, which is nice because like not many people would be like saying that or giving any advice actually (P3: Mentors: Offering advice)

Some of them do. Like my mentor does. He's like oh, like go on, like shake her hand too, basically. He doesn't like push me, but like he pushes the coach to like acknowledge all of us. He's very -- he's really good at that actually. Like if it's me and like another like younger female, he's like "okay, girls", whatever. They're here too. It's not just me. Like he always like knows that we're there and like he knows that it's like a team mindset. (P3: Mentors: Advocating)

Like we're like very close now because he's been around for like ever, like probably since I started reffing, which is nice. And normally you kind of like get one person that gives you advice and then they like go away, but he's always been around. (P3: Mentors: Having a consistent support person)

But they're basically like my dads on the field, which is great. (P3: Mentors: Dad complex)

Yeah. But there's only like two of us, so that are capable of like mentoring. Which is like it's limited, but like we've been around for -- I've been around for seven years. I've been able to mentor for like three. (P3: Mentors: Lack of qualified female officials)

Yeah. The male mentors I've had are straight to the point, blunt, where the female mentors try to -- when we have discussions, they're not "okay, you really screwed up on that one. You need to go here and here.

Okay, [redacted], what I saw was this" and like I said, the harshness of conversations is different between men and women. So, they're straight to the point and there's no fluffy puffy whereas a female mentor, they would try to word it so where you're not offended or also not -- you don't put your back up. Whereas like "you know what, [redacted], I saw you come here, here and here, but what we want to see you do is do this here instead." Yeah. And teaching you to reflect and change instead of "you really -- you know, don't do this. Do this." They're more -- they're warmer, if that makes sense. (P4: Mentors: Sex differences)

I am one of those people if I'm doing something wrong, give me all of it. So, I'm one of those people that if I eight things wrong, you tell me. I'm fixing it all. But that's just the way I am. So, I like that approach more. Now, I like to talk, so I like their approach because we can discuss and I'm also a visual learner, so if they tell me I didn't do this, they'll draw it and then they'll do diagrams or magnet boards or whatever to visually help me learn. Whereas they just list off everything and "you need to fix this, this, this and this." In my head I know what they're talking about, but at least when they're doing it, they're showing me a plan on how to change things. (P4: Mentors: Personal preference)

Because the way that they teach the instructor evaluator course is that if I'm watching your game and you do like -- say like eight things that need to be changed, if I tell you did all these things wrong, you're going to go "I didn't do anything right" and then you're going to walk away. They tell you to pick two or three big ones, but also reflect on the three or four great things you did. (P4: Mentors: How mentors are taught to correct)

So, being a mentor, I really -- I haven't signed up to do the mentor program for Softball Canada because I was working on getting my level five. Like I'm spread thin with all the things I do now, and that was one more thing that my former UIC said "wait till you get your five and then you can enter the mentor program, so that you can help focus on someone else other than yourself" because at that point, you don't need to really focus on yourself as much as you need to get your five. But like I went out to several tournaments and helped out there, and then we had the Eastern Canadians here, which I got to supervise and help, you know, people with training and things like that, and did evaluations. So, I'd like to not have to umpire as much, but because we have such a short season, I have to. And then I want to be able to get out more, but until I'm able to grow the program to where we have fully established crew of people for the men's league,

I'm not going to be able to mentor as much as I'd like to, which kind of sucks. (P4: Mentors: Not able to mentor due to small crew)

And I was teaching that for the Eastern Canadians, and the guys, by the end of the tournament were doing it and I was like "isn't it more exciting?" It gets you right into it and gets the crowd into it, and the girls and the two Eastern Canadians they had the last two summers, the coaches came over and said "the umpires were phenomenal. Like we had no problems with the umpires. Thanks so much. We had a great time. Thanks for making us" – like I had one player – we had four umpires, this is for a championship game. She said, "I've never had four umpires before. I feel like we're so important." I said "you are. You're in the championship game." So, like I mean, they were 15 and under. So, like to make that little girl's day thinking that they were so special because there was four umpires on a diamond and that's how big that game was to us, you know, that made her softball career up to this point, you know what I mean. It made her feel like she was a superstar. (P4: Mentors: Being a mentor)

They know, you know, like one of my supervisors in 2016 was Genevieve Gaudreau. She was one of the two women from Canada who officiated at the Olympics and she was the female official from Canada down with Men's Worlds this year, this week past. So, she's phenomenal. She's amazing. So, she's one of the girls that I – one of my mentors, which is fantastic. (P4: Mentors: Having a great mentor)

Now, my mentors are approachable. Like they're very nice fellows that are very friendly, but when it comes to the nitpicky, nitty gritty of getting your level five and being elite umpire, they're to the point where like my female supervisors, some were like "you know what, I saw this, but how about you tweak this just a little bit and do this here and change this a little bit" or whatever versus "no," blank, blank. You know what I mean? They're more instructive. (P4: Mentors: Sex differences)

Oh yeah. Like they'll treat – like teach me how to stand properly, because there's some poses that will hurt your back or legs, and they'll show me like where to stand stuff or how to quickly get to sports. And sometimes they'll show me – like one umpire said don't like look down at your clicker, like glance down and click it, so that people won't – people will see that you're professional and always to look at your clicker, to look more professional. (P5: Mentors)

But I have a great mom and she has a lot of friends that help me, support, and show me the ropes with everything. (P5: Mentors: Family and friends)

Oh, they're really nice. Some of the other male umpires, they show me how to – how to do it properly, like how to do a stance and where to go when someone hits a ball, like on a plate or on bases. They'll show me where to stance and stuff like that. (P5: Mentors: Male umpires)

And they'll tell stories of when they used to umpire, like different teams and have a good laugh too, and like to hang out sometimes when the game is still going and stuff, and they're really nice too. (P5: Mentors: Male umpires)

My mom is kind of – my mom is more confident than me and can show who's boss, but sometimes I just lose my confidence and mess up sometimes. (P5: Mentors: Setting good examples)

Well, one, if anything, there's two [redacted](phonetic). It's hard – one of the Johns, like he's really helpful. He always shows me – like he always tells me I'm doing a good job and I felt really proud of myself, as I get more confidence, I guess. And he always tells me like how I'm doing, and I feel really happy about myself when I umpire the plate because I get nervous because I'm afraid to get hit. I'm wearing gear though, but I'm still afraid to get hit. (P5: Mentors: Male mentor)

I think a good one is like teaming up with my mom. I know, it's like, you might have (phonetic) mom and daughter team-ups in sports, but she helps me figure out stuff and trains me how to stand properly or where to go. (P5: Mentors: Mom)

Yeah, because when I started, I was really nervous and I'd always keep looking back, like "what call do I make?" because it was like T-ball stuff, so didn't know like what the strike zone was or foul ball or strike.

But they kept helping me get better and better and so I could umpire different teams and ages. So, Mom thinks that I'm almost ready to do senior, but I still need a few more years of training. (P5: Mentors: Mom)

I feel a lot more confident (phonetic) with my mom because she's always there to help me and stuff. Like if I don't know a call, I generally look at her and she would help me out by giving me a signal and I say the signal. So, she really helps me out on the field when like it's hard to tell by positioning or when I can't see. So, I give her a signal and she'll tell me. (P5: Mentors: Mom)

But favourite part is like learning from older umpires because – I know I'm still – I've been doing this for a few years, but I still got some ropes to learn. (P5: Mentors: Learning from more experienced umpires)

Yeah, it definitely played a factor. He was the reason like I started playing basketball. (P6: Mentors: Father)
It's just funny because it's like my dad. So, it's like obviously it's there. But yeah, no, like having those first couple of games with him, like it made me more comfortable. Like it wasn't like I was going to do games with someone who I've never met before. They don't know me; I don't know them. So, it was good to get those first couple of games in with someone I knew and someone I knew would give me like positive feedback and, you know, wouldn't be too harsh on like any criticisms he may have had. (P6: Mentors: Gentle criticism due to familiarity)

Yeah, I mean, where my dad is like a male official, I think say if it were a female or if it was my mom, I think there would definitely be a different perspective coming from like years of officiating. But, yeah, I mean I would say there would be like a different perspective, but you know, anyone I've reffed with, male or female, right now have all been really positive and always like, you know, giving their piece of advice and whatever. So, right now, I don't have like a very distinct difference between like mentors, in terms of gender. But you know, it would be kind of interesting to see – to get the perspective of more experienced female referees. (P6: Mentors: No experience with female mentorship)

Like other officials have – other male officials have said that to me and yeah, that direct feedback has been from like my – like other officials. (P6: Mentors: Positive experiences with male mentors)

I mean, the biggest mentors I had was in meet management and people who are transitioning out of the role who spend a lot of time with you, like get you to learn it, because no clinic is going to teach you what you need to know. So, you know, having a mentor along the way was – and many mentors is important. (P7: Mentors: Important)

Well, the president prior to me at Easter Seals, she was actually also female. I know, I definitely learned like a few things from her like having to deal with some of the things they did with Dodgeball Canada. (P8: Mentors: Female mentors)

Well, the president prior to me at Easter Seals, she was actually also female. I know, I definitely learned like a few things from her like having to deal with some of the things they did with Dodgeball Canada. (P8: Mentors: Female mentors)

But like I said, especially when I first came in- it can be like, a little bit intimidating and whatnot. But I always try to ensure people as well, like, if they want to learn this in my league and stuff to like, you know, we're always here, we're free. You know, I kinda like try to give that level where, you know, don't be nervous- obviously, you're probably gonna be nervous. But in a sense, it's like, you know, we're here to support you, basically, if you know you if this is something you want to do. (P8: Being an official: Mentorship)

Anthony's been a, he's been a big support. Even just like, friend wise, we've been really supportive and whatnot, because even when I was president over Easter Seals, he was actually the vice president. So you know, we would have those one-on-one conversations if things were ongoing and whatnot. So yeah, and I mean, I think his attitude kind of sometimes helped me too. (P8: Mentors: Male mentors)

And when I was assigned to another tournament with the same evaluator that put me down and made me feel uncomfortable. They made sure that our national governing body knew what he had done to me in the past and made sure that he was not doing my written evaluation and stuff. So, like I have people here have stuck up for me and supported me, and have believed in me, and they they've supported me when I felt uncomfortable, and stuff like that. So I've been very fortunate to have the support here. You know, there's still battles here, but I do have a lot of support here. (P9: Mentors: Being supportive)

But, you know, I've got so many people on my side that, you know, support me and have mentored me and they're, they're like, close friends now friends for life. And, you know, if I have any issues, I know, I can call them up tomorrow. The support from the right people is there. You know what I mean? Like the people that wanted me to vote developed have always been supportive. But there's still those few that are the haters in the background. But I've got ref dad.. And I mean, I've got lots of people like the guys I reffed here for a year with, I could message them tomorrow with anything. And I know that they'll be there to write back and cheer me up or talk about a situation I had or you know, that support is definitely there. Regardless of the negative stuff, there's so much positive. I've been through it all. But I've come out the other side. (P9: Mentors: Being supported)

So, I often feel a little bit of jealousy towards the people away that have those women to talk to. Right, next, you know, they're in their backyard, and they get together for a coffee and that kind of thing, like, and I could do that with ref dad. But it's still not the same, I don't think. I think I would have benefited from

having a female mentor. But I've been very fortunate to have some great mentors even though they're males like very, very, very fortunate but I just don't think they fully understand sometimes where I'm coming from so I think having a female as a mentor would definitely be a benefit. (P9: Mentors: Appreciative for any mentor)

I wouldn't know I really wouldn't. I've had female evaluators when I've been away. And it's great to have conversations with them, because I guess they can relate to you. Because they've been through what you've been through. (P9: Mentors: Female evaluators)

Yeah, so I've had these conversations with, with my previous provincial supervisor, he's been he's like my "ref Dad", I call him my ref dad. He thinks it's great. He said it's a compliment. He's been super supportive. He understands. And then there's another guy there, as well, who was a former like, president of our national body that is from here. And I've spoken to them about some stuff and they made sure that they take care of me- like they make sure that that doesn't happen here I guess as much. (P9: Mentors: Male mentors) Well, I know so many female officials from away and they have all these female mentors, and I've had men, because there's nobody really higher than me that's a female in the province right now. I'm the highest level female basketball official. So like, I am that face for the up and coming females- I guess. (P9: Mentors: Being the only female mentor)

The men don't get the same- I guess they just don't get the female emotion sometimes just like in a relationship and all that kind of thing, I guess. And when you're a female in a world, so many males around you all the time, it's challenging, like to feel alone sometimes, right? So, you know, even with those male mentors, you can still feel alone. (P9: Mentors: Not having female mentors)

Sub-Theme: Training and Education

So, the clinics, when you're doing your certification, happens once a year, usually at the beginning of the year. (P1: Clinics: Used for recertification)

But as time goes on that they become more familiar with you, it's great. It's just like having a chat with a friend. It's not a big deal. After the game is done or before the game even starts, there's no issue. (P1: Advancement: Social acceptance)

So, as great as it is to see those two female officials do that for the first time, it's like, why did it take so long? (P2: Advancement: Takes too long for female officials)

Yeah. So, but yeah, no, I would say like I was – in my first clinic or one of my early clinics, I remember that comment being made about, you know, refs being a very closely bonded team and I would fully agree with that, based on my experiences. (P2: Clinics: Being a team)

