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**TITLE: GENDER'S INFLUENCE ON CAREER PROGRESSION OF FEMALE
SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTORS.**

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Abstract

The Snowsports industry is highly gendered due to the roots of sports as a male dominated endeavor. This research looks at the way in which gender influences career progression of women in the industry. The research finds that women's success in the industry is largely influenced by self-efficacy but also procedural justice and issues related to precarity and care-work. Recommendations for the industry are then addressed with the goal of creating more equity to help women go further in their career and proceed to higher level of qualification. Addressing gender issues in ski instructing requires a multi-faceted approach involving the ski industry, ski schools, instructors, and governing bodies. Promoting diversity, providing equal opportunities, creating inclusive environments, and challenging gender stereotypes can contribute to a more equitable and inclusive ski instructing industry.

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1. Introduction

Looking at skiing and snowboarding instructors one can notice that there is a much higher number of male in the profession especially when it comes to those with higher level of qualification. In the recent years there have been more discussion from professional athletes and brand on the position of women in Snowsports, a lot of renowned female athlete voiced their opinion concerning what it felt like to evolve as a women in a highly male dominated industry (Thorpe, 2005). Issues such as the lack of female media in professional

skiing, the difference of possibility to compete, the lack of adapted gear and such were raised and one can begin to see a shift in the industry. One of the area that is not well discussed yet is the position of women in the ski and snowboard teaching industry. Snowboarding is an emerging sport, and as such one can see that its gender construction can be different than that of others. Most of the studies looking at gender in sports are focused on sports such as football, basketball, sports with a history of excluding and now separating women. Emerging sports such as snowboarding are more unorganized and individualized which create different construction of masculinity, this is the topic that Anderson (1999) focused on in her research. Starting with the emergence of snowboard, the sport first appeared in 1977 when surfers wanted to practice in the winter. The sport grew very rapidly and the main interested group was the middle-class men. Looking at snowboarding media of the time Anderson (1999) concluded that white young male were the dominant demographics with 86% of representation in pictures. Even though those number are low for women one of the interesting fact is that Snowboarding emerged in a time when women were already participating in sports (Thorpe, 2005), which wasn't the case for skiing. Skiing is an older sport in which women were not included at the beginning, with time it has evolved in a way that integrates women much more than it used to but in which there is still a gap (Hudson, 2003, pp. 49-88).

Snowsports instructors at higher level are mostly identifying as male and this research looks at the reason for which there are so few women at higher level. Understanding what role is gender in career progression playing and findings ways in which the industry could evolve to better fit the needs of all, no matter their gender. The literature on self-efficacy theory, procedural justice theory as well as precarity and care work as gendered will be used as reference. Trying to understand where are those differences founded by looking at women's entry into the industry, training, work life and lifestyle and imbedding the theories

earlier mentioned. The research question are as follows: Why are there less women in the industry? Is the industry fair to all of its employees? How come women are exiting the industry earlier than their male counterpart? Are women given similar opportunities? Are there inequalities in training opportunities? Do women feel integrated and represented in the industry? They are based around the differences experienced by women in the industry. Interviews of Snowsports instructors will be used to illustrate the issue and later give a framework to offer recommendations towards improvement of gender equity and women furtherment in Snowsports instruction. Research regarding women and career opportunities as well as development within professions are numerous but the gap in extreme sports is even more noticeable and this research will explore this specific topic.

The research will start with a literature review, the first part of it will look at defining gender and the ways in which gender is used throughout this research. It will then explore the field of feminism and post feminism. Finally it will look at three theories in relation to gender that are, the self-efficacy theory, procedural justice as well as precarity and care work. There will then be a methods chapter in which the reader will be informed about the ways in which the research has been pursued, defining research position, design of the study, as well as covering all the ethical concerns that are inherently linked to qualitative research. Finally the research findings will be exposed and discussed leading to a suggestions for the industry and conclusion.

2. Literature review

Gender

In order to start the discussion on women in sports there is a necessity to first introduce the concept of gender and frame the ways in which gender will be considered in this research.

Firstly, gender and sex are not the same, however, they are interrelated, sex and gender will often be talked about in relation to one another (WHO, 2011). Sex was defined by the Canadian Institutes of Health research as “ the set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed”. As for gender it was defined as follows “Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender is usually conceptualizes as binary (girl/woman and boy/man) yet there is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience, and express it (CIHR, 2019). In the present research the term of female, woman or female identified will be used, not necessarily in regards to sex affiliation but rather the expression of an individual to belong to a non cis-male group. The goal of this research is to look at the skiing industry which so far is following the binary terms in most regards, and so does the research.

Gender expectations and gender essentialism is one of the issue that will often come as a barrier for women within position of leadership and sports. Gender essentialism is based

on the assumption that gender is a permanent and stable feature of the individual. It therefore imply that gender will define a certain number of feature of an individual such as women being nurturers and more relatable. It somewhat fails to address the diversity of women and the fact that situations and upbringing will influence people's behavior, both for female and male (Gergen & Davis, 2013). One of the issue brought by gender essentialism is that it creates expectancy of individuals based on their gender, people's belief play a powerful role in shaping reality for a person and for others. There are a number of research that document the effect of stereotyping based on gender or ethnicity to have an actual effect on performance of a person who was targeted by this stereotyping. For example, Heyman and Giles (2006) wrote an article in which they mention that some women believe that they are less likely to perform well in mathematics because there are older research that tried to show that women's brain do not function the same way as men do, or men who are interested in nursing but believe that they do not have the nurturing abilities of a women and therefor will not succeed. Gender essentialism and biological determinism is somewhat limiting for individuals as it narrows the range of choices that people see available for themselves, the individuals believes that gender predisposes for natural tendencies and will most likely only consider possibilities within this frame. It plays a very important role in terms of education and occupational decisions (Heyman & Giles, 2006).

Feminism and post-feminism

Feminism emerged as a movement in Europe and America as a response to the exclusion of women in the political and public life, it strove to bring forth equality of men and women. At the time the essentialist view of the people made one believe that women should be at home taking care of private matters because of their perceived characteristic such as passivity, submission, dependence and selflessness whereas men were perceived as

having higher capacity for reasoning, taking action, aggression and independence making them seen as more suitable for public sphere position (Smith & Robinson, 2022). The situation gradually improved and many changes were brought forth. Change that gave equal treatment to women when it comes to areas such as education, training and wage earning and such. However in the 1960's a wave of second generation feminism wanted to have equality that went beyond the laws but rather changed the whole system and incorporated a different view of feminism. Fast forward to nowadays many woman particularly in the west have attained rights of property, earnings, education, employment, legal standing, political participation, divorce and reproductive choice (Smith & Robinson, 2022). However, one can notice that feminism is evolving and there are ways in which the progress toward equity is being hindered. Post-feminism related to the way in which many women are under the impression that equity has been reached and that there is no more need for work in our society. Schorling (2022) noted that there are three ways in which women engage in post-feminist behaviors "First, they ascribe inequalities to the past or to distinct environments; Second, they claim there is a current female advantage; Third, they accept current gender distribution as normal.". One of the issues that stems from this is the creation of tension in between women themselves, research has showed that when a minority (whether because of gender, race, or any particularity) experiences negative stereotyping individuals of said minority will try to distance themselves from their group and try to adopt characteristics of the dominant group. In the case of women this can be seen in women trying to be "one of the boys". This makes women distances themselves from each other and create a lack of cohesion, this also happens as women feel like they are competing against each other for a limited amount of available spots (Schorling, 2022).

