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1 ***‘Why am I putting myself through this?’ Women football coaches’ experiences of the***
2 ***Football Association’s coach education process***

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27 **‘Why am I putting myself through this?’ Women football coaches’ experiences of The**
28 **Football Association’s coach education process**

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30 In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the provision of formal
31 coach education. However, research has repeatedly demonstrated how coach
32 education has had a limited impact on the learning and development of coach
33 practitioners. To date however, these investigations have avoided female coach
34 populations. Ten women football coaches who had recently completed various
35 association football coach education courses participated in this study. Following
36 the interpretive analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews the findings revealed
37 high levels of gender discrimination and inappropriate cultural practice. The
38 women’s experiences are discussed in line with the Bourdieuan notions of social
39 acceptance, symbolic language and power. The women coaches provided a
40 number of recommendations for future coach education provision, which in turn,
41 may help to improve the experiences for those women who participate in the
42 coach education process.

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44 ***KEY WORDS: Sports Coaching; Formal Learning; Gender Inequality; Soccer; CPD***

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57 **Introduction**

58 The latest active sport participation data for women in the UK reveals that association
59 football (from now on referred to as football) is currently one of the most popular participation
60 sports. At the time of writing football is the second most popular sport for women, currently
61 0.17% behind netball (Sport England, 2015). The creation of the Women's Football
62 Association in 1993 and the development of the Female Football Development Programme are
63 considered to be *inter alia* major contributors behind the recent explosion in women's
64 participation in football. However, despite the reported increases in participation levels, the
65 number of qualified women Football Association (FA) coaches in the UK remains modest at
66 best (Norman, 2012).

67 This state of affairs is, to some extent, broadly reflective of the sport coaching
68 profession in general. For instance, there is compelling evidence that only a small minority of
69 women (when compared to males) enrol on formal coach education courses, and actively
70 pursue a career in sport coaching (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011). Women's engagement (or
71 not) in *bona fida* sport coaching is currently a vastly under researched area (Norman, 2012).
72 Thus, following the guidance offered in previous studies (i.e. Mercier, 2001; Norman, 2008)
73 we agree that researchers should begin to expand their coaching investigations beyond that of
74 'typical' male populations.

75 Previous research has illustrated how coach education provision tends to be dominated
76 by males, with course educators often demonstrating a predisposition towards associated male
77 attributes, orientations and characteristics (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Likewise, there is evidence
78 to suggest that formal coach education courses typically reflect associated male behaviours
79 such as aggression and toughness (Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012). Fielding-Lloyd
80 and Meân (2011) have argued how a woman's unequal coaching status is often attributed to
81 perceived gender differences, and for them is 'an example of liberal individualism which
82 assumes equal access to opportunity' (p.360). This notion is supported by Norman (2012), who
83 has criticised the current lack of support and coaching opportunities for women, arguing that
84 in order to develop and increase confidence, knowledge and ability, women coaches need to
85 be provided with more coaching and leadership opportunities. For instance, at the time of
86 writing, only two women occupy managerial and leadership roles for the 18 Women's Super
87 League (WSL) football teams.

88

89 As the national governing body (NGB) for English football, the FA's coach education
90 provision 'cannot be overestimated' as the driving force for enhancing coaching standards
91 (Lyle 2002, p.275). The FA's own code of conduct for coaches highlights that coaches should
92 'respect others involved in the game', 'promote fair play and high standards of behaviour' and
93 to 'never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour' (The
94 FA, 2014, p.4). However, in contrast to these aspirations, a number of individuals employed
95 within the FA, and the wider international football community, have provided incongruous
96 examples, and disparaging attitudes towards women. This includes the investigation of the
97 current English Premier League chief Richard Scudamore who recently, was forced to
98 apologise for exchanging inappropriate emails with colleagues. The terminology and language
99 used in this context included; referring to women, as 'gash' and how he 'had a girlfriend once
100 called a double decker...happy for you to play upstairs, but her dad got angry if you went
101 below' (Drake, 2014). Perhaps more worryingly, Sepp Blatter, the Fédération Internationale de
102 Football Association (FIFA) President was quoted in 2004 as saying 'Let the women play in
103 more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball. They could, for example, have tighter shorts'
104 (BBC, 2004). Additionally, Mike Newell (then manager of Luton Town FC 2003-2007) was
105 publically criticised for questioning Amy Rayner's (assistant referee) presence, position and
106 power in 2006 because of her gender. Newell was reported to ask the question 'what are women
107 doing here?' Before concluding how he felt 'she shouldn't be here' (Caudwell, 2011). It has
108 therefore been argued, that the challenge for women coaches is not only to survive within this
109 challenging and often discriminatory culture, but also to understand, and ultimately challenge,
110 these pre-determined and often socialised views (Norman, 2012).