I mean, I do often say yes to a lot of things, but yeah, I actually – I helped with the female – they did a female only clinic here in the city for young officials, you know, if they felt more comfortable, just to be in an all-female clinic. So, I helped another official with that. Where was I going with that thought? Yeah, I think in the room, you know, you have young officials. I think showcasing some of the experiences that I or someone else had is important because I think when you're starting out, you're getting those like novice – or under seven and under nine and under 11 games and you're froze on the ice and you're like, you know, what's this all about. But knowing what opportunities are out there for you to get better and to strive for I think is important, which is something I wanted to highlight in that particular clinic, because I think the official I was with, she had done national tournament. I mean, there's another official on the island, I think she went to the Canada Winter Games, like a few games ago. You know, there's been a few of us that have done the Atlantic Challenge Cup. So, I think as a young official starting out, it's good to know that there's opportunities and that those opportunities are growing for female officials. (P2: Becoming an official: The importance of clinics)

Yeah, and sometimes – especially like FIFA, I mean sometimes they're looking to kind of grace over some of their own misdoings, I guess is the best way to put it, but yeah, and so, when I look at that and then I think just there – (P2: Advancements: Organizations have ulterior motives)

So, within six months, I had – I was chosen to go to the Atlantic Challenge Cup, which I'm not sure if you're familiar with but it's like an Atlantic tournament for female and male ice hockey players who represent their provinces. So, it's a high calibre hockey tournament. So, yeah, just shortly after I'd started, I'd got an invite there to line on behalf of one of the Newfoundland representatives and in that, I was ranked

like third-fourth amongst I guess the eight lines people that were there for the female group. (P2: Advancement: Selection for regional tournament)

Like I watch a lot of soccer and ref a lot of soccer, but not nearly as much as the guys, not even close. Like it's literally me and the other girl that get the opportunities, but it took way longer than it should have. (P3: Advancement: Takes too long for female officials)

They do have a – they have started a very big diverse mentorship program, and they sent out to everyone to be a mentor and then they sent out to everyone else who wants a mentor, who needs a mentor, which is great. (P4: Organizations: Providing mentorship clinics)

And a lot of times, if I do – when we do the clinic together, I'll do the exam with them. I'll get everyone to log in, because it's the exact same questions. So, we'll go over it. If anyone has questions, we'll chat about it and we'll get the answer right and we'll just go through it. That way everyone's got it done and if anyone had any questions, we go to the rule book, we look up the exceptions and this, that and the other and then that's how you learn, by doing the research, instead of getting on a computer and hoping for the best. (P4: Clinics: Hands-on approach)

The support will be here, because like I said, I had female official mentors off the island, but I'm hoping to be here for people, as well as like [redacted] as being an official the last eight years, you know, she's someone that she – I was trying to get her to do a youth clinic maybe next year, do a youth clinic for like the 13-14 year-olds and have her with me and she can teach the clinic and I can just be there as support, because 13 year-olds would look at someone who's 21 a little more closely than someone who's 44, who would be their mom. They would look at someone as – look at someone who's someone closer in age that they can relate to more than they would someone's who more mom figure than peer. (P4: Being a mentor: Setting up recruitment clinics)

So, I'm always growing. I'm always trying to grow and like I teach a lot of clinics because that's the best way for me to learn. I have a – I'm a very visual learner, hands-on learner. I'm not a read the book kind of learner. That's just never been my thing. (P4: Clinics: Easier to learn visually)

Because they – like I said, we're the only province where it's male-dominant. All the other ones are female-dominant, as far as the athletes. So, they are promoting women in sport because they have so many female tournaments and leagues and things like that. So, they're constantly – like what I tell my people in clinic, whoever's a play player, I say this will make you a better ball player because it tells you nitpicky rules and little things that it's not cheating, but if you know these rules, you can call time and ask the umpire and it can go in your favour, kind of thing like that. So, I became a better ball player once I did the umpire clinic, became a smarter ball player. So, they're constantly trying to recruit players that are currently playing to become umpires. (P4: Clinics: Becoming a better official)

But I've had more highs than lows. I can honestly say I've had a lot. Like I was on the gold medal game for the Canada Games in 2017. It was an all – it was six umpire systems, all women, which was really cool, and like I said, it was just – I've have more highs than lows, and you know, I'm the chair for the umpire committee here now and like we're looking at setting for people who've never been to a National next year, so they get that experience, because once you go, you're hooked. It's an experience beyond anything you can think of. (P4: Advancement: Selection for National tournament)

Yeah, so like I go to a centre or school or a gym where they have like proper space, and we'd do mechanics in the room and we have the slides up on the board and we go through – like there's a level one clinic, a level two clinic, level three clinic, but it used to be level one through three, but like stuff that someone's a brand new umpire shouldn't be being taught stuff that someone who's been at it for four years is being taught and it's new to them, because something that they are seeing that's basic to them is just wasting their time. (P4: Clinics: Reorganizing)

So, it's a hard route to go, like and I had to go through the female side because I'm a female official. So, I asked to go through the men's side, and they said it's – they would rather me go through the female side. I said “okay, but I don't officiate female ball”, because female softball is completely different than men's softball. (P4: Advancement: Not tailored to specifics of the official)

Now, I do host an all-female only clinic because some women are – some females are uncomfortable with guys around because they feel like if they ask questions the guys will make fun of them or they'll make them feel stupid. So, I do offer women only and I do get a good turnout for that. (P4: Clinics: Female only clinics)

I said, "if you ever experience any of this, and you're too uncomfortable in a situation, call me, email me, text me, anything." Because I give them all my information. "Never ever feel like you can't voice your fears or concern. I'll do it for you. Got no problem." So, I do use it in a positive way and explain to them, listen, it happened and like we had a gentleman that was harassed by a coach and he got suspended. I called him "you all right? Did everything go – you know, I don't want you quitting because of this" and like I've had people come close to quitting because of harassment from coaches and I'll call them and "listen, don't you worry about that. I'll take care of that. You send me an email; you write up what went down, and I'll get it taken care of." And actually it's mostly male umpires because they're young. Male youth umpires harassed by older adult coaches. (P4: Clinics: Offering support)

So, rules have gotten tighter and things like that now, but it's still unacceptable and like I cried. (P4: Organizations: Rule changes based on repetitive abuse)

But, I do it for both men and women, you know, I say it's not appropriate for a man or a woman to do any kind of like pat on the butt or anything like that, for a male player or nothing like that. There's no touching; there's no anything, and I stress it to the people. (P4: Clinics: Emphasizing rules)

Then after a few years, I started to get more clinics and I got – I'm level three now umpiring and I'm getting better of being more confident in umpiring and being – like and showing people to respect me and stuff because it's hard to get respect because you're umpiring in a man's sport and they think they're superior in the sport. But it is hard to get other umpires of what's happening in sports like this. (P5: Positive experiences/Advancement: Gaining respect)

I felt proud when I think I did my first home call, like it was like neck and neck and I quickly called it and it was right. I felt so proud of myself because I got it right and no one got mad at me. (P5: Advancement: Confidence)

My mom told me I did a great job and one time I did the same thing again and John said I did a really good job with that call and I was prepared to – prepared for it too. (P5: Advancement: Confidence)

Well, in Newfoundland it's just – it's up to Swimming Newfoundland and the director of officials to just constantly be putting out clinics and constantly be moving through and they need to do that. And there was a time when they feel like oh, you know, everybody has to have some time on deck. There's more than enough people to get time on deck. Because they have that thinking, they ended up in a situation where they had no one in the pipeline and then officials, senior officials retiring. I mean, we have some old senior officials and they should have retired ten years ago, but they keep staying in the sport because there's no one else. (P7: Organizations: Lack of consistent clinics)

Oh, definitely not, definitely not here. It never has been, never has been, and I think as more of us will come up through, it'll improve. But it's the nature of the sport too. It's all volunteer and all the level fives, none of them have children in the sport anymore. Right, all their kids have graduated and moved on. Some of them might have varsity swimmers, maybe not in this province, but they might have varsity swimmers. (P7: Advancement: Very slow process in a small province)

Yeah. And you know, there's other parents and it's a – there's always a group of parents who are in the peanut gallery who don't ever volunteer, but they complain all the time. So, sometimes it's worth sitting up there and just listening to it all. (P7: Gaining insight from spectators)

Now, you're responsible for putting up your hand and saying "I want to do it" And putting in the time, but you're fully dependent on somebody else. I mean, there's three of us now could have been referees three years ago. (P7: Advancement: Self driven)

Oh yes, yeah, for sure. I mean, in order to move forward, you depend heavily on the level fives and the directive officials, heavily, and without clubs putting on clinics, you don't get your experience teaching clinics; you don't get to take the clinics. You are fully dependent on that system. (P7: Advancement: No advancement without help from the organization)

Right, right. So, you can get stuck in the meet manager role because you know how to do it and no one else knows how to do it. Well, I never knew how to do it either. So, you know, you got to be responsible for getting someone to fill your shoes so you can move forward. (P7: Advancement: Self dictated)

No, because if men can do women's women can do men's. But it's definitely pushed a lot more in the basketball world for men to move faster. (P9: Advancement: Gender bias)

Sub-Theme: Organizational Support

Do it. Just do it. (P1: Becoming an official: Do it)

So, we had a tournament, Provincials tournament a few years ago, and we had – it was a women’s tournament and we had someone that was playing on a team that was transgender. As a gay umpire or gay person, I knew the person. I had no issue, but yet, the first game that they played, there was two other umpires that weren’t very sensitive to the fact of who they are and probably overstepped their boundaries on what as a umpire that you need to look out for. So, as an umpire, you don’t care who plays. That’s up to the convener, just as long as they’re playing as such. You may present as a woman, but you may look like a man. It shouldn’t have any effect of what you’re playing because you’re transgender, as such. (P1: Equality: sport is for everyone)

I don’t want to be hearing it. And it’s come to – it’s gotten a lot better. Talk 20 years ago, not so much. Now, it’s a lot better, a lot more respectful. (P1: Progress in the officiating environment)

Yeah. It’s fun. It’s good to see on the other side of it too, and I think it’s good for them to see the other side of you, to know that you’re not that – like I’m not too strict, but I’m also not – you know, they see that there’s a side of you that maybe has more of a personality than what they would see on the ballfield. (P1: Benefits of joint athlete/official outings)

If you had to ask me 15 years ago, I would say something different. You ask me now, it’s a great environment, yeah. (P1: Organization: Progressive)

Okay. So, we were umpiring in Paradise. This is the most recent one. This had to be about five or six years ago. And bottom of the seventh and my partner made a call and it reflected on the game. The other team wasn’t very happy. The place went up. They started coming out of the dugouts, losing their mind and they came over to me. I was doing the plate. My partner was doing the bases. And they came over to me and said “[redacted], you got to talk to Frank about this. You got to talk to Frank about this” and what have you, and I said “listen, this is Frank’s call. I can’t override Frank. Frank can ask me for my opinion, but this is the game.” Now, Frank can see it a lot better than what I can, where I am versus where he is. (P1: Officials are a team)

So, you always will probably have an umpire on a team, which is pretty good. And once you go over from being a player to an umpire and stand in their shoes, those umpire shoes, you tend to realize the shit that you put up with. (P1: The crossover effect)

It’s a community. I think you coined it really good at the beginning. There is a community environment and no matter what, like they have their end of the year celebrations and stuff and you get a phone call and they’re like “[redacted], we’re having a thing. We’re having a dinner and dance. Can you come?” and I’m like, “boys, I don’t play.” “No, but you’re our person every Wednesday. We see you every Wednesday. Can you come?” And it’s nice to be invited, but it’s their thing. (P1: Officiating is a community)

But it can be really rewarding too, because when you do have that great game where it’s a close game, it’s a phenomenal game and everything is done to the tee and everyone comes out and they’re like “that was a fantastic game” and nothing more is said, just talking about the game. Like it’s rewarding. (P1: Becoming an official: Rewarding)

Just do it, try it. There’s no reason not to. (P2: Becoming an official: Do it)

Sometimes you can be a bit hypersensitive or hyper-analytical of the situation too. (P2: Justification)

I wasn’t living in town, but I was in town for Easter visiting family, but the ref in chief kind of knew I was coming over, so he got me into some of the games, and the last game, I was – the championship game, I was thinking I was going to be driving back, but I decided that I would stay and then that decision that I could make the championship game. So, he was pumped to hear me call him to say that I would be available. So, he – whatever refs he had that game, he made sure it was four female officials, and like I thought it was really cool, like they did the anthem and all that stuff beforehand, and so I’d say on the ice, probably the – like I was on the ice with some really good female officials from the province. So, I mean, I felt good. I mean, again, so all the officials on the ice were moving – like we were all working really well together and I guess with the organization of like the particular official that was organizing the tournament made that kind of happen or made it an option that could happen. So, it was good. (P2: Organization: Feeling connected with organization)

Maybe. It depends on what part. Like I think there’s some things I know I need to work on, but yeah, I would definitely – yeah, one thing I was going to say with regards to some of – so, there’s a referee in chief

for the province and then each minor hockey association kind of has their own league refs and just this past spring, there was a female tournament in Torbay and the lead ref there went across the metro area looking for female officials. So, it was a full weekend of female under-15 games and it was all done with female officials. (P2: Organizations: Creating opportunities for female officials)

I would say that yeah, I think when those evaluations are done, they're – it's just based on the calls you make, positioning. The feedback is not with regards to whether I'm a female or male. (P2: Evaluations: Unbiased)

It's like as long as – and my – the way I go into games is as long as everyone goes home safe and not hurt, you can be whatever official you want to be, but that's really the only thing that matters. But yeah, so yeah. (P2: Prioritizing safe play)

Whereas reffing is like “hey, we got a game this weekend. Are you available?” So, I can say yes, or I can say no. So, I guess that's – it doesn't really affect me in that way because I've made it work with my own work schedule. (P2: Work/Homelife: Doesn't really have an impact)

Yeah, I think it's important too for young officials to know that they can reach out and ask questions, like not to be scared to follow-up with, you know, higher level officials. I think when you're young, even starting out in a career, in a job, like you're almost too scared to ask questions because you don't want to sound like you don't know what you're doing or make a mistake, but I think communication is good and expressing your interest to want to go further than – like if someone with an executive or someone in power knows that someone is particularly interested in climbing the ranks, well you know, they'll probably do what they can for that particular person. (P2: Becoming an official: Asking questions)