Women in Sports

Modern sports were created by men, for men, with a dominant group of wealthy, heterosexual, white men, even nowadays that women have the possibility to partake in sports it is still a gendered institution. For boys, sports is an activity that defines their identity from childhood whereas many girls will not be as engaged. The amount of women in sports is raising, nonetheless one can notice that for example in the US out of the four most popular sports only basketball has a women league and female soccer players earn only a small fraction of what men do, same goes for teams in Europe (Burton, 2015). In 1994, 240 delegates from different nations took part in the first World Conference on Women in Sports in Brighton. The Brighton declaration was adopted with the purpose of increasing women involvement in sports at all levels, and in all functions and roles. Since then there has been 7 more of said conference with the last one taking place in New Zealand in 2022 (JCRWS, 2023). The last conference had “Lack of women coaches and instructors” as one of their area of discussion, creating three recommendations in that regard that are the following « Collect and share case studies on the IWG Insight Hub as a useful resource for other organisations wanting to drive change. Include sample constitutions, training and mentoring programme resources, links to research and evaluations. ; Design and deliver training and development programmes and resources that acknowledge the specific requirements of girls and women as athletes, coaches, referees and umpires. ; Drive system change to achieve gender balance throughout organisations, from board to place of play, creating environments where women thrive. Promote the business case of women in sport leadership as a key benefit. » (IWG, 2022)

The issue is not only in participation in sports but also the number of female in editorial boards of sports media, of leaders in sports organizations and other entities that are linked to sports in general. Snowboarding is an emerging sport, and as such one can see that

its gender construction can be different than that of others. Most of the studies looking at gender in sports are focused on sports such as football, basketball, sports with a history of excluding and now separating women. Emerging sports such as snowboarding are more unorganized and individualized which create different construction of masculinity, this is the topic that Anderson (1999) focused on in her research. Starting with the emergence of snowboard, the sport first appeared in 1977 when surfers wanted to practice in the winter, in 1988 there were about 6% of snowboarders versus 94% of skiers, by 1992 this went up to 24%. The sport grew very rapidly and the main interested group was the middle-class men. Looking at snowboarding media of the time Anderson (1999) concluded that white young male were the dominant demographics with 86% of representation in pictures with 5% of Latino, African American, or Asian men and 9% of white women (0% of minority women). Even though those number are low for women one of the interesting fact is that Snowboarding emerged in a time when women were already participating in sports (Thorpe, 2005), which wasn't the case for skiing. Skiing is an older sport in which women were not included at the beginning, with time it has evolved in a way that integrates women much more than it used to but in which there is still lot of difference (Hudson, 2003, pp. 49-88). Snowboarding for example sees that the biggest magazines are all edited by men, the biggest governing bodies are led by men, the gear brands are mostly directed by men (Thorpe, 2005). However, in the last few years there has been strong advocacy from professional athletes to get better media coverage and more sponsoring possibilities in order to be able to live off of a professional career. It is oftentimes for athletes important to find several streams of revenue as competing is not offering a stable income, brands and sponsoring is one of those. As women were most depicted in lifestyle scenes (on the side of the slopes, or at restaurants rather than actively skiing or snowboarding) there were much less available contracts for women to be sponsored and to earn money for publications. In 2022, Cardrona ski resort in

New Zealand launched their “all in” campaign in which they insure that their media will now be showcasing female athlete in other terms that just lifestyle publication. In the YouTube video they made regarding their project, professional athletes are sharing their opinion of how it is to be a women in the industry and the fact that sometimes media only showed women in lifestyle photos, and showing pink gear rather than show them actually skiing (Cardrona, 2022). There are various initiatives that are currently pursued in order to better integrate women and bring them to different professions on the mountain. For example there are non-profit organization such as “Shejumps” that are create to support women on their journey to the outdoors, Shejumps has program such as junior ski patrol camps and such (Shejumps, 2023). There are also more and more media sources that try to feature women in ski and snowboard movies, there are nowadays an increasing number of women participating in movies both behind and in front of the lens (Skimag.com, 2022).

Women and self-efficacy theory

Women in male dominated and non-traditional industry is a topic that has been extensively studied, Hackett and Betz (1981) argued that the cause of such difference in gender representation in some industry is due to the early sex-role socialization leading to lack of expectation of self-efficacy in women. Their research found that in domains such as IT women had significantly lower expectation of their own capacity to pursue the studies or career even though there were no significant measure showing the reality of this belief in academic prowess. The source of this lower self-expectation is thought to be rooted in early childhood, each person develops a perception of potential career path based on influencers during childhood, for example if young females were not encouraged to tinker with the family computer (which is a socializing process) they might not develop the desire or self-efficacy to lead a career in the IT domain (Michie & Nelson, 2006).

In childhood individuals are exposed to a number of activities that are career-related and finding a career path will be influenced by those activities, as gender still influences activities practiced by an individual they will influence the sense of self-efficacy and desire to pursue certain path. Vocational interest reflects the like, dislike or indifference towards different vocations. Early vocational models show a link between tested abilities and work vocation, however, in practice it seems like abilities are less of an influencer than perceived capacity and feeling of self-efficacy. Occupational self-efficacy is the belief that one has in its ability to perform the educational requirement and job duties of a particular occupation. Vocational interest, and self-efficacy are then showed to be tightly linked with the vocational path of individuals, people are most likely to choose a path in which they have an impression of high self-efficacy (Michie & Nelson, 2006).

Self-efficacy is also something that has been defined as changing and evolving based on different factors, for example, Bandura (1977) said that it was influenced by four parameters, namely performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states. The change would also be greater for all parameters depending on the degree of dependability of each experiential source and whether it is enactive, vicarious, exhortative or emotive source. *Performance accomplishments* is based on personal mastery experience, repetitive success will boost self-efficacy whereas repeated failure lowers it. Failures in early stages of a course of event will create an even deeper impact and will be harder to reverse whereas in a succession of successful attempts a few failures will be more easily dealt with. Rapid self-efficacy in one domain by mastering is said to also create a stronger ability to create self-efficacy in other domain. Bandura (1977) mentions the example of somebody rapidly mastering their fear of a specific animal, their sense of self-efficacy in this particular case will tend to boost their ability not to fear other animals. *Vicarious experience* relates to the fact that people can get influenced by seeing other individuals

perform certain tasks, if a person sees many other do a specific task they might believe that they are also capable to do so. It will in some way improve their sense of self-efficacy, however this is often shallower. Vicarious experience relies on inference from social comparison, the efficacy induced by it is weaker and more vulnerable to change. Until it takes shape and the person tries themselves. *Verbal persuasion* leads people through suggestion into believing that they can cope with a particular issue. It is a mechanism that is widely used in therapy as it is easy and ready available. Again efficacy induced is somewhat weaker than that arising from own accomplishment but can be a source of strengthening self-efficacy. *Emotional arousal* refers to the stages of stress and anxiousness that can have a negative impact on people's sense of efficacy, teaching people to manage their emotional arousal can help face situation in a better way that will lead to mastery and better sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Women in precarious situation and care work

Transnational mobility and precarity

Non-traditional employment and precarity however non mutually exclusive are often working hand in hand, the factors that make a non-traditional employment precarious are according to the International Labor office based on 7 factors (ILO, 2016, pp. 18-20). Employment, earnings, hours, occupational safety and health, social security, training, representation and other fundamental principles and rights at work. *Employment* referring to the stability of one's position or the ability to find a new position if one was to lose their current employment. *Earnings*, answers to the insecurity that can come from the wage earned, if this one is below minimum living wage or uncertainty of future earnings if work is uncertain. *Hours*, whether it is too many or too few or the constant change of hours can pose

problems to the worker, insufficient hours can create concern of insufficient financial stability, too many hours or inconsistent schedule can cause health issues and work-life conflict for example. *Occupational safety and health*, meaning insecurity coming from safety and health concern can arise when there are not sufficient rules in place to protect the workers from hazard, work-related diseases and injuries and general condition of work that can impact well-being. *Social security coverage*, insecurity in this area can arise if there is no social security of adequate coverage. *Training*, not having access to training, or inadequate access can lead to issues in promoting professional development and career advancement. *Representation and other fundamental principles and rights at work*, represents the issues faced by workers who do not have access to representation through unions and collective agreements, as well as the three fundamental rights at work: freedom from discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, the elimination of forced or compulsory labor, and abolition of child labor (ILO, 2016). Seasonal workers are considered non-traditional, even though they might be working a full-time position the contract is only lasting for a short period of time, their contract is influenced by seasonal factors such as climatic cycle, public holiday and/or harvest season (ILO, 2016, p. 26;114).