111 Unfortunately, little empirical research currently exists, which examines women's
112 experiences of coach education particularly within football. As Schlesinger and Weigelt-
113 Schlesinger (2012) remind us 'we do not know exactly why women keep away from the
114 associations' coach education programmes or do not take on coaching positions' (p.58).
115 Accordingly, for change to occur, the issues concerning the existing cultures and recruitment
116 policies, at the heart of the underrepresentation of women, need to be accurately identified and
117 understood (Mercier, 2001).

118

119 *Formal coach learning*

120 Sport coaching and more specifically learning how to coach, has previously been
121 labelled as a socialisation process, similar to that of an 'apprenticeship' (Cushion, Armour &
122 Jones, 2003). Somewhat critically, Nelson, Cushion and Potrac (2006) referred to formal coach

123 education provision, as a process more aligned to ‘indoctrination’ (p.251). Similarly, Rogers
124 (2002) suggested that coach educators engage in ‘activities that set out to convince us (i.e.
125 coaches) that there is a right way of thinking, feeling and behaving’ (p.53). In this respect it is
126 argued that ‘indoctrination’ denies the learner the opportunity to question or examine the
127 content they have learned, and so are more likely to abide by the prescribed cultural values,
128 attitudes and practices presented to them (Nelson *et al.*, 2006).

129 In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the provision of formal coach
130 education and the associated importance attached to them (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). It is widely
131 acknowledged that NGBs adopt a range of learning opportunities for accrediting coaches to
132 enhance their knowledge and underpinning theory. However, as Chesterfield, Potrac and Jones
133 (2010) stated, ‘while this body of literature has provided scholars and practitioners with
134 valuable knowledge about the role, nature and impact of coach education programmes, very
135 little is known about how coaches experience such programmes’ (p.300). Consequently,
136 Denison (2007) and Denison and Avner (2011) have suggested that scant attention has been
137 paid to exploring coach education effectiveness, in particular, amongst women coaches.

138 In order to examine the notion of woman’s inequality within coaching, the focal point
139 of the research inquiry must be gender (Norman, 2008). As Norman (2008) has argued
140 previously, gender is ‘conceptualised as the organising principle that influences and moulds
141 individuals’ lives and consciousness, as well as shaping institutions and determining how social
142 power and privilege is distributed’ (p.449). The central concern for inspecting potential gender
143 inequality is therefore considered to be the suspected disregard for the enforcement of equal
144 opportunities. As Hargreaves (1993) reminds us, ‘attempts to remove or compensate for the
145 ascriptive and social impediments that prevent women from competing on equal terms with
146 men, without otherwise challenging the hierarchical structures within which both sexes
147 operate’ (p.168).

148 English football has recently been described as a deeply masculinised institution
149 (Norman, 2012). Previous research has attempted to understand and explore the existing
150 barriers associated with recruitment strategies, underrepresentation and negative influences
151 women have faced (Norman, 2008). In coach education terms, it has been argued that gender-
152 stereotypical beliefs, and expectations of the male coach educators, and male candidates leads
153 to the natural exclusion of women during their formal learning (Hartmann-Tews, 2006).
154 Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that many women choose not to continue or indeed engage
155 in the formal coach education process (Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012).

156 Similar to Norman (2008) then, it is argued, that what is missing from previous coach
157 education inquiries is an examination of current coach education provision, through the voice
158 of the woman. Given the previously reported gender inequalities inherent within football
159 coaching (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011; Norman, 2008), formal coach education courses may
160 be considered an appropriate starting point for exploring, and understanding these issues in
161 more depth.

162 In this regard, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is worth considering as Bourdieu's work
163 constitutes a powerful attempt to comprehend the social structuring of human relationships
164 (Cushion, 2011). Furthermore, Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus have recently
165 been adopted as a conceptual framework with which to examine coach learning (i.e. Townsend
166 & Cushion, 2015). As Townsend and Cushion (2015) emphasised, incorporating a Bourdieuan
167 lens is appealing, as it offers numerous 'possibilities for grasping the complexity of coach
168 education and presenting it as a construct embodied within social practice' (Townsend &
169 Cushion, 2015, p.2).

170 Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the experiences of a number of women
171 football coaches following the completion of the FA's coach education process. By following
172 an interpretative phenomenological framework, this study will offer a unique theoretical and
173 sociological insight into the cultural practices of male coach educators, and coaches as
174 experienced by woman coaches. Furthermore, the work of Bourdieu and in particular notions
175 of field, capital and habitus are adopted to build on earlier work, to better understanding formal
176 coach education as a complex social encounter. In this respect, it is anticipated that following
177 this framework can contribute to our understanding and provide a more detailed insight into
178 the 'unknown world' of women football coaches' experiences of formal coach education.