I mean, just go for it, honestly. Like if you want to ref, like you have a place. So, own it, basically. You have a place on that field just like everyone else does. So, I mean, there's not many opportunities, but that's just general anyway, but I mean, if you're young, there's going to be more opportunities for sure. There should be anyway, if things are going the way they're going. We just got a national league in Canada for women now. So, yeah, there's opportunities coming. (P3: Becoming an official: Do it)

I mean, like sometimes my calls might be a little softer - than males, because I play a female game and we get called on more – like less stuff, like less serious tackles. (P3: Justification)

Yes. So, I mean, they're going to be out there, if you want to go. They put a lot of like – what's the word? Emphasis, on female refs in the past few years, which is nice. So, there's going to be opportunities anyway, hopefully. (P3: Organizations: Emphasis on female officials)

Like nothing really affects me. It's like oh, you're an AR, you're a linesman or lineswoman. Like it's nice to hear the switch sometimes when they realize that, oh, it is woman on my lines, not a man. (P3: Being acknowledged as a female official)

But I know when I go reffing and then my friend is also there, she's like very much introverted and the guys are kind of like, oh, they don't really know what to say to her. Like I'll go in and like after like a Challenge Cup game or a Jubilee game, like final weekend or whatever, they'll all sit down and be like “oh, you want a beer?” or whatever, and it's fine. But then like the other girl is kind of like, “yeah, I'm going to leave now” and you can tell she's kind of uncomfortable. (P3: Benefits of being extroverted)

Yeah, I did it last week. I slide tackle someone, studs up, cleat from behind. It's a foul. Yes, I did it in my game. I got the foul. They got a free kick. You just did the same thing that I got fouled on last week. So, I'm blowing it down. (P3: Advantages to being an athlete and an official)

Do it. It may – like I said, if you love softball as a player, it'll make you love softball more as a player and then as an official. You get so many opportunities. You will have opportunities because I'll make sure that's going to happen. (P4: Becoming an official: Do it)

There's a lot of opportunities to travel for female officials. Softball Newfoundland, we give the opportunity to whoever is interested to go to tournaments. So, there's two tournaments per age group, male/female. So, it's 15, 17, 19, 20, so, 2-4-6-8, U-23 men's, senior men's, senior women's. So, there's – and then there's Canada Games and there's Eastern Canadians and Canada Cup. So, there's so many tournaments that they're constantly looking for umpires that, you know, the opportunity is there to travel, if that's what they're interested in doing. (P4: Reasons to become an official: Travel opportunities)

So next year, the Softball Newfoundland is mandating that if you're on a provincial team, you have to take the umpiring course. So, that might help us get people in our numbers as well. We'll see. (P4: Organizations: Mandatory officiating courses for athletes)

I love it. I have – most people who know me know me from softball from officiating. Like I've had players and parents like add me as an official, like add me on Facebook to share pictures. I find because I'm friendly and from Newfoundland and all that stuff. But I identify – like most people that know me, they say "I know your face. I know you from somewhere" and the first thing I say is "well, are you a nurse? Are you with softball? Or are you from Shea Heights?" Those are the three things because most people know me from officiating sports. (P4: Outside competition environment: Well liked)

So, Softball Canada is known for having a very structured, organized step-by-step process of developing their umpires, doing the mechanics a certain way, following the World Baseball/Softball Federation model, where a lot of – majority of the other countries don't. So, like watching the games and seeing the two Canada representatives doing the proper like positioning and mechanics, it made me proud that I'm one of those guys and when you see the mechanics of other people, like "oh my God, what are you doing? You need to be doing this. You need to" – like you know what I mean? I felt connected because of how I've been instructed and coming up through. (P4: Organization: Feeling connected with organization)

So, for me, like I said, I've proven myself but I'm still working on it. Like there's no such thing as knowing all rules and like I'm always working my strike zone because it does change. They do change it, widen it, heighten it, whatever. It used to be belt to knees and now it's sternum to knees for men and then it used to be armpits to knees and now it's sternum to knees for women. So, you're always – there's always something to work on and every two years rules change, so there's always something to take out of your memory bank and put back in, things like that to learn. (P4: Organizations: Frequent rule changes)

Well, you're not alone. There's other females there that would help you out. Just reach out and we'll help you. (P5: Becoming a female official: Reach out to other officials)

And some male players are really nice and will actually help you too. (P5: Becoming a female official: Reach out to athletes)

But, it's just how it goes because teams – like you really, really want to win and sometimes you just can't control your anger because you really want to win. (P5: Justification)

My advice would be if you're considering it, go for it, like you know. Don't think about like the what-ifs of, you know, going into a male-dominant sport or whatever like that. If you're interested and it's something you want to do, then do it. Like I would like highly encourage it. (P6: Becoming an official: Do it)

I think it's officiating was more so I didn't have to look for a team. I knew that like I would get in pretty quickly, more so with finding another team again. I don't have like a lot of player connections. So, I just – officiating was like that option that I had like immediately. So, that's what I went with. (P6: Becoming an official: More accessible than returning as an athlete)

Really like I've had no bad experiences, and I've actually had people reach out to me and say that it's great that they are seeing like a young female official. So, I've had positive experiences so far now. (P6: Mainly positive experiences)

But it's very minor. Like you adapt to that and it might be inconvenient, but you know, there's that. So, there's a little bit of like communication issues, but other than that, I've had good experience. (P6: Justification)

The club ball, I've done pretty equal between girls and boys, but all the high school level tournaments I've done so far have been boys. (P6: Even distribution of games)

No, it's not really specifically for us to like, you know, kind of like group together or anything like that. It's just it's encouraging when females do see females like officiating. I think that's more so what is trying to come across there. (P6: Quietly unified)

Just do it. Like get out and do it. (P7: Becoming an official: Do it)

You have your officials meeting. That's all the officials meet before every session and talk about if something went wrong the last session or if this session is different. Like maybe there's distance races, maybe there's little kids in this one, you know, maybe there's new timers. So, there's always something to talk about and then, no matter what, you go through the strokes. So, it's never assumed that you can remember the strokes. You revisit every stroke every session, every meet. So, then you never forget. And because there could be a month or more in between meets. And a lot of the people there aren't swimmers. (P7: Organizations: Thorough official meetings)

There's always a chance or someone to talk to, or there's also always a parent who's willing to listen to you complain. (P7: Coping strategies: Many opportunities to talk)

No one else is going to do it for you, so if you like it – and I’m always – like women, this is generalizing, and I don’t know if there’s any statistics behind it, but I find no man will ever say “I never did this before, so I don’t feel comfortable doing it.” They don’t care if they never did it before. “Yeah, yeah, I’ll do it.” But women, on the other hand, will think “no, you know, I don’t know. I don’t know if – I have never done that” or “I don’t want to do it on my own” and I don’t know how many times for to bring – to get new meet managers to come in to say, you know, you’re not on your own. Just say you’re going to do it and there’ll be people there to help you, and just get in there and do it, and you’ll figure it out on the way. (P7: Becoming an official: Encouragement)

Yeah. I mean, you get that. I think – and again, I feel often you become a high-level official because of your dedication to the sport. You’ve done the courses. You’ve been on deck. But for no other reason, like not because of your academic background; not because of your – the industry you’re in or any kind of professional experience, right. (P7: Being evaluated: Based on dedication)

But that’s hard to do, but you got to keep pushing them and encourage them and that’s what I keep saying to them, like you do it, and then I’m like don’t get stuck in the role. You do it a couple of times, then you find someone else, one of your buddies, to come in next and then you can move up. Take the next clinic. Tell them you want to move up. Have you got your badge? So, you know, because otherwise they just get lost. (P7: Becoming an official: Encouragement to advance)

I guess my advice to them would be like, always stand your ground. There are going to be times that you’re going to get this scattered person who might give you attitude. But if that’s what you see, you can certainly stick by it. And you got to have that little bit of like, assertiveness too. It’s okay to be nervous. It’s a big learning process, the rules and the regulations and whatnot. But, you know, after a while, you kind of get that comfort level, I guess, in a sense too. Yeah, you can do it. It might take a little bit of work but eventually, you know, just like learning the sport of dodgeball you get the hang of it. (P8: Becoming an official: Do it)

Of course, I know myself, I’ve made wrong calls, you know, had to change things, of course. But you know, as time goes on, you get that better knowledge of it, and whatnot. And like, now at least, you know, having myself as president, a couple other people on the board, we’re always constantly going over the rules and regulations. And you know, and making sure we’re on top of things in that regard. So I mean, I don’t find it as bad now. (P8: Being an official: Better with time)

In our Dodgeball Newfoundland Labrador regulations, we do actually have- because it’s mostly a male dominated sport, but it’s also a coed league. So we have in our rules and regulations stating that at least 25% of your team members have to self-identify as a female. So with the 10 teams that we have in our league, every team has at least four girls on the roster. Usually, our teams consist of about 12, or 15 players. So, they have about three to four players on their team that actually would self-identify as female. So, we tried to kind of, you know, make sure that that’s the case for every team. If we notice that this is not the case, we’ll reach out to the teams and let them know. If not, like come playoff time, if their roster doesn’t have enough females they can’t play. So, you know, they all want to play playoffs. So in that regard too they, they make sure that they have that on the roster. We make sure that there is female representation in all games. (P8: Enforcing female inclusive rules)

Take, for example, like even the league that I’m in, my fiancé plays on a team. He’s not on my team. And I always make sure that I don’t ref his games because you know, I don’t want people to think that I’m favoring his calls. You know, if I help with the games or something, I’m always on the opposite side of the court calling plays on the other team. And we try our best to kind of like, do that. I know we may not be perfect. We’re certainly learning things in that regard. But we try our best to disperse people. We always try to take that into consideration- like, how are we going to work with this now going forward? Because we don’t want it to be associated like that. (P8: Avoiding bias)

But there has been times we’ve seen maybe not just as a referee, but we also have like, what we call linespeople, like who kind of point out things like on the sidelines- who will say if a person is hit they’ll call them out. Or they’ll let the referee know, we kind of have like, several eyes on the court kind of thing. (P8: Several types of officials)

But you know, I feel like off the floor it’s less concerning than on the floor, you know what I mean? (P9: Outside: Less scrutiny)

Sub-Theme: Coping Strategies

90 percent of the players that come to play, men or women or what have you – actually 95 percent, are respectful, are – not – and don't get me wrong, as an umpire, as an officiant, you get calls wrong, 100 percent. We're human. We can't see everything that's happening. You shag up. You absolutely shag up.

(P1: We're only human)

Probably not so much the organization as such, maybe my other umpires, like our co-workers as such, yeah.

(P1: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

You can have a chat with them after the game, decompress, see what's going on and say, "listen, they're just complaining about everything. Was the game that bad?" and they'd be like "nah, whatever" or "that call may be – you know, that's why they're getting upset about that call" or whatever, and I'm just like yeah, and just have a little quick chat about it. (P1: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

You know, you just try to have that conversation, and sometimes you just got to walk away from the field altogether and just go home and decompress and get out of there. (P1: Coping strategies: Dealing with athletes)

You know, you'll have your ups and downs, but everybody does. Everybody, no matter who you are, male/female, whatever. You're going to have your ups and downs. You're going to have your good games and you're going to have your shitty games where you officiate, where you just cannot get it right. But you're just human. (P1: Becoming an official: Having ups and downs)

You have to leave it there. I think that's probably one of the things that people sometimes are remissed over is that I'm a person too. So, yeah, it's easier. (P1: Coping strategies: Learning to leave it on the field)

Oh yeah, 100 percent. Oh yeah, that was funny. I had to give warnings at a charity game one time and I'm just like "I should not be doing this. You're here for charity. Like let's be real. We're all here for charity.