Non-traditional employment is not evenly distributed amongst the population, the major part of non-traditional workers are women, young people and migrants. For women in particular this difference is often rooted in the fact that they assume more of care work and unpaid labor outside of their paid employment, which both makes them less flexible and deters employment from recruiting them as they believe they will be less available (ILO, 2016, p. 117). In terms of those seven parameters one can agree that lifestyle skilled Snowsports migrants workers fit in most of the categories. Lifestyle sport migration is a pattern of migration that is based on seasonality of a sport practiced, when it comes to skilled Snowsport worker the pattern follows winter from Northern to Southern hemisphere. This

constant migration is in many ways fulfilling and pursued because the person enjoys this lifestyle however it also comes with many strains (Thorpe, 2017).

Workers in seasonal employment are workers who hold explicit or implicit contracts of employment where the timing and duration of the contract is significantly influenced by seasonal factors such as the climatic cycle, public holidays and/or agricultural harvests. These workers may be classified as “employees” (cf. paragraph 8) or “own- account workers” (cf. paragraph 10) according to the specific characteristics of the employment contract. (ILO, 2016)

Care work and welfare systems

The position of women in society was historically very different than it currently is, women were traditionally staying in the household to perform different duties while men were working and earning money for the household. There are now more and more women that start working again after having children and this influences the way in which families function (Ellingsæter, 2018). Care can be defined as a concept that englobes activities, resources and relations that are related to rearing and providing for young children, those who are ill, frail or vulnerable. Care giving has most often been the responsibility of women and with the return of women on the labor market after birth of their children the care giving work and its distribution is evolving (Daly, 2018). Family, care work and professional life are tightly linked and one can see that in some cases founding a family is a barrier to professional life, many women tend to consider whether their financial situation and professional life will be endangered by starting a family. One of the factor to consider in the country in which the person is residing, not all countries have the same level of welfare when it comes to gender equity. For example, the Nordic countries are perceived as countries in which the welfare system is very well developed and in which many women return to work after childbirth (Teigen & Skjeie, 2017). Whereas for example Japan is seeing a major crisis linked to

fertility rate drop as many women decide not to have children because of the high cost of child-rearing and the lack of possibilities of child care. Many of them have decided to renounce family life in order to be able to keep a place in society and ability to work (Kristensen & Semba, 2021a). Overall it appears that the Nordic countries have higher a more developed welfare system that promotes gender equity whereas Japan is still working on developing a more balanced system (Ishii-Kuntz, 2021, 2022; Kristensen & Semba, 2021b; Schultz Lee, 2010). One can see that each nation has their standard for welfare and that the gender equity laws and regulations vary greatly from one state to another.

Procedural justice and motivation

Procedural justice is a theory that looks at fairness and justice within organizations, it initially was mostly concerned with organizational policies and rules but has now evolved to a wider array of entities. There are now a group of different area of justice such as interactional justice, interpersonal justice, informational justice, and structural justice that looks into different issues of justice within organizations (Konovsky, 2000). Interactional justice looks at treatment of people within the organization when procedures are enacted. Interpersonal justice regards the dignity and respect given to employees. Structural justice is concerned with the voice that is given to members of a company, and informational justice with the ways in which they are made aware of decisions in advance and decision making process. The research within this field has greatly grown due to the benefits that have been linked to having fairness within organization. Research shows that having a strong procedural justices is positively linked to beneficial employee behavior such as organizational citizenship behaviors, rule compliance, cooperation, and deference to authority (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). The research led by Zapata-Phelan et al. (2009) investigated the link between motivation of employees with procedural justice and interpersonal justice. It

revealed that procedural justice had a positive impact on employee's motivation, the tasks performed by an employee are evaluated, judged and translated into reward based on a certain degree of procedural justice, inherently it had a direct impact on the employees motivation to perform tasks. However, they also found that interpersonal justice did not influence task performance, as there is more of a psychological distance to it and no direct impact on task performance. Traditional ways of motivating employees were based on altering core job characteristics by increasing task and skill variety, task significance, autonomy and feedback, in addition to this procedural justice is now a factor to be taken into account, in order to increase the likelihood of fair treatment managers can receive training in procedural justice rule adherence (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009).

3. Purpose and significance of the study

This research was pursued with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the effect gender has on career progression of women in Snowsports instruction. As earlier mentioned I am myself a ski instructor and a women which is what peaked my interest in the topic however there is strong significance to the issue other than my personal interest. The ski and snowboard industry is currently mostly directed towards males, the media, the advertisement, the gear and most of everything is tailored for men. This means that a very big segment of the market is not being targeted and not being given the chance to be part of it. Women represent half of the population and by excluding them from Snowsports in its different forms the whole ski industry is missing out on a potential segment of market that significant. Gender equity would therefore benefit the women who are already part of it but it would also benefit the existing structures as they could be aiming at a wider audience. Gender equity for itself is an important goal but making industry understand that their lack of equity

leads them to missing out on a big segment of market is a way to make a difference. By improving equity in instructing there would be a better representation of women that could motivated girls and women to participate more actively in the activity, bringing more customers on resorts and in retail of gear.

4. Methods

Researcher position

This research is a scientific paper in which the intent is to develop knowledge about gender issues within the skiing industry. As a ski instructor myself I am part of the group that I am researching and therefor have a strong understanding and knowledge of the issue.

Qualitative research that are based in the field of psychology are often based on a critical realist view, which is the standpoint I have chosen to adopt for the present study. According to Maxwell (2012) critical realism is based on the distinction between ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to what actually exists – the nature of reality and epistemology in contrast refers to the way in which we gain knowledge of what exists. Critical realism combines a realist ontology, with a constructivist epistemology. Realist ontology meaning the belief that there is a real world that exists independently of our beliefs and construction. And constructivism epistemology the belief that our knowledge of this world is inevitably based on our own construction, in which there is no way to achieve pure objectivity. All knowledge is therefore based on our own perception and could be interpreted differently but that does not contradict the fact that there is a real world to which knowledge refers to (Maxwell, 2012).

As a member of the group researched my perspective has influenced the outcome of the research and so is true for the participants I have interviewed as well. In this regards I believe that the knowledge constructed shades light on one reality and could be read or

interpreted differently if another research was to look into the same questions. Even though written with the intent to describe constructivism I also believe that the following is very relevant in illustrating the purpose and intent of my research “constructivism transforms social sciences to an activity done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future.”

(Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Design

This research is an exploratory phenomenological research, it observes a particular phenomenon in a specific setting and time (Mligo, 2016, pp. 48-58) namely the influence of gender on career of female Snowsports instructors at the present moment. This type of research is by nature a qualitative endeavor that is often pursued through the use of interviews which will be the case in this study. The research is interdisciplinary in the fields of gender studies and leadership using theories that are in the field of psychology. Its goal is not to generate a form of truth but rather shed light on an issue for gain insight on a specific topic. It is knowledge produced both from theoretical and tacit knowledge of the industry.

