

# WOMEN IN COACHING

According to research, female coaches experience challenging situations that are complex to navigate, either holding them back or slowing them down from advancing within their workplace. For example:



Female coaches are perceived as too soft or too tough but never just right

- When female coaches act in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes (e.g. soft, caring, kind, nurturing, empathic, less tough and emotionally balanced), they are viewed as less competent coaches.
- When female coaches act in ways that are inconsistent with gender stereotypes (e.g. strong, tough, decisive, assertive), they're considered as unfeminine.



Female coaches face higher competency standards and lower rewards than male coaches

- Female coaches have to prove that they can lead, influence, coach, make a positive and significant difference, over and over and over again within their sport.
- Female coaches have to manage stereotypical or false expectations (e.g. too tough versus too soft dilemma) constantly.

"You have to know your stuff and have demonstrated your competence far more than they [men] have to, to survive...in some respects, I think you have to be more competent than the male....I perceive men to get roles with less skill sets, with less competencies, with less experience and with less knowledge over females, especially if it's a male in the role that is being appointed." Sue



Female coaches when competent are either disliked or liked, but rarely both

- When female coaches display assertiveness, toughness and directness – traditionally valued behaviours, they tend to be seen as competent; however,
- Females displaying such stereotypically masculine qualities find that their interpersonal effectiveness is curtailed especially when compared to female coaches who adopt a more feminine style of leadership (e.g., nurturing, caring, empathic).

"I think definitely in general as a woman, when you challenge something, or you have an independent thought...it's hold on a minute you are here to do what we tell you to do. So I think as a woman you either conform and therefore you are liked or you have your own independent critical analysis and then you are not liked" Cali

"If you care about the person, then you're mothering them. You're trying to baby them, you're trying to wrap them in cotton wool, and if you're not, then you're just always the complete opposite, you're just too tough you are too performance focused you're too outcome focused." Nadia



The material is evidence-based and is informed from research conducted worldwide. The quotes come from a recent co-authored study by: Goss, J., Jowett, S., & Rivind, O. (2021). The Goldilocks Dilemma in Coaching: Female Coaches' Experiences of Stereotypical Biases and a Two-Dimensional Approach to Combat Them. Manuscript under review.