I'm not getting paid. You're not getting paid to play." I said, "we're charity." I said, "go give them five dollars for swearing." Like you know, it's just – ah, it's all good. (P1: Grounding when things get intense)

It's not very often I come home and I'm upset or whatever. If anything, it's a good night, and it's usually time to decompress. So, after all is said and done, I get home 11-11:30 at night on the nights that I umpire and it's just like I can't go to bed right away. (P1: Homelife: Decompressing)

So, after the one where – not the one from years ago about the bats, escorting off by the police or whatever, that was whatever, that was just a crazy scenario. The one that happened in the last six or seven years, that situation with the slo-pitch game. That one, I went home to my partner and I said "[redacted]," I said – and one of the players that were on that team was actually an umpire himself, the one that lost their mind. I went home after the game and I said "[redacted], this is" – that was my last game of the year. It was in October. And I said, "I do not want to umpire again if something doesn't happen with that scenario." So, to make sure it doesn't happen again, I said, "if the convener does not deal with the situation to my liking, to have this – the team not only losing their mind on us, but the bystanders threatening us, like if someone doesn't – something doesn't happen in that scenario, I'm not going back" and [redacted] was like "[redacted], you know, just give it time. It's the last game of the year. You got the whole year. You got the winter now to relax and just lowkey and whatever and you might find it different. You love umpiring" and I said, "I know." And she pointed out, she goes, "yeah, so and so was on that team" and I said "yeah," and he's an umpire and I said "yeah" and she goes, "you're more upset that he didn't shut that down with his team before it got out of hand." I said, "absolutely." I said, "100 percent." I said, "he never had the courage or the backbone, I guess, to shut down his team so it never escalated to that level." I said, "you're more upset with him because he was a good co-worker umpire, as such." I said, "yeah, I'm pissed off with him, 100 percent" because everyone knows you're only a person. You're only human. I said it should never get to that level and for all the team to be consumed with this much animosity and arguing and it was just – yeah, but I used to go home – only after that one. [redacted] would always say, every night, "how was ball?" "Oh, best kind" because it usually is. 99 percent of it is great. (P1: Coping Strategies: Sharing experiences with partners)

You only have two eyes and there's ten players and two goalies on the ice, for my particular discipline, and the game is fast. (P2: Responsibilities of officials)

Well, I guess, for me, like I have a sister and she played – we both played at university and we both started reffing late. She actually picked up reffing after I had started. So, I guess I do tend to speak to her a bit, whether it's a good performance or bad performance. I guess we'll always like bounce ideas off each other or stories because I – like I guess we're both female officials, so you can kind of talk it out and you know, was that a situation just based on you being an official or you being a female official. (P2: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

Other than that, yeah, I guess family would be one. (P2: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

But I don't – like I'm trying my best and these teams really aren't showing respect to me and it's kind of unfair that I have to deal with them, but it's still umpire's job to help teams play games and show fairness and help them. (P2: Responsibilities of officials)

So, yeah, I would – and too, I think after every game, you kind of – when you – on the drive home, you reflect about it a bit, but – and I think early on, I was reflecting about it probably a bit too much, but in the back of my mind, I settled on that everyone went home safe and not injured. So, I think that's kind of how I put things to rest. So, yeah. (P2: Coping strategies: Safety first)

No. I sent an email, didn't get a response. So, that was quite interesting to me. I was like I don't know if they're like embarrassed that this happened or like – Yeah, that I wanted to ref and they didn't give me the opportunity. So, I was like why, pretty much. Yeah, they kind of just left it hanging. I was like, okay, cool. And then the year after, I got Jubilee games. So, something might have hit a nerve. (P3: Self advocating) It doesn't really affect my homelife. If like I'll say like a problem or whatever and be like oh, whatever, and laugh about it, like yeah, I gave this guy a red card. I'll just tell them about it or whatever. Like I don't bring like refereeing home and be like “oh, I'm a referee. Like here's a yellow card” or whatever. “Mom, here” like, no. (P3: Homelife: Sharing experiences with family)

Yeah, like I said, it's always like kind of offered too. Like they're actually a little more cautious. (P3: Being cautious)

Yeah, exactly, that they actually acknowledge you. Like we go on a walk around the field, like to check everything, and then you greet the coaches at the benches or whatever, and they might come up and shake your hand, whatever, but like the male coaches, like they just kind of sit at their benches and like they look at you kind of weird and like “hey, I'm here to ref your game. You don't get to change it now.” (P3: Adopting an essential attitude)

Yes, it's like “oh, you're reffing” basically. It's like they don't want to see you. Honestly, it's kind of like – it kind of just gets me going. Like I kind of laugh at it. I'm like, “come on, like grow up.” Pretty much like that's – like I'm at the point now where I'm just like if you don't want to see me, like leave. I'm here to ref your game. This is what I came here to do. You stay on your bench, cooperate and we won't have a problem. (P3: Adopting an essential attitude)

Yeah. No, but that's what it is. Like we're so short on refs that they're lucky to even get one. So, if they're giving me like dirty looks and awkward looks, I can leave. I don't have to ref your game. So, you get what you get, man. (P3: Adopting an essential attitude)

I would say yeah. Like refereeing, I probably put on like a bit more – when I ref boys especially, I probably put on a bit more attitude. Like you kind of have to own it. (P3: Adopting an essential attitude)

Yeah. No, I don't really – like I'll say a few things about reffing, like oh, I had a good game or whatever, but like homelife it doesn't affect me. But like normal life, it's like – if like someone wants to be mean to me, like it doesn't affect me anymore. I've heard so much stuff. So, I'm like if my friends like, oh, whatever, says something, I'm like I really don't care. Like it just goes off my back. (P3: Adopting an essential attitude)

Mostly like the senior officials. Like I said, I have like one mentor that's like watched me for like five years or whatever. He's a male obviously. There's no like higher up females that I would go and talk to anyway. (P3: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with mentors/other officials)

But like I would probably only go and talk to my mentor for like five years or whatever and be like “what do I do in this situation?” whether that's female game or male game. There's no like difference there. I'd be like, “oh yeah, the coach yelled at me” or whatever, be like “what do I do?” Be like, “oh, here's advice” or whatever. (P3: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with mentors)

But like, like I said, I sent an email that one time when I was in – I didn't get any games that I wanted to ref and that I was very capable of reffing. (P3: Coping strategies: Direct approach)

Like I said, it's only me and that one girl. So, like I talk to her about reffing like sometimes, but it's not really a topic during the school year or whatever. It's mostly just the summer. My family doesn't know much about reffing at all. (P3: Coping strategies: Limited options for sharing experiences)

My dad is the only like sports person. Like my mom knows absolutely nothing about it, and she'll be like "oh, how was the game?" I'll be like "oh, it was good." She's like "okay." That's basically it. She asks, she helped me write that email. My sister is like whatever, she does not care at all. But like I don't really talk about it. Like I've never had – it's only like when serious like experiences happen that I'm like this is what's going on. Here's the juicy details. (P3: Coping strategies: Limited options for sharing experiences)

Like we only have two eyes, so you can't see everything on the field. So, if I have my back turned and something happens behind me, I can only leave it up to my AR's, but we only see limited things too. So, if something happens behind my back and one of the coaches see it, then there's obviously something said, but in females, it doesn't really happen behind your back as much. (P3: Responsibilities of officials)

Yeah, exactly. To be your literal parents and right – so, I'm reffing a game. Be like respectful and play the game of soccer or I will get you kicked out, pretty much, yeah. (P3: Asserting yourself)

Some situations, I've kind of just ignored. I try not to like focus on it that much. Like I said, I do have thick skin, so it does take like a lot to like piss me off or something. (P3: Coping strategies: Ignorance)

So, that's how I have to look at it because I am a half glass full – glass half full girl. I've never been a pessimist. I'm always optimistic and have been. Like people, like "where do you get your energy? Where do you get your positivity?" Well, that's just how I am; I always have been. (P4: Coping strategy: Optimism)

Oh, my poor husband. My husband has zero interest in softball. He played it like as a kid, but he's my sounding board and I say things to him, and I've already said it to myself in the car on the way home, and he says exactly what I said in the car on the way home to me, and I'm like, "okay, I'm just making sure I'm not crazy and you said exactly what I said to myself on the way home." And then like my parents both were really big ball players growing up. So, I'll talk to them about some stuff. (P4: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

Yeah, absolutely. I've gone to like my local umpire development committee for advice on how should I go about this stuff. We have – like I said, we have an elite program, which is one of our original umpire in chiefs, as well as the previous one, and then we have – I have like friends that are like the umpire in chiefs of other provinces that I go to, and like "hey, we" – like we're now revamping our umpire agreement and I've sent it to the other groups, and like "hey, can you just look at this and see if I'm way off base on anything or if there's anything that you guys do that I'm missing that we should include in our program?"

Just feedback. (P4: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

But other than that, I don't – like umpire friends outside of the association, like in New Brunswick, I talk to her every day. But other than that, like I don't – unless you're really involved with softball, a lot of people don't understand. (P4: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

Tomorrow's a different day. Breathe through it, take a nap, go shop, go get a coffee. Today is wing day at the Big's, go get some wings. (P4: Coping strategies: Optimism)

I actually work them in my presentations during my clinics because I really go over that extensive harassment and sexual harassment and verbal abuse policy because that's written. We have several slides on that in our – like right before we even start, there's zero tolerance. And I explain to them, this is what happened to me and a lot of this comes from other female officials going through the same thing and they finally said "hey, we're putting a stop to this kind of thing." So, like because our clinics are still majority men and then female. (P4: Coping strategies: Raising awareness)

But with a female, I do see – and I haven't had it much myself because I do tend to come off as a – like a bit stern, not stern, but unapproachable. But I'm not timid. You're not going to – you're not winning me over kind of thing. And so, I don't find that people try and linger and argue with me over and over and over trying to get me to change my mind, where I've seen other umpires being kind of berated by a coach and questioned continuously for them. Like the coach, they can read that you're – you may change your mind if I continue on with what I'm going with. But I don't have – I don't put off that vibe. (P4: Adopting an essential attitude)

Yeah. And even like stuff – I was talking to a coach yesterday with hockey about fundraising stuff and like he was asking me questions about officiating for softball and age groups and all this stuff, because it's different for hockey than it is softball. (P4: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other sports)

Oh, I do. Every time when we switch, I would talk to the umpire and tell them what happened, and they will deal with the team because I'm not that really confident to go out at the team and tell them like that was not nice and stuff. I'm still building my confidence to talk to them because I'm still kind of nervous. (P5: Coping strategies: Other officials)

Well, if people are talking badly to me while in the umpire, I just believe and just ignore them while I focus on the game, and outside, I just – I just like chat with my friends and vent for a bit and just listen to music, because music helps me calm down a bit or withdraw or stuff my mom tells me, like don't – it's okay. She helps me deal with it too sometimes. (P5: Coping strategies)

I know the teams really want to win and stuff, but it's – I'm just trying my best and if they're throwing negativity at me, I just ignore it and just keep going on until the day is done and just go home with my family. (P5: Coping strategies: Family)

But for umpires, we just walk it off and say "good job" to each other and nothing bad really. We just chat then while we get undressed and head home. (P5: Coping strategies: Post-game debrief)

Well, my mom told me a lot of stories of her umpiring and I really want to join her. (P5: Reasons to continue: Family influence)

Yeah, I mean, usually after like the end of a quarter or whatever, the two officials meet at like the middle of the court and I looked at the other official and go like "whoop" and they would just be like "what's up?" and I was like "my God, like the coach is giving me a hard time" and he was like "yeah, just tell him whatever" and kind of let me know how to handle it and then when we went back into play, like we kind of rotated, so that I wouldn't be next to the benches. So, I was on the sideline by the parents or whatever. So, you know, they kind of helped out that way. (P6: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

Yeah, I talked to my sister and my dad and they were – both were kind of like, if you want to keep doing this, like you can't let that bother you. You know, that happens. It's something that is like a part, like whether or not it's a good thing that it's a part of it. Like you will have that response from coaches or players. So, they were kind of just like "don't let it get to you. Just let it go. Move on" and then, you know, go to your next game with a fresh mind about it. (P6: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

Right. Within the environment, you know, I kind of remain professional and be like "okay, coach, if I see it, I'll call it" like whatever, but like after, like this is a warning. But you know, like that was my first – when I did have that experience, it was kind of my first time having negative feedback. And I'm saying negative feedback, but it's so typical of coaches to kind of react that way. It's a supportive thing for their players and playing, I understand that. But you know, like coming in and being new and having that experience, I was actually pretty upset after that game. But, you know, I take it as a learning experience afterwards and, you know, try and get better from it. (P6: Coping strategies: Using negative experiences to learn)

But if it was like something that was, you know, raised more concern than that, than yeah, I would probably, you know, talk to Dad again and be like "what is on the go here?" and he would probably like encourage, if it was severe enough, to go to like the board about it or whatever. (P6: Coping strategies: Willing to take issues to organization with second opinion)

I don't think I have personally encountered it. Do I see it? I don't know if I have. But can I honestly say that something happened because I was a woman or that person was a man? Is that kind of what – yeah, I don't think so. I guess I've been lucky. (P7: Gender bias: Being lucky)

You go back to your officials and try and stay calm, despite someone yelling at you. Coaches can be really nasty, because they're pumped up like their swimmers. And can be very disrespectful to officials. (P7: Negative experiences: Remaining calm)

Not really. I mean, you know, I talk to my daughter who's a swimmer, you know, because she – swimmers are pretty oblivious to what's going around them. Because they're in the pool. So, you know, that was an education for them. It's also an education for us to get the swimmer's perspective. (P7: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

I like to stick to the facts and certainly in swimming, if a coach is all over you for whatever reason, you just go back to the rules. You go back to the data. So, you know, what was the time that was captured by the system. (P7: Coping strategies: Sticking to the facts)

So, anyway, that's all just learning, I think, and maybe it's harder for women. I don't know. But I know men who are – who have trouble with that and sometimes there's women who are like that in the business environment to men. So, that's the only thing I would point out though is just the small micro – they call it microaggressions, but do I feel like it's a microaggression? Do I think a person's doing it to me because

they don't like me? No. I think it's just their personality. That's the way they are, so sometimes they need to be called out on it. (P7: Being confident: Speaking up for yourself)

Oh yes, yeah, it's a – it is a team effort. You're very very on your own. Certainly, even in a meet management role, you can call upon an official to help you deal with a coach. You can – when you're a starter, you have the referee you can consult with. When you're an official, it doesn't matter if what – as long as you're sure of what you saw, if you don't know how to name it, it doesn't matter. You just come and talk to somebody. “This is what I saw” and then they'll help you figure out whether that was legal or illegal and then go from there. So, there's never that – necessarily that you have to know everything, or you have to be afraid to ask questions (P7: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with other officials)

When I first became president at the other league, you know, there were some issues sometimes. Like there was one team in particular, they would kind of message us every week say, “Oh, this went wrong.” Like, and I mean, again, we're learning we're not perfect. It was my first season as president. But between myself and another one of the board members, we'd always just talk about it and vent. But we kind of came to realize that after a while, I was like, okay, it's probably not always us. Like if this is one team that's constantly coming at us, you know, it might have something to do more with something unrelated entirely. Like I said, I know I mentioned before that this team thought we were biased. So, we just made sure that if they thought it was me, I wouldn't ref, if they thought it was someone else, they wouldn't ref- we would always try to make sure we accommodated to the best that we could for them. (P8: Avoidance techniques)