Sample and setting

Sample

The sample chosen is based on a group of female Snowsports instructors both skiers and snowboarders alike. All of those were employed at a company based in Niseko, Japan for the season 22/23. The participant all identify as female and are over 18. Sufficient level of English proficiency was also a requirement for participating. The participants have been

picked amongst all ski school present in Niseko, and have been contacted through their company or personally when met on the slopes. Each participants was asked to sign a consent form, the draft of said form is joined in the appendix of this document.

The research has been conducted with a sample of six female Snowsports instructors, the first two participants were women met on the slopes and asked if they would be interested in participating, the following were met through common connection and snowball effect.

In this group of women there are six different nationalities (Czech, Japanese, British, New Zealander, Indian and Taiwanese), aged 22 to 34, they all had experience as a ski instructor from 2 to 15+ seasons and worked for different companies. All of them had experience working in at least two different countries of which were Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, India, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland. All names have been changed for anonymity's sake but here is a short presentation of the participants.

Tash is a 25 years old British citizen who has worked 5 full seasons, she is a ski instructor with level 3 BASI qualification working on level 4 and projecting to pass level 1 snowboarding in the near future. She has worked in Argentina, New Zealand and Japan. Her current goal is to pass higher certifications to become a trainer.

Kate is 26, comes from New Zealand, has worked 11 seasons and is a NZSIA Snowboard trainer (highest certification level). She has worked in Canada, New Zealand and Japan. She has reached the highest qualification level in Snowboarding and is instructing but has been working towards a career in coaching.

Sofie is 34, she comes from Japan and has worked 22 seasons between Canada, Japan and New Zealand. She has a ski racing background and now has the highest level of qualification in the Japanese instructor system as well as ski and telemark level 2, and avalanche safety certification to work as a ski touring guide. She sees guiding as an extension

of teaching, being able to take somebody on a journey from start to backcountry skiing. Still considering what are the potential next moves for her career, whether it will be becoming an examiner or do more guiding for example.

Victoria is 26, she comes from Czech Republic and has worked 2 seasons as a ski instructor and has her Skiing CSIA level 2 qualification, she has worked in Canada and Japan. She is mostly teaching but has started the process of becoming a backcountry guide and is interested in going towards ski patrolling.

Mary is 34, comes from India and has worked in Canada, India, Dubai (indoor center) and Japan for a total of 15 seasons. She is a snowboard instructor with CASI level 2 as well as ski CSIA1.

Setting - Niseko

Niseko is a village located about a 100km from Sapporo, on Hokkaido, the Northern most Island of the Japanese archipelago. Niseko United comprises four ski resort that are on the Niseko Annupuri volcano. It is a world famous destination because of its very particular snow condition, the winds from the Eurasian continent pick-up moisture from the Sea of Japan and creates the driest, lightest powder in very high quantity. The four resorts, Hanzano, Tokyu Grand Hirafu, Niseko Village and Niseko Annupuri are all linked and work together creating a very vast skiable area (NisekoUnited, 2022). Each of the resorts have an official ski school, except for Grand Hirafu that has two, those are the ski school that are at least partially owned by the resort owners, there are then many ski schools that are affiliated but owned by third parties (NisekoUnited, 2023).

Data collection

The data collection was done through semi-structured interview, informal in tone and allowing for open responses (Clifford et al., 2016). This format has been chosen in order to have all participants answer the same questions but also leaving the freedom for the conversation to extend so that respondents can develop deep in their experience without feeling locked in a set of questions that is too rigid. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to an hour and took place in different cafes around the ski resorts of Niseko. Those cafes were chosen to have a neutral setting with limited distraction and were either in Kutchan or in Hirafu depending on the most convenient option for each participants.

There was also data collected on the field during the season, as the researcher is an active member of the group studied the research will be involved in situations that are relevant to the research, this data will be sourced from private conversation and observations that will not be illustrated in ways that reveal the identity of the person with whom interactions took place. All interactions and field observations are presented in the findings chapter alongside the interview findings, however, they are clearly identified and cannot be confused with the findings of interviews.

Data protection and ethics

During the semi-structured interview the participants were recorded and the data was transcribed shortly after each meeting, the data protection laws put in place by the NSD were closely followed and the NSD has approved the project prior to interview start. Each participants was asked to sign a consent form of which an example can be found in the appendix. The interview template was based on a first set of question that regard demographics, including age, and nationality. Followed by a few question regarding previous

place of employment, qualification level, years of experience and finally open questions about their experience as Snowsport instructor in terms of gender equity. In this research all names used to describe interactions with participants have been change in order to insure that they are not recognizable. In the sample chapter there are names that have been attributed to each participant however citation in the finding chapter are not linked to those names to insure that readers cannot connect participants to citations. The citations are extracted from interviews and all of participants are cited.

The field notes were written throughout the season as early as possible after a situation took place as to best render the reality without omitting detail, the notes did not include any names or personal data that can lead to identification of the subjects.

Data analysis

In qualitative research analysis of the data is an ongoing process that is based on breaking the whole of the data into parts (Mligo, 2016, p. 9). In this case an inductive content analysis process was used. There are three phases in the inductive content which are the open coding, the creation of categories and finally the abstraction. The open coding is the time in which the researcher becomes familiar with the interview transcripts and takes notes on each of them. Categories are then created so that the results from different interviews can be grouped by recurrent theme, there are different level of categories, from sub-categories to main categories. The last step will be to abstract the information, formulation a general description of the research topic through the categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

5. Findings

During the analysis of the interviews there are seven categories of information that came out all are shortly illustrated in the upcoming chapter with direct citation of what the participants have mentioned as well as field observations that fit into those categories. The categories are as follow; women representation in teams, training and development programs, differences at work, gender in certification process, company involvement in gender discussion, women specific issues and work, family life and financial situation, and community and support.

Women representation in teams

In their current team the women interviewed mentioned that the representation of female instructors were ranging from 40 to 50% but also stated that this had not always been the case, for example Mary was the only female instructor when working in Dubai, and both Tash and Kate worked in teams with less than 20% of women in previous employments.

“Probably about 45%, and our supervisor is a women also maybe 50/50 on a team of 20 supervisors, that’s quite well represented”

“Our manager is female and the supervisor team has another women and 4 guys”

One of the issue noted was that even if there were quite a lot of women there were very few who had higher certification level.

“Last season I was training and there were no girls on my level, it was all guys. There were no female instructors that I am aware of, even in high season.

I’ve had a bit of everything, lots of girls or none at all. “

“I find that a lot of female instructor I worked with mostly have up to level 2, I’ve only worked with one level 4 female instructor before.”

“In the whole NZSIA (snowboard) there are only 3 female trainers, they female representation is not there at higher level.”

However when it comes to guiding both Sofie and Victoria said there were less than 10% of women, same thing for coaching where Kate was the only women out of 20 coaches. As for patrolling there are also big differences depending on the country.

“In general 30% in average, at the moment it’s 50-50 But for guiding it’s less than 10%”

“I was the only female coach and it felt like a boys club. We’d get into the van up to work every day and it would just be lad’s chat all the way”

“All the patrollers I know and worked with are super open-minded and they said they want females on their team because they are better at talking to patients and keep the male ego down. But in Czech there is not a single woman patroller and they don’t want any, they say that it would mess up the balance and all men would be pining for women in the team. Like isn’t it their problem if they can’t keep it in their pants?”