If it's my home life, it probably and again, this is probably not much of an effect or anything like, like, we were talking about, oh, maybe there was a bad call or this or that. My fiancé- might just be something like, I'll vent to him. It's just like, sometimes you just have that little irritation maybe when you go home. But it's like once you vent about it, you're like, “Okay, I'm good.” (P8: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with partners)

Most of the time now I think I've kind of gotten to a point that I just go home at the end of the night and just let it go. (P8: Coping strategies: Developed thick skin over time)

I guess when I first started I talked to my family a couple times I guess out of like, just needing to talk to someone because at times it stays. (P8: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

Like, I've been through it all. And I say to my mom all the time. I've been through it. (P9: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with family)

Find somebody to confide and talk to. There'll be tough times. But they'll be far more better. Take everything as a learning experience, and grow from it. And just let them know that I'm here if they ever need to talk, like, knowing that there's somebody there for you is huge and having support, because you'd never get through your officiating career without somebody to talk to you. Because let's face it, parents can be savages. It's not coaches sometimes, but it's the comments you get from the crowd, from the coaches. Yeah, so I think you need someone to talk to you and support and know that there's far more better than worse. (P9: Becoming an official: Having a support network)

But yeah, I just have a support network. You're not alone. And don't let those hard times be the be all and end all of it. And, you know, yeah. It's- it's tough. It can be tough. And to know, you're not alone. And there's somebody else has been through it is huge. (P9: Becoming an official: Having a support network)

I vent to my mom and my husband. Like, “I wanted to punch that person in the face today.” But you know, that kind of stuff. I mean, they're very, very supportive. (P9: Coping strategies: Sharing experiences with loved ones)

Appendix G: Quotation List - Theme: Barriers

Sub-Theme: Negative Environmental Influences

Like you know what I mean? They [female athletes] might not question a male umpire as much because I don't know if there's an intimidation factor too, when you look at the male umpires, because some of the male umpires, they can be, for lack of a better word, a little bit unapproachable. (P1: Gender bias)

At the beginning, I guess, it was a little bit different because being a female in a male-dominated sport, it's – they have a lot of questions. They want to make sure, you know, your ability, I guess. (P1: Perceived ability)

100 percent. There's age discrepancy in some of the officials that does slo-pitch Nationals as well. So, I would say some of them are in their 70s. Some of them are in their 60s. I'm in my 40s. Some of my fellow umpires are in 40s. Probably the youngest is early 30s maybe. (P1: Organizations: Age differences)

Yeah. So, there's a broad range of officiants, I guess, and I find generationally we have a difference between the older umpires and what way they would handle a situation versus a younger umpire. So, that in itself is different. (P1: Organizations: Age differences)

They don't have that – now, not everybody. Don't get me wrong, but the consensus of more questioning the rules and what your call is and stuff, usually I find normally happens more towards the female umpires than the male, maybe because the males just don't give a shit, I don't know, but even women playing, they'll have a habit of questioning female umpires more than male umpires. (P1: Sexism: Gender bias)

I don't know. When I'm sticking around the ballfield and I get a break in between games and I – you know, you got nothing else better to do, so you're going to look at the next game, I just find that they don't have a tendency to question a male umpire as much as what they would a female umpire. (P1: Perceived ability)

But yeah, and again, I make a – I try and make up for it with my skating ability. (P2: Perceived ability)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I would say – I don't know how they would feel like at that level. In my – to me, it's like they had the confidence. You have the confidence. (P2: Perceived ability: Confidence)

So, again, it comes back – yeah, I guess there's a difference in those sort of environments that I think on the ice, I can prove myself versus off the ice, you're kind of like how do you prove yourself. Like I'm not going to try and like talk about rules all night, just to show that I – you know, like. (P2: Perceived ability)

Yeah, just balancing all the stuff, but yeah, I definitely – but I think it comes back to too even my experience on the ice. Again, I have – when I go out and I skate and I kind of prove to everyone, okay. (P2: Perceived ability)

Again, so I did – only been back in the city for one year reffing and I mean, the bulk of that was Covid, so I wasn't reffing a whole lot, and the majority of my reffing occurred in a rural area on the west coast of the island. So, really, they needed refs. So, they weren't – yeah, I don't want to make it sound that they weren't – I mean, you could look at that. Like they weren't being picky, so they let me come. (P2: Reffing shortage)

And sometimes it might depend on if you have a history of with a particular coach that you might see frequently or a particular player. (P2: Prejudice influenced by a coach/athlete history)

Yeah, and I think – yeah, for sure, especially in hockey. I think it's – I mean, even like Hockey Canada at this point, like I've even questioned – I mean, Hockey Canada has been under a lot lately. I mean, I don't know all the details, but I've read enough, a few articles, to even question like do I want to be an official under Hockey Canada? (P2: Organizations: Actions/scandals driving officials away)

Yeah, there's like – no, I believe she was in that position but it's like the minor hockey association took that on themselves and just reached out to females across the board. (P2: Organization: Overlooking females in decision-making positions)

Because I don't think right now there's any female officials in the NHL. (P2: Organizations: Not all are willing to be progressive yet)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But – and it was a female official actually. And I would say as a hockey player in New Brunswick – and growing up, I only ever remember one female official. She's since given it up or whatever. (P2: Quitting: Witnessing other female officials quit)

Yeah, exactly. And like I ref – like I love letting the guys play or whatever when I'm reffing them. I'm like yeah, go play. If you're going to stay clean, fine, I won't blow it up on you. If you get dirty, I'm putting my

whistle in my mouth and calling your foul. So, don't sook. They get really sooky. Yeah. And I'm not changing my mind. My whistle's blown now, so – (P3: Male athletes' sensitivities)

Well, some of them would, but that's just in the game, I would say. But like there's like 100 percent they would get in an argument with me over a male ref. They're like, "oh, what did you just see? Why did you blow that? I didn't do anything." I'm like – (P3: Male athletes temperament)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, well, my sister didn't pick it back up this year, but it wasn't for any reason like that. I think it was just more professionally. (P2: Quitting: Witnessing other female officials quit)

Like there's only specific people that know enough about refereeing to be like "oh, this is a problem." Like referee, like the soccer refs are like – like there's no like – nowhere you could go and be like "oh, I have a problem with this." It's like I don't know, might not be like much focus on us really, for any of us, like female or male. No, not really. Like I wouldn't go to NLSA and be like "I have a problem." It'd be like with a sole person. Like the only problem I've had is with that assigner. Like serious problem that I would go to like a board about was that assigner. That's it. (P3: Lack of knowledgeable people in decision making positions)

Like sometimes we switch roles. Like I might go on the lines and then I might go in the middle, but like if it's like a male game, they're like "oh, do you want me to go in the middle for this?" and I'm like "no, I can go in the middle just as well as you can" and like they offer, which is like – it's like nice sometimes if I do like a back-to-back game and like "ah, I don't really want to run as much" because male games you run way more than female games, and like "no, I can run just as well as you can. So, I'll take the middle for both of these games. I don't need to go on the lines", because lines is like a break kind of. So, I'm just like "no, like just because I just did a game, doesn't mean I can't go do another one", but that doesn't really happen when there's like all guys doing it. (P3: Perceived ability)

Not really because like it's like behind the scenes the games you get assigned. So, I don't have control over it, but it's mostly like a back-to-back game, like they say "oh, you look beat out" or whatever, and I'm like "no", but it's mostly only back-to-back though. (P3: Perceived ability)

So, we actually – I actually mostly ref with other males. Like I said, there's only probably about four female officials that I've actually like seriously reffed with at like a higher competition level because only like three or four of us are capable of reffing at that level. (P3: Mostly male officials)

So, most of the males I've reffed with – I've been reffing for seven years, like I said, but the ones that I ref with at the competition level, they're mostly like in their 40s and 50s. (P3: Mostly male officials)

Yes, yeah. Like when you go to ref like Challenge Cup games, they're always – not the assessors, but the assigners, like last year I hardly got any Challenge Cup games, which is one of the higher levels to ref for the Province. But they're always a bit iffy – like I'll get – like I have their Messengers or whatever, text numbers or whatever, and the assessor – not the assessor, oh my God, assigner will always like text you and be like "are you comfortable reffing this men's game or going on the lines for this final?" or whatever, where the two best teams play obviously, and I'm like "yes, I am perfectly fine reffing. You do not need to check in with me for every single game" because I know they wouldn't do that for like the older guys, like. (P3: Perceived ability)

They're kind of pals, yeah. Like some of the guys are my age, so like we're friends outside of reffing anyway. So, it's like whatever. (P3: Different dynamics with different age groups)

Oh, that's another thing. Hold on. I got a story now. So, I decided -- this was probably two years ago now.

So, two years? Yeah. So, when I finished playing under 17 soccer, I decided I wasn't going to play Jubilee because I was at the level in my refereeing career that I was supposed to be doing like all the Jubilee games.

So, I basically made the choice. I was like I'm going to play intermediate soccer, which is kind of just like a league or whatever, like late night ladies league or whatever, not competitive or anything like that. So, I was like "I'm going to play that so I can ref way more games." That didn't happen. I got like zero Jubilee games that year to ref, when I was the only female available to ref because the other girl was playing in that league. (P3: Advancement: Being denied opportunities)

Not to play in it, so I could ref it because I was at the level to get Jubilee middles, Jubilee lines and whatever. And that looks great, yeah. Didn't get any. Maybe like two, and I was like – I actually sent an email that year. I was like "I opted out to not play in this league, so I could ref this league and you gave me like two games total in the whole season", out of like how many games, 50 games, 30 games, I don't know. Four teams in the league, you play like four or five times each, so 20-25, I guess. (P3: Advancement: Being denied opportunities)

No, you can either – you can play in like a league, a team outside of like the league, like the Jubilee league. So, I played intermediate, which is different than Jubilee. So, I was like “I’ll play in intermediate, to ref Jubilee.” Yeah. Yeah. So, I was like well, I want these games. You want female officials to ref these games and now I’m not getting any games. That doesn’t make any sense to me. And I was the only female capable of reffing those games because like I said, the other girl was playing in that league. (P3: Advancement: Being denied opportunities)

No, no. They always make more comments if I’m there, I think, about my game. It’s like “ah, you did well for that one” or whatever. Only like select males though, like a few of them, it’s like “oh, you did well that game.” They’re like kind of surprised almost, sometimes. (P3: Sexism: Males believe their sport knowledge is higher than females)

They wouldn’t ask “are you comfortable reffing this game? Do you think you can keep up?” Yes, I am quite capable. I’ve done the same fitness test that all these other people have done. So, yes, I am quite capable to ref this game. (P3: Perceived ability)

Like I could make a call for like a soft tackle, like someone gets tripped or whatever, and that’s easy peasy, like called in a female game no problem. Male game, if they get like a little tiny trip, they’ll be like “why did you blow that? That wasn’t a foul” or whatever. I’m like “yes, it is a foul. Here’s my rule book.

Tripping is a foul in a female or a male game.” But in a female game, I could like side tackle someone and they blow it right away, even if I got the ball, right. (P3: Perceived ability)

But they’ll like check-in and be like “oh, are you sure you want to ref this game?” Like “yes, I’m sure. I put in my time. I can ref this game.” Otherwise I wouldn’t have offered. And it’s like “oh, you’re comfortable reffing this?” and then they’ll check-in and be like “oh, do you want senior AR’s on your lines?” I’m like “sure, I don’t care.” Like it’s nice to have the extra support, but sometimes I’m like I reffed this game three times this year, so I don’t need the extra support. I know these coaches now. I know these players. So, you can give me whoever you want on my lines. (P3: Perceived ability)

The coaches’ thing is – it’s always there. So, like you’ll always get a bad coach, whether it’s female, male, whatever. The females are like never as bad anyway. Yeah, never as bad. Like whether they have a female ref, male ref, never as bad. I mean, if it’s like a super badly reffed game, maybe. I’ve never had an experience like that. But like if I’m reffing a male game and all the coaches are male, guaranteed someone’s going to blow up, like no doubt. Either one or the other, for sure, almost every single game. Yeah, if it’s not the player, it’s the coach. (P3: Male coaches’ general temperament)

I mean, it’s pretty well generalized. Like the guys always have something to say to you. Like not like female directed, but like you can tell there’s a completely different atmosphere when they have a male reffing and a female reffing. Like when I go up to do a toss, the coin toss or whatever, I don’t really like have a conversation like that the guys would. Like when the guys like ref in the middle and they do the coin toss, and basically, “hey, what’s up, bud?” or whatever and do the coin flip and they have their hands out right away. But when I’m reffing or whatever, it’s almost like – I don’t know if they’re like intimidated or what it is, but they always come and they’re just like straight-faced and seem like they don’t want to be there. (P3: Atmosphere differences)

So, it’s a very frustrating situation because it should be we should all get along. We should all be promoting each other because if you don’t have umpires, you’re not going to have tournaments, and I can’t grow my umpires without tournaments. So, if you’re going to, you know, try and stick me in the ribs, well then, the only one you’re hurting is yourself. You’re hurting my program but you’re hurting yourself. Like you’re trying to grow softball here in Newfoundland, but you’re not growing the umpire program. Well then, they come hand in hand. (P4: Organizations: Lack of support)

For men’s league, I only – like my daughter, [redacted], she does intermediate men’s. So, we’re the only two females for both men’s, senior and intermediate men’s. So, if I get to work with a female locally, it’s her. (P4: Few opportunities to work with other female officials)

But when I go away to a Nationals, there’s – majority of them are women. So, it’s exciting for me because that’s the only time I get to work with a lot of women, and even when we had the Eastern Canadians here this summer, I was the only female at the end because we had – I had everyone worn out from all the assignments. But I don’t – I actually primarily work with men. So, I don’t have – unless I go to a National or go to a tournament that I pay for myself, I don’t get to work with women much. (P4: Few opportunities to work with other female officials)