During field observations there was a clear inequity in the number of female versus male instructor in the beginners area. Even though most ski school have a fairly high amount of women instructors the percentage of male in beginners area is significantly lower.

Training and development programs

As previously stated there are much fewer women with high qualification level especially when it comes to snowboarding, that has an influence on the training programs. Women specific programs are in high demand but are often not available because of the shortage of trainers. Female specific training are in high demand because they provide a safe space in which women feel more included and find a space for themselves.

“In -name of resort- they try to put on female only training but because of the shortage of trainers they can’t. There is such a demand for it like all the female snowboarder get intimidated going on morning training with the boys because they compare themselves and feel like shit. Creating a female only environment is very supportive and it’s crazy how much they all froth it. I think last season I ran two and then there is no one else to take them.”

“There are 2 female trainers, out of maybe 10, but I feel like there is a strong representation of women who are not trainers but are still very skillful and are treated like such. And we run a ladies night that is open to all the staff not just instructors.”

The general feeling about women specific training is also in some way shared, not all women agreed with it.

“In -Name of resort- there was a girl shredding thing sometimes. But it wasn’t like.. it was more about us, it wasn’t from the company, we were the ones organizing. I’m not that psyched about this girls stuff, I just like going skiing all of us together.”

“I actually have interesting feeling about women’s only training, I kind of like putting a band-aid on a broken arm. It’s great to create an inclusive space that people need for now but I don’t like the idea of separation. There is an issue with women in the industry and they needing to be encouraged a bit more but mainly to be involved in that as well. Not just separate it out and expect it to change. But for now if people need a comfortable space that cool and this is taken into consideration.”

Gender’s influence on day-to-day work

In their employment most of the participants felt like they were treated fairly and that their gender did not influence their day to day work as instructors. Most of the issues that were noted were actually coming from the clients rather than from the companies. Also showing that differences are much more present in guiding and coaching. In some ways it appeared that in instructing parents of children would rather have had women as instructors, as for adults the clients rather wanted a person of the same sex. But for guiding and coaching clients often expect men.

“I’ve had a few female requested, for kids so I guess there is a stereotype of women being more caring. But I feel like that comes from the client more than from the management.”

“I can see definitely request from the clients or guests or students or parents, they prefer female instructors for smaller kids, it is just that they think a female is more gentle with kids. Or kids prefer female as well as parents prefer females.”

“In -name of Canadian resort- I didn’t feel any difference at all. Here surprisingly I feel very supported, our boss lets me tail guide and helped me getting my avalanche certifications. But with clients there have been a few weird interactions when guiding. One guy helped me take my skis off. I was talking and you know you need to press the pin and my pole didn’t go straight in and the guy went down to help me like I didn’t know how to do it. There are also a few sexist remarks happening here and there.”

“In guiding It happened a few times I show up in the morning and they look at me like “you’re guiding us?” kinda look, like they don’t say but I can feel it. So I can feel that it is not completely positive, but normally it is fine once we start skiing. Cause for guiding for sure what they imagine is a mountain bushy dirty guy to rock up and jump in the van, they think they will struggle to keep up with the guide and such.”

“There was one incident last season, I was coaching for -name of resort- freestyle program which runs 4 days a week for kids training towards high performance program for the national team. The parents of the kids at the beginning of the season told my boss they didn’t want me as a coach because I was a female as one of the reasons, so that’s one time it has had influence in a negative way. [...] That was pretty shit because at the start my boss stuck up to me and told them that this is how it is. But then at the end it escalated and I got shafted. He should have had my back and supported me and helped me through the situation but it was easier for him to say ok we’ll get rid of -name- and get a male coach. So yeah it was mostly the fault of the parents but it wasn’t well handled by -name of resort “

Gender in the certification process

During the interviews it appeared that most respondent felt gender somewhat influenced the process but in rather different ways. One of the interviewee for example felt that being a woman might have made the trainers be more indulgent on her.

“If anything, from my experience maybe I didn’t have to have the same strength or skills as male candidates. Possibly, I can’t really judge as a third person enough but when I did my level 4 exam I was questioning if I would pass with the skills I had if I was a men. They were maybe softer on me, or they wanted more qualified female instructors in the industry. [...] I have a feeling that sometimes you can’t fail this girl because if you fail this girl not a lot of female would pass. So they might consider that muscle or body strength is not always expected in the same performance as male can do.”

On the other hand some believe that sometimes the female physiology is not taken into account and that women are asked to perform the same even though it might not be physically possible.

“The image we are expected to be showing is more tailored to male snowboarder and not female because it was started by a group of men and they just expect everyone else should be able to snowboard like they can and show the same picture that they can. So that way we are treated a bit differently cause our physiology isn’t taken into consideration. But it’s something that is not well understood. I’ve experienced it when going through the levels like I think the expectation for female is sometimes a bit harder for female because of the way our bodies are.”

There were also mentions of wanting to go further in the system and remarks from other instructors to motivate women to keep pursuing higher qualification.

“ When I went to the course level 1 and 2 I only had male trainers and I was like this would be way more inspiring if I had a female trainer and be like “oh if she can do it why can’t I ?” So that’s what kinda motivated me to keep going and yeah now I’m a trainer.”

“ But what I heard from other friend, one of my colleague told me I should go to level three and maybe trainers because there are no women in there, high in the ski instructors industry in NZ. And he was like you would have a job

cause most women don't want to do that for a long time because they want to have a family."

Company involvement in gender discussion

Throughout the interviews there were a lot of mentions of having companies that are trying to promote gender equity, or are not actively trying but do not show bias either.

"I think my company is on it, the female is a manager so she knows this stuff, they are trying to hire more women"

"I think the company I work for is trying to make it as equal as they can, but when I worked for a Japanese company if they got more women they didn't mind, but they were not actively trying to balance it. And in guiding it's impossible because they don't get enough female applicants"

There are also two instances in which participants mentioned experiencing strong bias.

"In my current company I can't say, they've hired a lot of women and it seems equal-equal but in a company I used to work for – name of a Japanese company- and there the boys were definitely favored, the boss always let them go riding or let them backline, we didn't get a say. That would probably be the only time a supervisor really made it clear though."

“When I worked in the indoor dome in Dubai it was very difficult, I was the only woman and I was often told not to talk to men or experienced that I would not be able to voice my opinions. It was very frustrating.”

“In my previous company I think it wasn't too thought about, my boss was a female so she would try to get women but there were just not enough applicants”

However one participant also noted that in one of the resort she worked at the management was making real progress and tried to involve women.

“In -name of resort-, they released a movie last year that was about the women in the industry, they made a big thing saying that all marketing photos and videos would from now on be at least 50/50 male and female. They are very aware of gender representation but at the same time they make all this effort now cause they saw that it was not equal at all.”

During a private conversation with a friend who is an instructor working in Niseko she mentioned that being in a team with more women was an important concern for her as she wanted to improve and get into higher certifications, however she mentioned that even though during her interview she had planned on asking about it she decided not to as she was interviewed by a man. She did not want to sound like “that kinda girl”. By that she meant that she did not feel comfortable expressing her desire to train with other women because she was worried this would make her sounds picky or less capable in a way (Personal-Communication, 2023a).

Women specific issues and work

The women menstrual cycle is one item that came in interviews as something that was hard to deal with and hard to manage in the skiing industry.

“I wish there was better understanding of female period. Some people can get very ill or really struggle to get out of bed. But it’s not an easy environment to speak up about it. Not the easiest to get understanding and get a day off. I wish there was better way to communicate or set it up I some way. Most supervisors are male so it’s hard. It’s hard to change because female are a minority but it should be easy enough to make it work”

“When you have your period something it’s not fun, it just sucks. It might be one thing you know, if you are in a company just with guys they don’t think about this. Because of period you are exhausted and they don’t see this. We should be more open about it.”

Family life and financial situation

For most of the women interviewed one of the concern with pursuing this lifestyle was that the financial situation made it complicated to pursue a career and have a family.

“I hope there is a way you can get employed and get maternity leave. Or enough income to raise a family. I don’t know many instructors all over the world who keeps doing this job once they get married and have kids. [...] I wish understood that this is an actual career, an actual professional job to be an instructor. Motherhood and instructing is very hard. I know people who went back teaching after having a baby which is really cool but I think it is really hard

financially. If ski schools had a kindergarten or one if there was one around that would be great but normally in ski resort it is too expensive, not realistic for a ski instructor to pay for. I think this is a big reason for women not to go further.”

“In this kind of job if you wanna have a family and kids it’s gonna be hard, you’re not gonna be home 4 and leave 8. It’s just lack of money, you don’t get good pay in this industry. We were talking about it with one of my colleague, a 50 years old male and he told me if you wanna have a family you probably can’t date a guide, you need to find someone who’s got money. That’s just sad. So yeah that’s the biggest issue for me, money. To be able to comfortably have a family and do what I love to do.”

“Because people don’t make enough money they can’t stay there, what they do is that they just top up with gap year people to get by for the season but we lose good instructors because they don’t have enough money.”

“If you have another 10 years then maybe it’s worth dropping a 1000 dollars to go to a higher level. I think this is a big reason for women not to go further, they can’t see it last long, making enough money and having your life at the same time. It’s a big commitment, you need a big passion or it. “

From different conversations and field observation there were also several instances in which instructors mentioned having issues with sustaining their travels, paying for flight tickets, affording healthy and sufficient foods but also afford health care. During a conversation with a physiotherapist based in Niseko this one mentioned seeing a lot of instructors come once and wanting to return but not having the financial ability to do so. She

also mentioned having instructor friends who just would keep on working even when injured because of not having good insurance or sufficient income (Personal-Communication, 2023b).

Community and support

For most interviewee one thing that came out was that women would truly appreciate is having a stronger community in which mentorship and training could be provided by women. Not necessarily exclusively for women but overall having more women in trainer and mentor positions:

“One thing from a coaches perspective would be, it would be cool to have a group of other female coaches or instructor who want to be coaches. A cool group to have some sort of maybe mentorship or like training too. [...] And have other female to bounce off-of and confide in and relate to. I guess it would help to open up a path way for female instructors to see a career that can be beyond instructing; Open doors.”

“ Representation makes a massive difference, and its already changing, just in my little world of instructing. When I first started. I couldn't tell you the name of a single woman instructor but right now there are a lot and their faces are everywhere. [...] Just showing hey there is a space here, this is for you. I can look at another skiers that is male and be inspired by that and that's great but when that skier has the same gender then you identify like “oh that could be me”.

“I would like to know what people especially women, what their career plan is, maybe steal some of their idea what to do. I would like to meet more female instructors who is actually passionate about teaching or enjoy doing what they’re doing, would be very nice. A better community. I don’t find many people like that”

6. Discussion

This thesis was pursued with the goal of better understanding the ways in which women are influenced by their gender when it comes to career progression as Snowsports instructors. The research was pursued in Niseko in order to find out more about the following questions: Why are there less women in the industry? Is the industry fair to all of its employees? How come women are exiting the industry earlier than their male counterpart? Are women given similar opportunities? Are there inequalities in training opportunities? Do women feel integrated and represented in the industry? The theories used as basis for the research are the self-efficacy theory and procedural justice but also looking at the precarity angle and the overall women discrimination in work. The initial results presented in the previous chapter will now be discussed in connection with the literature that was presented in the theory chapter.

Self-efficacy and gender

According to the result chapter of this thesis there are seven area of concern that were noted from the interviews. The categories are the following; women representation in teams,

training and development programs, gender's influence on day-to-day work, gender in certification process, company involvement in gender discussion, family life and financial situation, community and support.

The first one was regarding the amount of women that are present in teams. It was found that as expected work environment had a fair amount of women in general but that the ratio of women depending on their position was very unbalanced. Women with higher level of certification of holding managerial positions were much fewer than their male counterparts. This was expected, however the main interest is to find out the ways in which this influences women in their career progression and their experience as workers in this industry. In some regards it appeared that the interviewees noticed that there were less women but found it rather normal, it didn't seem to shock them and they mentioned that the ratio was quite good (even though often below 30%), the main issue for them was when it came to other positions such as coaching and guiding. All mentioned that they had felt excluded in some ways for example saying that as the only female coach there were moment in social interaction that felt heavy and inappropriate, the "boys club" feeling was present. Understanding the ways in which this disparity affect women during the progression of their career is the essence of this research.

Training and development was directly affected by the rather low presence of women in higher level, many of the interviewees expressed the thought that having few female trainers impacted their learning curve in a negative way. Training with men and not having other female of their skill level was perceived as a disadvantage in several regards. Self-efficacy is definitely one of them, not having many female to look up to create for some a sense of discouragement, for others though it was perceived as a motivator to push themselves and become the next generation of trainers that could help the younger skiers and snowboarders in the making. The two participants that expressed this willingness to become

trainers in order to show possibilities for younger generations has both been working in resorts within which there were some kind of mentoring programs, or women they looked up to during their lower level education. In many regards the participants agreed that they would wish for more female trainers but the idea of having separate training was not necessarily what they wanted. In accordance with the thought that minorities tend to try and match the majority group and distance themselves from the minority some of the participants showed reluctance to having female only training but also expressed not being very enthusiastic as to hanging with girls or having girls riding days for example. Negative stereotyping against women created an environment in which many women distance themselves from each other and lack cohesion. However, on the other hand for all participants it came out in the interviews that they found riding with women less intimidating and that the pressure put on themselves was lower when they were with women. They also mentioned enjoying riding with men but rather in a group where they were not the only women. It also is interesting to see that they all are aware of this but try to work on not caring as much.

In terms of differences at work one interesting point that came out is that many of the women interviewed mentioned feeling like they were treated fairly, they all perceived their company as behaving in a way that didn't discriminate. This is one area in which the results were not what they were expected, when looking at the beginners area in the main resort of Niseko one could clearly notice that there were more women than men even though the company has more men employees. This is one area in which post-feminism behavior could be found, even if the treatment wasn't very fair most women thought the current gender distribution was normal. There were even mentions of being given children following parent's request and some instructors saw this as a kind of compliment, that people were not requesting male but rather female. This is derived from gender essentialism and the fact that parents believe that women are having attributes such as being nurturing, gentle and better at

communication. Even if those are positive traits they result in women getting lessons of lower levels. Which in turn affects their ability at getting better at giving advanced lessons and progression in their own skiing through working at higher level. When discussing training and certification levels again there were two sides to the answer some women noted that they thought certification process was harder for women because of being expected to perform in the same way men do even though women's body work differently and might not be able to show the same picture as men do. However, some also mentioned believing that they might have been given certification even though they performed at lower level, again a sign of post-feminism in which women might doubt their capacity and think that they are at an advantage because their gender influences others. One of the instances that was noted to really affect a participant negatively was regarding the coaching experience in which parents openly discriminated based on gender, as this happened at the beginning of the coaching career of the interviewee one can expect that it had a negative impact. As seen in theory performance accomplishment is a strong driver of self-efficacy and repeated failure or failure in early stages can have a noticeable impact on one's sense of self-efficacy.