Like when I did the men's tournament, I was the only female – well, there was a female here as an exchange program, European exchange program. So, I got to work with her for a few games, which was great. But there was a bit – like she spoke English, but it was her secondary language. So, and Newfoundland English is fast and different. So, there was a little communication barrier, but same thing, we hung – I felt like we hung out a little bit to where like if she needed something, I was the mom kind of thing. And even when the guys were needing stuff, I went and got their laundry done. I did this, I did like whatever was needed to be done, where, you know, I grew up – I'm two and a half years older and two and half years younger than the next girls in my family. It's all boys and me. (P4: Few opportunities to work with other female officials)

So, and the convention is coming up again in April, so I've expressed by concern of – like I can handle myself, but there's other people there that I knew that he was a little too friendly with and they can't handle themselves like I can. So, you know, it's something that's being discussed, whether he's going to be permitted to come back to another convention. (P4: Organizations: Taking too long to make decisions that may risk other officials' safety)

There is a difference because the men are – they joke more. They're kind of gruffy where women are – we're more planners and organized and things like that. (P4: Differences in male and females in the officiating community)

It's very hard. It's not – the girls that I've spoken with that got their – one of the girls, she got her level five here in Newfoundland and she got her WBSC certification this summer. She said, "getting my five was harder than getting my WBSC." It was harder to get her level five than to get her international certification. I was one of two females. There was five of us – sorry, four. And then there was six men. So, there was only three of us this summer that got our level five for fastpitch. (P4: Advancement: Very difficult to achieve highest level)

I did have one critique on my evaluation and it wasn't anything bad, but it was something I asked to be revised because one of the female supervisors, when I was in Surrey in 2018, wrote down "[redacted] did well despite not having mentors" and I said, "that's not what I said. I said I don't have any female mentors in my province. I have lots of female mentors outside my province, but I have a lot of mentors in my province" because that went back to my umpire in chief and they were pissed because they've been working with me every game for weeks trying to, you know, make sure I got a good evaluation every year, and I said, "I never said I didn't have any mentors. I said any female mentors in the province." So, I actually had to get them to go back and rewrite that saying despite not having female mentors within Newfoundland because it's a huge difference. (P4: Mentors: No females mentors in province)

Like our interactions, like myself and Audrey, we've got a level five this summer. We got there, we collected money from everyone, we went to Costco and got all the food for the week. Like we're structured, we're organized, to make sure that everything is taken care of so we can just worry about the diamond, instead of people saying "hey, I need a ride to the store to get food." Like we're kind of like the mom figures. And with the guys, it's like, you know, we're going for wings afterwards; we're going for beer. (P4: Differences in male and females in the officiating community)

Yeah. And I think because everything is money. So, if they offered it for advertising for sporting groups to be free, you'd see a lot more. Like I can't afford to do a commercial for officiating. I mean, we have like less than \$5,000 in our bank account and I got to send four people to the mainland next year. So, that's where that money's going. So, to pay a couple thousand dollars to have ads on the radio or a spot on like the local TV channel, we don't have that kind of money. So, if they were willing to give free time on air for "hey, you know, interested in coming out and officiating softball? Contact, you know, such and such or go to our Facebook page and send us a message and we'd love to have you" kind of thing. Even like a ten second or 20 second voice over on the radio, something like that, that would – any sport really. (P4: Recruitment: Not having the budget to advertise wide range)

Well, yeah, that's the whole part of I have to get my level five through the female side of the thing where I only officiate men's softball. It would have been easy to me to officiate through the men's side, but I was told I had to officiate through the female side. So, I don't know if that's – it's not a rule. It's not a written rule, but it is a written rule that men have to get their level five through the men's side. They can't get it through the female side. So, I don't understand that, because there's some men out there that don't officiate men's ball at all. They officiate women's college ball and only women's ball, so they should be able to get

their level five through the female aspect of it because that's the only ball that they see. But that's the only gender bias I find. (P4: Advancement: Must be done with the same sex)

In the summer, it takes over. My husband, like I said, is a very patient man. We don't do a lot of trips or anything like that or we don't do any kind of trips during the summer because of officiating, and my vacation time, a lot of it does depend on if I'm getting sent to a tournament. So, like if I go to a National, I have to be there Tuesday morning and I get back Monday usually because flying into Newfoundland, we get back a like 2:30 in the morning. So, I'm gone at least one week each summer, which is during like August of some kind. (P4: Homelife: Summertime takeover)

Yeah. I just don't like people getting mad at me or yelling at me. I just kind of panic a little bit. (P5: Negative experiences: Athlete/coach aggression contributing to mistakes)

Well, let me think. Like so far, I haven't had any troubles. You know, it's always been kind of in the back of my head like that I want to do good and I am like kind of the minority in this position. So, like that's always in the back of my head, but like it doesn't really affect how I officiate or anything like that, but it is a thought that crosses my mind that like I do have like a little bit of added pressure almost. But really, I'm just enjoying it. (P6: Pressures of officiating)

Yes, yeah, anytime you're in a level two and above, meet manager, starter, you're working with the referees and the referees are male, except for, like I said, we have – we just brought one up in the last couple of years, but other than that, one woman, who is – you know, she's in her late 60s now and she's – one time she was the only female referee. (P7: Mainly male environment)

And you have a more balanced gender presence at higher levels in Ontario. Maybe that's because of the size of Ontario, the number of swim clubs. It's just the sport is so much bigger and because it's so much bigger, so many more events, they push people through very quickly. So, through meaning to the levels of officials. Offering clinics, offering on-deck time, mentoring and just getting people moved up the ladder, if you want to think of it as a ladder. (P7: Organizations: Larger provinces have more resources available)

Then more people will want to do it. And then maybe there's an incentive. Now, there is some incentive. I know the sport does – to get your level five, they will help you cover the cost of going to a National meet. So, some money is coming along for that, some money. (P7: Organizations: Lack of incentive)

I would say it's mostly male officials. I do know about one or two females like, from several years ago that used to officiate, but they're just no longer involved with dodgeball anymore. But actually, I think I've somewhat learned from between male- and a female as well actually, like, kind of learn how to go about all of this. (P8: Working with mostly male officials)

I work with almost all male officials. The last year or two there has been some more recruitment of female officials in the area. But for me, I work with mostly male officials. (P9: Working with mostly male officials)

There's a real issue with a few people where they get what they want, and you gotta fight. I'm like, listen, I asked to work with the young PMO officials, we need to develop them, and you don't get it. And then next thing, you're on the schedule with them, and then a new schedule comes out and you're not with them anymore. So, I don't know why that happens. But yeah, for the most part, I say 98% of my games are paired with a male. (P9: Organizations: Disorganized schedules)

But, you know, on the outside sometimes when I'm evaluating other people. So, I'm looking into the competition from the outside, I guess, if that makes sense. Sometimes the men have a hard time listening to a female, tell them what to do. Like they, they know that I have the experience, but it's just like they don't take that criticism the same way. They're like "Yeah, I know. I know.", Then why aren't you doing it? (P9: Being an evaluator: Females not being taken seriously)

So it's a challenge at times. Sometimes you don't know that. It's no different than I'd think being a male is, but there are times that can be very difficult because we're still in a world that is male dominated, it's male, you know, and women are still looked down upon in a lot of aspects and you see that in officiating. (P9: Living in a male dominated world)

Sub-Theme: Unfair Treatment

Not necessarily with the organizations as such. Probably because when we do our umpire clinic and stuff, like some things are said that's probably not – shouldn't be said, just more watch your P&Q's because

you're in a room full of, I don't know, 30 men and you're probably two girls in there and they have a tendency to talk about certain things that you don't really want to know or it's not relevant to what you're saying. Like it's – picture going down to a bar downtown. So, your topic of conversation when you're around burly men is a little bit different and they probably say a little bit of things that are out of line. (P1: Officiating is a boy's club)

So, the second game that they were playing that weekend, the convener knew that it was – I was the one umpiring and they came over and they said “[redacted], this person so-and-so is going to be playing.” I said, “oh, excellent.” I said, “it'll be great to see them.” I said, “perfect” and then they told me about what happened at the previous game to it. So, I was like “oh, that's bullshit.” So, we had the game. It was lovely. It was great. No issue, no problem, and me and the person talked after and I said, “I really apologize for what happened. I heard of what happened in the first game.” I said, “I can't say enough.” I said, “I'll deal with this when we have our umpires' meeting that night” and I said, “I'll try to nip this in the butt, so you don't have to have that anymore.” I said, it's just one of those things.” (P1: Making amends for less progressive officials)

Like in the game itself, you could see two guys and they're about to have a fistfight. So, I'd give you an example of what I would do versus what a man would do, or one of my co-workers would do, I guess. Two fellows are just about to come to blows. They start swearing on both sides of the thing and they're starting to come together in the middle of the ballfield and they're about to lay down. I would go out and I'd say “fellas”, and I'd be just like this, I'd say, “fellas, what are ya at? Like what's going on?” I said, “you can't be at this. Your mothers would kill you.” I said, “get back in. If I got to do another warning, I'm going to toss you”, and I'd let it go. One of the – we've had a situation like this before, this is why I bring it up. One of my co-workers as such, same kind of scenario. He's like “what the hell, take it outside. You're gone and you're gone” like without even having that try to deescalate the problem versus escalating the problem maybe, because he's just going to toss them and both of them are going to get into a racket outside the – Yeah, they're going to just go to blows there. I just find it's different ways of handling things, I guess, and I don't – maybe it is female versus male, but I don't know. It's very much a male-dominated thing. (P1: Gender bias: Differences in deescalating)

But yeah, I mean, outside of officiating or maybe in another non-evaluation circumstance, yeah, I could certainly say I've been like – felt like an over explanation was completed even though it may not have been required. But yeah. (P2: Over-explanations as a female athlete)

But I would say like I don't – I've never been in a game where – I also feel that as a female that I have to do – like I have to be on top of my game because if I do make a mistake, it's because I'm a female. (P2: Sexism: Performance evaluation)

Yeah, exactly. And just like, I mean, yeah, and another tangent, but I think a couple years ago in the NBA when they were starting to get female officials at the games, there was one comment by one of the top players and a bad call had been made and it was based on because the particular official was a female. But so, yeah, I feel like if you make a bad call, it might get highlighted as because oh, it's a female ref. (P2: Sexism: Performance evaluation)

But they'll blame it on you because you're female and not just because it might have – like you can make bad calls. (P2: Sexism: Performance evaluation)

But when you take a second to sit down and think about it, like outside the bubble of the rink, it's kind of like – yeah, it definitely is a bit of a boys' club. (P2: Officiating is a boy's club)

So, actually just there this past week, I was on the ice and I came off and the guy was like “wow, you can skate.” I was like yeah, like I really – like again, to me, best part of the game. I spent a lot of time in my career on my skates. (P2: Sexism: Preconceived notions)

Like but it wasn't – like he almost like – it's almost like they're not sure like what we're getting into. We got a female in the room. (P2: Sexism: Preconceived notions)

And then I go on the ice and I just like bust my butt off and then they're like “oh, yeah, you're pretty good” and I'm like “yeah, thanks.” (P2: Sexism: Preconceived notions)

Yeah, it's like “wow, you're like a really nice skater” and it's like – but on the other token, as a player, I don't think I've ever told anyone this, and I feel like I guess I'm being interviewed, but that sounds a bit cocky, but I was in the middle of a game and the referee came up to me after he'd scored a goal and she said “you're the nicest skater I've ever seen” and I was just like – that's like always stuck with me. (P2: Sexism: Preconceived notions)

Like getting – like based on like your certification? Like I know like – I think there was a rule for a while that Hockey Canada’s levels one through six, females couldn’t attain a level six designation. I believe that to be true, because I think to officiate in the NHL or even to get asked, I think you have to be at that level. So, it’s almost like an indirect – (P2: Organizations: Difficult for female officials to obtain certain certifications)

On the same token that we had a couple females ref junior B for the first time. We have three female officials up in FIFA World Cup, again a multibillion dollar like – it’s a lot of weight on their shoulders. (P2: Pressure carried by high profile female officials)

Yeah, and I know a lot of these guys. I mean, they’ve been – a lot of – I mean, the bulk of the crew were from the St. John’s area and I did sense from one or two others who were from the rural part of the province, let’s say, that they often – that they kind of call the St. John’s guys like the bigwigs or like they’re almost too good anyways. But like we’re all officials. (P2: Regional prejudice)

But I do feel that as an official, you kind of already have that label. So, I think when you walk in there or walk into a game, skate into a game, yeah, you kind of have that label on you anyway. So, certain people already don’t like you. (P2: Prejudged based on gender)

Now, Hockey Canada has kind of changed the nomenclature of its rankings, so like your question there on the sheet, like what’s your current certification level. At this point right now, I’m considered high performance because I’m level four – what used to be level four-five. But I think that number system beyond level three, they’ve changed it to high performance. But yeah, there’s level one through six, but apparently there’s a bit of a grey area on this level six for female officials obtaining. (P2: Organizations: Difficult for female officials to obtain certain certifications)

If you walk in like three like this, like 1-2-3, and the two guys will give like a handshake or whatever and then like the girl will be like, oh, like a head nod or something, or like an awkward smile, like okay. (P3: Inequality)

I think if the males wanted a game, they would get it, whether they have the fitness level or whatever or they have like the referee skills. I don’t know. (P3: Organizations: Unfair treatment as a female official)

Yeah. The younger male officials actually like this year – last year, this year? Probably both actually. The younger like upcoming male officials, they probably had more like opportunities for the higher-level games when they’ve had like little to none experience in them. So, it’s kind of like – it’s like disheartening. I was like I was 16, the same age that they were, and I didn’t get any of those games. So, I was like um, it doesn’t sit right all the time. (P3: Organizations: Unfair treatment as a female official)

Now, I don’t know if that could be based on like my like ability to ref versus like someone that might be worse or something. I don’t know. (P3: Belonging might be conditional)

But like they’re always like complimenting, like “oh, you had a great game. You kept up well” or whatever. But like I don’t know if it would be the same if like I had a bad game or not. Like if I recognize I had a bad game or like some other person, they might be like not want to talk to you or something. I don’t know. (P3: Belonging might be conditional)

But it was just that one assessor that was kind of like “oh, you’re not really capable of reffing” and I’m like “I did the fitness test like everyone else”, like I said, but we do fitness testing every year. But like they don’t put the focus on the females as much. Like they’d rather have men reffing men’s games or when there was – like Jubilee is the women’s version of Challenge Cup. (P3: Organizations: Preferring male officials)

But it’s more of just like the games, like “oh, you got given these games. Great.” “I didn’t get any games this week”, whatever. But it’s just the amount of games you get given. Like it’s like oh, these males got female and male games, but like sometimes I’ll get a week with like only female games, and I’m like “oh, I wanted this male game, but I didn’t get it.” It kind of sucks when you ask for a game and it’s like oh – it kind of feels like “oh, she’s not capable for reffing that game” sometimes. (P3: Organizations: Prejudice based on gender)

Um-hm. Like we do fitness tests every year and me and my friend, we can probably run way longer than they can, but they’ll still get the higher. (P3: Unfair performance evaluation)

So, it’s basically like screw refereeing, like I did get my games that I wanted, but I want to ref Challenge Cup now. So, I’m making myself not available for Jubilee, so I can ref Challenge Cup, right. It’s sneaky, but it is what it is. Because intermediate soccer was not the level that I wanted to play in, so – It would be nice if it was easier, honestly. (P3: Taking desperate measures)

Yeah. And if you ever go by Wyatt Park or the little tiny field there next to Dominion down by Quidi Vidi, it's called Wyatt Park. It was named after a woman who was a softball player and that field was built for women's softball and there's a baseball mound on it. Like it breaks my heart. When I saw that there, it made me sick to my stomach because baseball is taking over every – trying to take over every bit of softball. How many professional baseball players have come out of Newfoundland? Zero. No, zero. But if my son wants to play baseball, I got to pay \$250 for him to play baseball for four – for 16 weeks. Softball registration, it's per association, but all we pay at Softball Newfoundland is \$20. (P4: Sport inequality)

Well, I had one coach during the Canada Games said, "come on, Blue, don't you want us to win?" I said, "coach, I don't care who wins. I'm not here to pick a side." Like I'm here to be non-bias and fair, you know. So, the funny thing is coaches still say to an official because – I'm friendly with everyone, but like I'm not putting off this friendliness in a way that one team will think that I'm biased over another team. You have to be careful with that. That's another part of the level five. Like you go out – if you're spoken to, you speak, but if not, you don't strike up conversations and things like that because you don't want to be looking like you're being biased on one team versus another. (P4: Friendliness made into bias)

Sometimes when the game's over, players get a little saucy, I guess I can use that word. Saucy sometimes to an umpire because they lost. Sometimes they won't talk or just give you glares. Or [say] that they lost the game even though they say that they won or stuff like that. (P5: Unfair performance criticism outside competition)

I think before my time, and I felt it when I first came to Newfoundland. I didn't – I can't say I felt it ever in Ontario. Like I said, it's a very much more diverse environment. But unique to Newfoundland was – there's a boys' club, definitely, of old referees who had to work hard, who carried the sport and feel like that everyone coming up through has to work hard and carry the sport and you don't deserve to be at that level unless you've put in that time, and they're buddies and they stick together and they talk to each other. They're not welcoming. Some of them are quite condescending and they can be on deck to many officials quite condescending and harsh, you know, in terms of whether you're writing the disqualification form up properly, if you looked away when the swimmer came in; they can be quite harsh. But that's a – that goes, I think, is in line with their generation, in terms of being able to provide feedback, working with people, putting people at ease. Could have been – you know, the type of people and their professional lives and the roles they were in. I think that has a lot to do with it. (P7: Officiating is a boy's club)

So, you get all kinds, and because of that, not everybody is equipped to give feedback appropriately and you know, you may – you know, you may be criticized for your deportment which when it comes down to it, did you follow the rules, did you apply the rules, did you run the meet efficiently, were you – you know, a kind person or you know, a good person fitting with the ethics of the sport. That shouldn't – your deportment on top of that shouldn't matter. Whether you're a cheery, giggly person or whether you're a serious person, those things should not matter. But often, you may have done everything else but because you were too serious on deck, which you know, is very limiting feedback, and based on as well, they just don't know how to give feedback and that's the best they could come up with. Like I'm not a bubbly person, you know. I'm not walking around with a big smile on my face. It doesn't mean I'm not happy or, you know, I come across serious. It doesn't mean I'm a stressed person. I might be the most relaxed person, but because I treat things seriously and remain focused, some people think I'm either stressed or – you know what I mean? So, that doesn't matter in a swimming environment. What matters is did you take your eyes off the deck? Did you follow the rules? Did you apply the rules? Did you do it with a smile on your face, that doesn't really matter. (P7: Unfair criticism: Personality based)

And you know, there's a lot of those parents, their kids are – want to leave like every other kid, but the kid has to wait because the parents are there stripping the deck, taking out the electronics and – I can't remember a time when it was all female or all male, but there's usually a good few mothers making sure everything happens. (P7: Organizations: More females helping than males)

Like sometimes, like I know, if I'm reffing you always do get this like one person like, "Oh, that hit them", you know, they're kind of like calling other people out. I was even playing like last night and like I had a one-on-one against a male who played years ago and was saying like, a certain played like, hit me in the chest, right? In dodgeball like you can deflect balls- and he kept insisting it hit me in the chest. And as the President of the league, trust me, if something hits me, I'm always like- unless I don't know it hits me, I will make sure I get off the court. I want to be as fair as possible to any team member, but I think even like two games later, he was still going on to his team about it. But, you know, you do hear stuff like that, but it's not

always, I don't think, towards females. You do see that towards males, you know, so I don't look at that more like a bias thing or anything in that regard. I just think it's like the whole overall. I mean, this guy has known a play for a while too, right? (P8: Unfair criticism)

But I do try to make that effort to work with some of the younger ones when I get a chance, but you request it, and you don't get it. I'm like, "can I please work with some of the young female officials?" then you get the schedule, I'm assigned with a man. Like, you know, you try, but yeah, it's like the old boys' club and the boys get what they want. And I'm not just saying this, because it's a female thing. It's a thing still in basketball. (P9: Officiating is a boy's club)

Miss fitness Canada was her title. She was crowned Miss fitness Canada, like I could get fit but I'm not gonna live like that. But like you play on that in your mind and that kind of thing and a woman would never say that in that way to you. I don't think, right? (P9: Female vs male: Constructive criticism)

So I really, really took to heart- really hard time after somebody tried to compare me to miss fitness Canada. You know, women have such body image issues. Nowadays with social media, like the last thing you need is to pressure from other people. So, when that hit, like I was like, okay, I want to go far with reffing at this point, I had learned that you know, I was like, my first national this is where it happened. I was under 15 I got assigned the gold medal game. So it's a big accomplishment for your first national and when that happened, I said, "okay, well, if I want to go further, I need to change the way I look." I was borderline eating disorder for a while, to the point I restricted food, I limited foods, I was sickly looking thin, because I thought I had to look a certain way. I was miserable. This is just one part. It's not all but like that part of it definitely led to wanting to be a certain size and a certain look, there was more to it than that, and there was other things in my life going on as well. But it definitely contributed to my depression diagnosis I had a few years ago. You know, not eating, not feeling your body, feeling miserable, being so unhappy, because, you know, maybe I was never going to look the way I needed to, to get where I wanted to go. Yeah, so that that was really a tough pill to swallow for me. The whole body image thing, because I've always had issues with that. You know, being a female, it's common happens with males too. But that that was probably the hardest thing I've had to go through. And that probably had the most negative effect on me. Yeah, yeah. And I'm still here, still reffing. But I vowed after I talked to my doctor and did whatever that, you know what- I'm going to stick around, I'm going to make sure this doesn't happen to somebody else. I want to make sure that if it does, I'm there to help them and support them in any way that I can. It's definitely made me have a much thicker skin. I've dealt with a lot I've been, you know, told I can't do things or you know, because of my competence- and I think it's because I was a female. And I just don't want that to happen to others. I want them to be given that opportunity. Not to worry about their confidence, because let's face it, that damaged my confidence more than giving me the game. You know what I mean? So you telling me you didn't think I could do it is much more damaging. So I've had lots of lots of negative experiences. (P9: Negative experiences; Unfair performance criticism)

I think maybe there's been a comment or two where they've said, you know, the men's game is different. And it is played differently. But they think that because I'm a female, they'll say something like that because they think I only ref women's basketball. (P9: Unfair evaluation)

Sub-Theme: Organizational Barriers

Then you add the male versus female. I find women are a little bit more empathetic to certain situations when it comes to any kind of injuries and stuff like that. I find that men aren't. They're just like "oh yeah, come on. Let's go." (P1: Organizations: Differences between male and female officials)

So, that's – the jokes and innuendos and stuff, when you're in a male-dominated place, it always happens, unfortunately. They've come to respect, I guess, the other females in the organization to the effect that they know that we don't want this shit going on. (P1: Begrudgingly accepting female officials)

Walk it out, yeah. And don't get me wrong, I say walk it off sometimes, but I also say "listen, I got all the time in the world. You walk around, get yourself loosened up and we'll go from there." So, you know, I do say it, but maybe I say it in a different way. Do you know what I mean? (P1: Organizations: Differences between male and female officials)

Yeah. Whereas in other sports, it seems like there's females at least, like I said, if I turn on the TV, there's a female official there. (P2: Organizations: Underrepresentation in hockey)

So, like people are making efforts to – I don't know. Like he could have just got whatever group of people, boys and girls, refs from his association for the tournament. But he thought it was important that these young girls who play see these opportunities for officiating. (P2: Organizations: Suggestion to create opportunities for female officials)

Yeah, yeah. I guess female officials being more present in some of these – in some of the major sports TV, like when you see it on TV, I mean, that's been a big thing too. I think female hockey players have voiced it a lot more recently. Like if you see it, you can be it or you can believe it. (P2: Organizations: Female representation)

And I guess it doesn't always – like it is nice to have like these all-female tournaments and all-female officials, but you know, I think we – the idea is just to have diversity. So, if you did have a bit of a mix, like there's nothing wrong with that either. Like we don't have to leave the females over here so the males can handle the male games. Like so, like yeah, I don't think they have – they aren't funneling it or trying to find a divide, but I think at the end of the – the bigger picture socially is that we just – you just want to have a diverse skillset and both in gender as well. (P2: Governing bodies: Increasing diversity)

Yeah, yeah. So, again, that's what I find. I mean, at the local level, I mean, and even at I'll say like what you see on TV, it's always males making decisions on behalf of females, (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

You know, and maybe it's just the change of guard at this point where it's really the people in these positions are men, but like at certain point, I guess, you kind of have to pass the baton and hopefully at some point there's like female executives who are making the decisions on behalf of females. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

Right now, in the NHL, I don't think there's been a female referee on the ice. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

Yeah, so like I mean that's a multibillion dollar, you know, business or association and yeah, I think that's really cool. But again, it came down to a man making that decision on their behalf. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

Yeah, so like yeah, but I think the folks at like – again, the referee in chief for the province, like he made a position for a – like I think each region of the province, so like Avalon, Central, West, Labrador, they each have a representative but he made – he made a position to have a female chief referee for the entire province. So, she's kind of like coordinating like getting a female clinic in the city and stuff like that. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

I think I've touched on it before but having females in that executive position to making those decisions. I think as of more recently, I just kind of had this feeling like there's another male decision deciding that females are comfortable and capable of handling, you know, big sports games or whatever, but so, I guess that's one way. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

Yeah, I think that's kind of it. Yeah, I think at the end of the day, like increasing opportunities for females in the executive positions, yeah. (P2: Lack of females in decision making positions)

Exactly. I'm just like "this is my schedule. Give me the game I want, or I won't be reffing anymore." It's just as simple as that. Shots. (P3: Organizations: Unaccommodating)

It's a bit of favouritism there. One summer I ended up working and he wasn't a fan of that. So, he basically punished me and was like you're not going to get any games. (P3: Organizations: Unnecessary punishments)

I think it's just the amount of opportunities, like that the – like I don't even know. Like opportunities would be like more games really. (P3: Organizations: Differences between male and female officials)

So, I don't know if it's right to say, like oh, we want all females reffing this female game. Like I like that, but like I also don't, you know, because – I would like to ref a males' game, because I enjoy male soccer better. (P3: Organizations: Disregarding officials game preferences)

That's where – because technically – not technically, but like Jubilee is like high level women's soccer, but then Challenge Cup is a completely different level obviously. So, like I would like to be reffing Challenge Cup, not Jubilee. So, I was like well – There's more people that go watch male soccer. The male soccer time is always later, which sometimes works better with my schedule. So, I'm like well, I put in my availability to ref the later game and then they'll come back asking me "oh, can you ref the female game?" and I'm like "I'm not available for that game. I want to ref this one." So, I only solely put in my time to ref

the eight p.m. Challenge Cup game, not the 6:00 Jubilee game. (P3: Organizations: Disregarding officials game preferences)

And then I sent that email and then that same year, I was sent to that symposium thingy, that women's thing. So, I was like – somebody read it, and I was like I don't know if they're doing this to reward me or like to keep me in, you know. Like that was kind of my like thought process. I was like, yes, I'll go on this trip. How can you resist like a paid-for trip? So, that was my first thing. I was like I'm going to go, but I'm still upset that I never got these games that I was more than capable of reffing this summer. (P3:

Organizations: Cover ups)

I would say there's like not as many opportunities. Like learning opportunities. Like we went away, me and my friend went to that women's symposium thing, but that was like the first I ever heard of like a women's focused seminar or anything like that. (P3: Lack of learning opportunities)

Yeah, exactly, and that would be the response I would get, exactly. It's like "oh, they need to be more involved" or whatever. "They need the experience" because a lot of the senior males are getting up there now and they probably want some males to still be around, you know. (P3: Organizations: Making excuses)

Yeah, exactly. I know someone read that email, absolutely. But it was still in the back of my mind, it was like are they giving me this trip because I'm deserving of it or are they doing it to keep me for the next year, you know. So, it was kind of like mixed thoughts. (P3: Organisations: Cover ups)

Yeah. Oh God. What they did with like me and the other girl, the other ref, like bringing in female mentors. Like that's the first year we've done it. So, like, I don't know, maybe the younger females liked us being there. I don't know. Because like sometimes it's kind of scary going up to like a strange man and they're giving you criticism on the game and you're like who even are you, right? Well, that's what happened to me when I was like 12. This man came up and he was like "hi, I'm so-and-so. I just watched your whole game and now I'm going to give you some tips", like right, so it's kind of like – I don't know. You could be like that towards a woman, but like I'm not. I don't know, like women are more like motherly, I guess.