Overall in terms of self-efficacy one can see that women in the ski and snowboarding instructing industry would largely benefit from being more represented in higher levels. Having more women with high level of certification would create an environment in which young skiers and snowboarders could identify and have a stronger vision for their own career. Being trained by a person of the same sex that better understand your physiology and psychology would be beneficial. Gender expectations and gender essentialism have a strong impact on the lessons that women are given and that comes largely from guests requests which in turn hinders chances of women progressing. Being given low level lessons more regularly can lead to a lack of performance accomplishment, one of the factors that help build self-efficacy. If few women get high level lessons other women also notice this and will lack

vicarious experience, which is based on getting self-efficacy from seeing other people succeed at a task that is to be attempted by one. This is true both for lessons assigned but also for seeing other women at high level of certification.

Companies engagement and procedural justice

As seen in the literature review procedural justice is positively linked to employee motivation, and in turns benefits the company and for employee satisfaction. That of course applies for all employees no matter their gender, however, the behavior of the company towards gender issues will play an important role for women.

When it came to company involvement with gender discussion most interviewed agreed that they thought their company was either actively concerned and trying to balance the percentage of men and women or that their company was neutral, not actively trying to balance but not actively discriminating either. What came out as interesting is the fact that several women mentioned that places where they previously worked at had more of a system and were trying to advance the situation. For example one participant mentioned this “All in” campaign that her previous resort pursued and overall while researching the topic of women in the industry there are several publishing that show some resorts going through great length to set up mentoring programs and such. The difference that could be seen is that the resorts doing so are often of much bigger size, Niseko United is a big structure but there are many small ski school operating rather than one ski school run by the resort. In those terms one can see that having only one school makes it easier to implement change. For example, some of the interviewed women mentioned their companies organizing girl-ride nights or women specific training, those were all women working in school with 30+ instructors. Whereas for

example some interviewed mentioned that their company were too small to run trainings, let alone women specific one.

During the interview it also appeared that certain companies where more or less involved depending on the country in which they were and on the nationality of people running said company. All women working for foreign owned companies in Niseko mentioned feeling like their company was aware and somewhat trying to balance the gender gap but there were also mentions of companies abroad like Dubai or Czech and of Japanese companies being less aware or even openly biased. It is hard to define from this result whether the Japanese company were not balancing because they were smaller structure without the means to try and find equal amount of women and men staff or if there was a lack of awareness towards gender issues. Overall, Japan is a country in which gender differences are still noticeable. As such, Japanese companies might have a lesser degree of awareness than foreign owned companies. In this case one can see that the country in which the companies are based can be an influencing parameter.

Improving procedural justice through training of managers and putting in place clear procedure that encourage gender equity would be a way to increase employee motivation and in turn to motivate women to pursue a career towards higher level. The other traditional means of improving employee motivation are also valid, increasing task and skill variety, task significance, autonomy and feedback would have positive effect on motivation and are also potential ways to increase sense of self-efficacy.

Precarity and family life

Working within the ski and snowboard industry means being dependent on seasonality, employment is oftentimes only based on short term contracts and can pose a

number of issues for employees. According to the ILO (2016) definition there are seven factors that can make an employment being considered precarious and all of those fit the description of a Snowsports instructor. Employment is fairly unstable as the contracts are short and new employment needs to be found every season, most of the interviewees mentioned having a hard time finding their next place of work especially if they were looking to expand into new areas such as patrolling, or coaching. Earnings are also somewhat unstable, as all agreed earnings of an instructor are not high and the season can be quite short with some weeks being more busy than others, which doesn't provide financial stability. Hours are not constant and can vary a great deal in between low and high season, some week will be extremely busy and even require a few weeks without days off whereas some week will be very quiet. Occupational safety and health is a concern that is tightly linked with financial stability, many ski instructors find that they are straining their body but might not be able to afford seeing a specialist or are not sure what their health insurance covers depending on the country of residence. In many ways the high seasons week schedules and very high load of work are also a hazard for staff safety as overuse of their body can lead to injury. Training or access to career development varies greatly from one company to another which is also a factor leading to precarity and further discussed in the next or previous chapter. Representation and other fundamental principles and rights at work are of course a central concern of this thesis. The three fundamental rights concern freedom from discrimination, elimination of forced labor and abolition of child labor. The two later are not a concern in the ski industry however discrimination at work is the main concern of this thesis with gender being the base for discrimination, the lack of union in the industry is also an aspect that further makes defending their rights complicated.

Within the process of the interview what came out from the participants as a main concern was the scheduling and financial position in which instructors find themselves.

However true for all it appears that being a female results in this factors being more present. Many of the women interviewed mentioned being that their financial situation and the amount of work they have does not allow for starting a family. There are very few women who proceed to having a family and decide to keep working as an instructor. The amount of work that needs to be put in in high season is very high and does not leave enough time for caregiving, which is often a task that women are left responsible for. The financial instability also leads women to decide to change career when they desire to start a family. This is in turn a reason for which there are fewer women at high level, investing money into courses to gain higher certification requires for someone to be projecting themselves staying in the industry for a longer period of time. However, many women see this career as a shorter time plan as they expect to need to change profession when they will want to have a family. All interviewees expressed the desire to have a better situation in which they could keep working with their passion but also have a normal family life. Life on ski resort and the cost of childcare is inordinately high due to the affluence of wealthy visitors and limited availability. An instructor wage does not allow one to afford childcare on resort.

The topic of female specific problems and especially menstruation is widely undiscussed, even though there are numerous women in the outdoor industry there are very few that find ways to accommodate such issue. Women have a hard time finding their place and voicing their concern when it comes to menstruation because most of their supervisor are men. This is a field that is connected to welfare and the ways in which companies could better accommodate women, this issue is mainly to be treated through welfare and governmental bodies creating laws and regulations that could make women able to get paid days off during periods but also better scheduling options.

7. Implications for the Snowsports industry

As previously stated improving gender equity in the Snowsports instructing industry would benefit both the companies and employees of the industry. Ski school and ski resorts would benefit as having a greater women representation at all level could act as a motivator for more potential clients to start participating. There are currently more male participating in Snowsports and the whole market that is the other half of the population is not being targeted equally. As seen in the discussion there are several factors that influence women's participation in the instructing industry but also the level of qualification they reach. Procedural justice, self-efficacy and care and welfare are three important areas that have been discussed and this chapter will attempt at showing ways in which those could be worked on in order to help women thrive and stay within the industry for longer and at all levels. Through the finding of this research one can see that the work has to be done on many different levels, from the managers of ski schools and resorts, media outlets, instructors and clients.

Procedural justice is one area in which the ski schools and ski resorts are most concerned, as seen through Zapata-Phelan et al. (2009) procedural justice is acting as a motivator for employees to perform task in a good way. As such ski schools and ski resorts would benefit from having strong gender equity policies that are applied in their day-to-day operations as to unsure that women (and men) are treated fairly and therefor grown a desire to perform in their employment and stay in the industry. This implies training managers to understand what procedural justice is and the way in which is relate to gender. For example, having fair distribution of lesson based on skills rather than essentialist view of women traits that indicate women will be better at teaching kids. However, as mentioned in the finding chapter it is often so that lessons are assigned based on clients request, and companies thrive

to meet their guests demand to deliver good service. In this case there is a need for managers and booking agents to be educated in this issue and to find systems in which the clients are being redirected to book an instructor based on their personal and technical quality rather than their gender. Following the research led by Schorling (2022) Big mountain resort created a scripted response to use when clients request a gender specific identity for their instructor. The scrip explains to the client that the school does not guarantee gendered instructor requests but asks them to explain what behaviors or personality aspects they prefer in an instructor. This system seems appropriate and will play a role as an educator for clients to see that their needs can be accommodated by instructors no matter their gender. This is a system that would show instructors justice in lesson attribution and motivate them. This is also a solution that will imply task and skill variety, task significance, leading women to have better chances at having diversity in their lesson, helping them grow on a personal level and motivate them to go further in the certification system.