Like, more approachable (P3: Governing bodies: Increase the number of female mentors)

So, it was funny because after that summer, he actually sent me and the other girl away to a national symposium thing with all female referees. So, I was like "well, why did you do that if you didn't want me to ref the whole summer that you were assigning games?" (P3: Organizations: Inconsistent assignments)

No, he's just – he's another umpire from a different province, but because it's something he's been working on and it causes sexual impulses, according to him and his therapist, like the treatment was altered and things like that, but he had been – he knew he had a problem with that and so that's the only reason why he wasn't terminated. He was given a full suspension for a year. But he's gone to like – I don't – I hope he's still doing the therapy, but I don't have any communication with him. (P4: Organizations: Lenient)

Yeah, and this was someone that I supported for years. His wife passed away, I was at the funeral, and like anything he needed. I'd hem his pants. Everything he needed, like wifey stuff, buttons fixed, whatever, I did it all that stuff to help him out once his wife had passed away and it was very – it was almost like I'd broke up with him. When he did that and I – like because he called me that morning looking if I was going to volunteer for the men's Nationals that was coming and I said, "oh yeah, I got the whole time off. Whatever they need I'm helping out with" and then he got into the whole "well, how come I'm not doing clinics?" I said, "Joe, all we got is time booked. We don't have anyone specifically slotted to do it." And then he called the president of Softball Newfoundland and the Executive Director and said I was going to destroy the program. And then, "oh, that wasn't me." "Well, Joe, you yelled at twice and hung up in my face twice. Called the elite program director and yelled at him when he was in Florida, and then coincidentally they get a phone call the same day. I don't – and they admitted that you were the one who did it. So, I don't know why you're going to lie to me." And then there was tournaments where he would go and watch and say people were doing things wrong and things like that, and then talk about me and the people who have no idea what's going on in the background because it's none of their business would call me and say "hey, there's an old man here talking trash about you, saying that you don't know how to position properly and all that stuff. So, there's a good reason why you're not umpire in chief and good reason why you were denied to be umpire in chief, they declined your application" and all this stuff. (P4: Organizations: Abuse of power)

So, like it's – they think all we want is money, but it's not. We want to grow the program, but like I'm a nurse. I make \$45 an hour. So, if I go do a minor ballgame, which I love to do, I'm getting 30 bucks an hour. If I get called for overtime and I'm in a tournament, I'm passing up like \$1500 in my paycheque to do

a tournament for a \$30 game because I love the game. But they don't see it that way. They're like, you know, we're just money hungry and we're constantly – all we're looking for is money. No, we're not looking for money. We're looking for support because we don't get grant money. I have to start looking for grants to get money. The only money we get is from our registration from umpires and we pay some of that to Softball Canada for affiliation and that's where the tournaments come from. But like the money for me to send these people to tournaments next year is going to come from our registrations and fundraising because Softball Newfoundland doesn't contribute to our program financially. But we have to pay them to be affiliated with them for insurance. (P4: Organizations: Accusations of money hungry officials)

I'm on the recruitment and retention committee for Softball Canada with a lot of men, but that's just whoever the province sends, whoever the UIC is. So, but like the Women in Umpiring group, there's a couple of men on there, but mostly women, but that's the only group I'm involved in that it's mostly men is the recruitment and retention committee, because they're the umpire in chief for each province and there's only a couple female umpire in chiefs. (P4: Lack of females in decision making positions)

More bursaries and things like that, more – Softball Canada had, with Sport Canada had a female bursary. They gave female officials \$500 to go towards any kind of – like my daughter got one. So, it paid for her clinic. It paid for her total uniform and it paid for shoes or something. Like it paid pretty much everything she needed to officiate for a men's league this last summer. So, it was a one-time deal, like 500 bucks. It's up to \$500. So, you tell us the cost and we'll give you the money. So, I think if they – even if they said "okay, here, we'll pay for your clinic. We'll give you a full uniform and a set of equipment" then - The biggest cost for a lot of people is the uniform and equipment cost. Like my shoes, on the average, my first pair of actual umpire plate shoes was \$250, and a teenager, you can't afford that. You'd umpire most of the summer or at least a couple of tournaments in order to get just a pair of plate shoes. So, I went on this – like I said, I went that homerun sports website and including a ball bag, like umpire equipment bag, it was \$1710 to be able to just go to a National, and a lot of kids don't have that. So, it might seem like a lot of money, but if you want more people to be going into the sport, even giving half, it would be a huge, huge weight off their shoulders and it also might be a huge like piece of cheese to a mouse. It might be something to lure you into it. (P4: Governing bodies: More financial support)

As far as players go. Where the majority of other sports are – it's mostly men's sports, men's baseball, men's hockey, men's soccer, all that stuff. Softball is one of the few women dominated. Like there's women college sports. Women's softball in college is – like there's no baseball for college. Like a man tried to convince me here that baseball will take over softball. I said, "well, not while I'm alive." I played college softball. I know the competitiveness. But baseball is big here because the Blue Jays give Baseball NL \$150,000 a year to go towards programs and fields. There's not one softball community in St. John's, not one softball team in St. John's because baseball has every other field taken over. (P4: All sports should matter equally)

Yeah, yeah. The suspension stuff because like, you know. Brought it up to that group, said "hey, I'm just giving you a heads up. This is what went down" because what we do, we have someone from every association on our development committee. So, at least the person that's from that association knows that this went down, if they weren't involved in the tournament or whatever, which they were anyway, but this is going to our officiating disciplinary committee and – because there's some things that are mandated to go to Softball Canada and if it's like sexual or whatever like that, that's got to go straight to the top. But this was more like cursing and swearing on the diamond and abuse and bullying of an official, not in any kind of sexual or anything like that, like "get the fucking call right", or you know, just stupidity. But you know, I definitely have our local people involved in everything that's going down. Like the revamping of the agreement, any kind of rate changes, everything we go as a group because I don't want them thinking I'm addicted or -- you know, I don't make any decisions alone. That's not how I roll. (P4: Organizations: Being informed)

Well, I know they're trying to get more people to help umpire, but seeing players disrespect umpires, it's hard to get more female/male umpires. So, I guess like show that they can help protect us from players that disrespect us or maybe help us control – I don't know. It's hard to say. (P5: Governing bodies: Enhance protection of officials)

There's a very – there's several provinces that there's a very big disconnect between the provincial body and the umpiring group because the provincial body think it's easy to umpire. Like you know, and their lack of support on different things because like we had a coach this summer that was very aggressive towards an

umpire and cursing and swearing and all this stuff. Softball Newfoundland stepped up and backed us up and suspended him for the rest of the year. But there's other provinces that their provincial bodies won't do that. (P4: Organizations: Other provinces are less supportive of their officials)

Yeah, so usually at the beginning of the week, you'll send out your availability to the person who schedules your games, and then throughout the week, pretty much every day there'll be like "here's a schedule for tomorrow. Some games need to be filled. Is anyone available?" So, like you can choose your games that way. I guess some of the officials who are – have been officiating for longer, kind of he already knows their schedule. So, they'll be put in like automatically. But for the most part, I do get to choose my games. (P6: Organizations: Scheduling)

Minor terms in terms of scheduling. It's something I've been adapting to. Like the day before I'll get the schedule for the night of – or like right now, just as an example, tomorrow there's a grade seven and eight tournament. I just got the email of the schedule on my way here. So, like there's that kind of thing. And it was this weekend I was supposed to have a game, but it got cancelled and I wasn't let know. So, I showed up at the gym and there was like an alumni group and like a couple of players who were practising, and I was like "am I reffing this?" even though I knew like I'm definitely not reffing this. But they were like "oh no, that game got cancelled." (P6: Organizations: Spontaneous scheduling)

I think one of the reasons is why I've got to get so many games is because we're kind of always looking for officials because there's lack thereof. So, I mean, coming into it, I've had like really good support in the community, like officiating community. In terms of like player interactions and stuff outside of competitions or games, I've not had much experience with it. (P6: Organizations: Generous to newcomers)

I would think, yes, just by the nature of the two genders and how they approach their presence on deck. Who they talk to, how much they put into it, you know. A lot of the unglamorous roles are filled by women and you know, it's the women who are bringing in the food and beverage for the officials and coaches, and it's the – you know, you get a mix of male and female doing relief roles, but you know, anybody who's bringing around the water is – you know, it could be another swimmer who's not swimming or a female. Like there's some differences for sure, and who stays at the end to help clean up. (P7: Organizations: Traditional gender roles)

Is anybody saying "nobody spent the money. Where are you? Have you done it?" Like you know what I mean, there's – because all these people are volunteers. There is one paid person in Swimming Newfoundland, besides the coaches. Ignore the coaches. In the whole of the organization, there's one paid person. (P7: Organizations: Offering more paid positions)

Well, recognition. I don't think the sport does a great job recognizing officials. There's the standard, you know, maybe every year there might be an official of the year. I don't even know the process for that. And that should be all – you know, it doesn't matter what level. It could be timer, all the way up, right. You should have an official of the year. So, I don't even know where that is or what it is. So, they have – do they recognize enough when people move up a ladder? No matter what level. It doesn't have to be referees. You know, do they profile all the new people who just got their level three? You know, how do you profile it on – I mean, everyone's into social media now. So, you pump it up. (P7: Organizations: Increasing recognition of officials)

And even now, like even when I become a referee, you still need them because I'll be a level four, but I need to get to level five. I need to have someone who is going to set me up to – in order to be a level five, besides time on deck, you need to go officiate at the National level. So, you need someone to set that up for you and then beyond that, you could become a FINA. There's all that path, I have no idea about. You'd need someone to help you through that. As a ref, going into level four, you're assigned a mentor. (P7: Organizations: Assigning mandatory mentors)

All of the provinces basically, each province has like a provincial sports organization for dodgeball like their own tier for each area. And we usually meet every, like, couple months or so. And a lot of those provinces and stuff actually probably have females that do lead to more, I'd say it's almost about 50/50 or so give or take in that regard. So in that aspect, I know they're always trying to promote females like being in all their leagues. (P8: Organizations: Female representation outside of NL)

Just with the assigning normally you know the same boys get the finals, the same boys get the big games, the same, right? And like, like, oh, you know, I'm going away next weekend. Love to have a great tournament this weekend to ref some good high-level games and they give me like a B tournament like this

is not what I'm asking for. So I guess in that sense, I see that a little bit. (P9: Organization: Unfair assigning)

Oh, yeah, it is like just like a man can reff a women's game, but you'll see that the men when we're doing like a national assignments and stuff- the men will do one U-Sport women's, and next thing you know they're at the U-Sport men's. (P9: Organizations: Gender bias)

The women, I have a friend who's done six U-Sport women's in a row has not been assigned to the men's yet but she does men's games. She's a FIBA carded official, she's very talented- and we had a conversation last weekend when I was at National and she said, "I'd love to go to the men's." I said, "But doesn't it stink? How they're pushed so much faster?" she goes, "I know." (P9: Organizations: Gender bias)

I mean, I understand why I'm assigned female games here. Because we you have to have so many female assignments to get a female national. And that's kind of where I've been going. But yeah, but sometimes when it comes to local assigning and stuff like that, it's, "Well, we'll put you on the girls tournament this weekend and out the boys." The boys is closer to me. So how come I can't do that one? (P9: Organizations: Gender bias)

I'm not really aware of what's out there so maybe spreading the word a little more somehow to the local governing bodies, if there are grants or programs or that kind of thing? I really don't know what their role is with that, or if they have a role, or if there's funding. Or, you know, giving grants for education for women officials? I don't know something like that would be great. But I really, I'm really sure on that side of things. (P9: Governing bodies: Grants)

NLBAC, we dissolved the provincial organization and formed a commission underneath the NLBA. So as my role I'm a member at large. So in my role, we're kind of defining those right now. So I'm education chair, I'm provincial supervisor- so that means I'm responsible for the evaluations, assigning evaluators, that kind of thing. And with the NLBAC commission, I'm the only female official on it, but because we're with the NLBA, they have board members, so we actually have a few other females there as well. So at least I'm not alone. But previously, I've been on the executive as secretary for provincial and local in St. John's region as the only female official as well. (P9: Lack of females in decision making positions)

I just want to make sure that I can help in any way I can. Because officiating can be fun, it can be rewarding, it can be a great time. But there's a lot of things that need to change. And I think talking about it with other officials and other people, is just one way that we can try to make change and spark change. And you know, that kind of thing. (P9: Officiating needs to change)