Self-efficacy and the sense of being able to perform tasks has also proven to be a strong influence on women's career, the research shows that the women interviewed had had different interactions with the industry that either encouraged or discouraged them. Being surrounded by men in trainings and feeling insecure, or being given low level lessons as well as being treated differently by guests in some case created an impression that their skill was not necessarily sufficient to get to the higher levels. In order to help with this there are ways in which the companies can create a safe learning environment and promote success amongst women. Previous research as well as the present research have shown that women would benefit from mentorship programs and having role models. This is an area in which both media, ski schools and certification organizations play an important role. As mentioned in the findings not all women would want women specific training however the literature review also showed that having balanced group with half men and half women would help with

representation and still make women feel integrated and capable. This also applies for the certification organism, when an instructor applies for a course to take a higher level of qualification gender equity should be considered, for example having groups where there are balanced number of female and male rather than splitting women into each group. It can be better to have 4 groups with no women and one group with half men half women rather than having one women in each group. As for mentoring the pairing of instructors with more senior instructors as part of programs ran by resorts, ski school or certification organism would be of great value for newer instructors that are looking to keep progressing.

Educating instructors and managers alike to understand gender bias is an important tool for improving self-efficacy, many female instructors feel that the “boy club” attitude is an uncomfortable environment and that there is a lot of it in groups of instructor at higher level or within guiding and coaching. Educating instructors to understand the influence of their behavior on female identified instructor would help create a more equal environment in which all can thrive. It is also important for women to grasp the extent of gender discrimination and to support each other rather than compete against one another for the seemingly limited spots available at higher level. This is one area in which the media can play a strong role, making media coverage more equal and showing women who are strong athletes rather than women posing solely for lifestyle shots. The “all in” project by Cardrona (2022) is a great example of the way in which media can be used to promote gender equity and improve the sense of self-efficacy both for clients and instructors alike.

In terms of care and welfare for instructors one of the major finding of this research was that women are not staying in the industry because of the precarious financial situation they are in that leads to incapacity of having a family. Having higher certifications would imply having higher salary as well as better employment prospects which could help with family building. However, there is also work to be done in the way resorts and ski schools

can better accommodate the needs of instructors who have children. Access to affordable day-care and more flexible working hours as well as higher pay rate would greatly benefit parents, this is of course true no matter the gender of the parent. In many regards though one can also consider that the country in which the person works and its welfare system can play a big role in this. As seen in the literature different countries have different policies when it comes to family and care work welfare systems. When instructors chose to start a family doing so might be easier in some countries than others, the ideal would be for all welfare systems to improve however this is part of a much bigger discussion that is on a Governmental level and would benefit gender equity as a whole rather than in the Snowsports industry level only. The same goes for the concern over women and menstruations, this is an issue that is present for all women in all fields, even though women working in a field that involves physical practice might be more impacted this is still a general issue that needs to be addressed by governments and is part of a bigger discussion.

Limitations of said implications

According to the finding of this research and other research that looked into similar issues there are a lot of ways to promote gender equity. However, one of the notable issue is the feasibility of taking said measure in different scales. The measures proposed in the previous chapter and the measure that have already been put in place in other resorts are in many regards easier to apply to bigger structures. For example, the idea to create an automated response to gender specific instructor request is fairly easy to apply no matter the scale of the ski school. However, creating more gender equal training and promoting mentorship might be an issue when it comes to smaller structures. In Niseko, for example to be affiliated a ski school needs a minimum of 5 instructors (NisekoUnited, 2023) but a school of this size will most likely not be able to provide training let alone manage to balance its gender equity. It is also likely that in smaller school finding the resources to train managers in

procedural justice and gender issues will not be possible. There are also limitations when it comes to the country in which the ski school is established, not every country has similar welfare programs and equity laws.

8. Further research

This research was pursued in the frame of a master thesis and however much time and effort was put it was somewhat limited in its extent due to the time frame allowed for the research project. It can therefore be considered a starting point for further research that would provide more in depth knowledge of the gender issue in the skiing industry. Pursuing this research would greatly benefit from having more interviews of ski and snowboard instructor in other resorts with ski school of different size and in different countries. There would also be strong benefits to interviewing a more diverse range of people, understanding the perspective that men have on the issue for example. There would also be interesting input to be retrieved by interviewing people who are in positions such as recruitment, marketing, sales persons and all other professions that are interacting with instructors. Gender studies are also very tightly linked to minority studies and looking into the angle of race and minority discrimination with gender would be an interesting pursuit. As earlier mentioned the industry as a whole would benefit to see more female participants and other studies looking at gender equity within Snowsports media, and gear for example would provide interesting findings and potential implications for improvement.

9. Conclusion

The skiing and snowboarding industries are highly gendered especially when it comes to higher level both for people practicing the sports and people competing or instructing. There are strong benefits to be had from improving gender parity in order to access a wider

array of clients and for the sole sake of parity itself. The research questions were the following: Why are there less women in the industry? Is the industry fair to all of its employees? Are women given similar opportunities? Are there inequalities in training opportunities? Do women feel integrated and represented in the industry? How come women are exiting the industry earlier than their male counterpart?

Throughout this study one can come to understand that the lesser amount of women in the industry is influenced by different factors. One of them is rooted in early-childhood development, the number of girls participating in the sport at a young age is lower than that of men and the lack of women representation makes it harder for girls to develop a sense of self-efficacy. They therefore develop vocational interests that are often in other industries that are less male dominated. When it comes to the fairness of the industry there is a paradox, a lot of women believe that the industry is quite fair but there are in reality a lot of difference that are found in all aspects. The traditional gender essentialist view of women influences guests into requiring women for younger children which affects lesson attribution which in turn results in women being given less opportunities than their male counterparts. Post-feminism appears to be a factor that influences women's perception of the situation, believing that gender differences are not actual and even sometimes consider that their gender might have helped in their career. In this regard procedural justice is an area that companies could work on by giving better training to managers and taking measures to educate clients on gender equity. As for training and representation, in terms of representation a lot of women seem to believe that the industry is fairly balanced even though the reality at higher level is far off. For training there are a number of gaps in the effect that training has for women and men. There is a real need for improving gender equity in training so that women can develop their skills in a discrimination free environment in which their sense of self-efficacy is not being threatened by a lack of other women in similar level of "boys club" feeling. As for the

early exit from the industry it appears that financial situation and family life with its care responsibility aspect is the major reason. Many women do not find that ski instructing provides sufficient financial stability to raise a family and this leads them to exit the industry without having enough time to get into higher levels of qualifications.

There are numerous improvements that can currently be witnessed in the industry with resorts and ski school taking measures to improve gender equity, however raising awareness to gender issues and promoting measures is a priority. This issue is multilayered and there are numerous actors that come into play. In the case of the Snowsports industry ski schools are the first in line as they are the closest to instructor, however there is a need for society at large to evolve so that women are being offered better parity since their earliest age and can pursue career in all industries without gender disadvantages.

Appendix

"Gender's influence on career in Snowsports"?

Gender's influence on career development for

experience the influence of gender on their career as Snowsports instructors? * The purpose of this research is to highlight the perspective of women and illustrate the current state of gender equality in Snowsports.

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Figure 1 - Consent form template

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