179

180 **Methodology**

181

182 *Participants*

183 Prior to the data collection process, a local university ethics committee provided ethical
184 approval, and the research protocol was conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines
185 and procedures. In an attempt to adhere to similar research methodologies (i.e. Norman, 2012)
186 purposeful sampling procedures were employed. Specifically, contracted women football
187 coaches currently working in a County FA (CFA), the WSL or the Women's Premier League

188 (WPL) were contacted regarding their possible involvement in the study. The participant's elite
189 athletic achievement in football varied. At the time of data collection, one was still actively
190 playing in the WSL; five were playing in the WPL and one in a CFA league. Additionally,
191 three had recently retired. Following an initial verbal acceptance, the participants were
192 informed about the nature of the study by the first author, who at the time was working as a
193 coach at a professional league club in the third tier of English football. Following formal written
194 consent and assent, 10 participants finally agreed to take part in the study. Each participant has
195 been given a pseudonym.

196 At the time of the data collection process all of the participants were actively coaching
197 women's football in a variety of different environments, which included: local amateur football
198 clubs, semi-professional football clubs and professional football clubs. The participant's ages
199 ranged from a low of 17 years to a high of 26 years and collectively they had a combined total
200 of 48 years football coaching experience. More importantly, all of the participants had at some
201 stage in their coaching career attended a formal coach education course, as stipulated by their
202 NGB. In total, 60% of the participants had completed their coach education course in the north
203 west of England. The level of the attained qualifications ranged from the 1st Sport Level 1
204 Certificate in Coaching Football to the Union of European Football Association (UEFA)
205 Standards 'A' Certificate. The only pre-requisite for admission onto the coach education course
206 was the successful completion of the preceding level of qualification. So for entry onto a level
207 two qualification for example, the coach must already hold a level one qualification. For a more
208 detailed breakdown of the participant profile please refer to Table 1.

209

210 **Table 1. Participants Characteristics**

Participant	Age	Qualification	Location of coach education course	Coaching experience (years)	Current coaching role
Amy	17	Level 2	North West	3	WPL
Beth	26	UEFA A	South East	8	WSL
Charlotte	18	Level 1	North West	2	CFA
Danielle	22	Level 1	North West	2	CFA
Eve	24	UEFA B	North East	7	WSL
Faye	21	Level 2	North West	4	WPL
Georgia	23	Level 2	North West	6	WPL
Helen	25	UEFA B	East Midlands	5	WPL
Ivy	19	Level 2	North West	2	CFA
Jennifer	26	UEFA B	East Midlands	9	WPL

211

212 *Data Collection Process and Interview Procedure*

213 The current study adopted an interpretive line of enquiry. In order to capture the
 214 women’s experiences and perceptions of the coach education process, 10 semi-structured
 215 interviews were conducted. The interview process was relaxed and informal in nature, and
 216 conducted at locations previously decided by the participants. The questioning protocol was
 217 informed by the current gaps in the coach education literature, and was structured around five
 218 central sections. The opening section focused on the participants coaching background and
 219 qualifications, in order to create a sense of their current coaching status, and previous coaching
 220 roles. The second section focused on the participants’ overall satisfaction and experiences of
 221 the coach education process. The third and fourth sections were designed to elicit detailed
 222 information surrounding the cultural practices of their coach education course educators, and

223 male peers. In particular, the coaches were prompted to outline and expand on any difficulties
224 or challenges they encountered. This included the recording of specific language, and
225 associated practices adopted by the male coach educators and fellow male coaches. The fifth
226 and final section was reflective in nature, and required the coaches to consider
227 recommendations and possible suggestions, which in turn, may have improved their recent
228 coach education experiences.

229 The 10 in-depth interviews were audiotaped using a CL-R10 digital voice recorder and
230 transcribed verbatim by the first author. The duration of each of the 10 interviews was
231 approximately 90 minutes. The interview process mirrored the interpretative framework
232 advocated by Reinharz (1983) as the criterion presented included ‘completeness, plausibility
233 and understanding and responsiveness to...subjects’ experiences’ (p.171). As a result, the data
234 collection process from a participant’s point of view was regarded as morally significant and
235 honourable.

236

237 *Data analysis*

238 In order to critically analyse the data, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
239 procedures were employed. According to Sparkes and Smith (2013), IPA has ‘two
240 complementary commitments: the phenomenological requirements to understand and ‘give
241 voice’ to the concerns of participants; and the interpretative requirement to contextualise and
242 ‘make sense’ of these claims and concerns’ (p.126). The importance of using this data analysis
243 approach is that the rich perceptions of the interviewees, which are ‘regarded as the primary
244 source of knowledge’ (Moustakas, 1994, p.52), can be interpreted and analysed so that the
245 participants insights can be easily identified and discussed. The work of Pierre Bourdieu and
246 in particular the notion of field, capital and habitus were also weaved into the analysis. It was
247 considered the use of Bourdieuan concepts would provide a more detailed insight into the
248 ‘unknown world’ of women football coaches’ experiences of participating in formal coach
249 education.

250 According to Sparkes and Smith (2013), when performing IPA there are a number of
251 key procedures to follow. Firstly, the process of reading and re-reading of the participant’s
252 transcripts was performed in an attempt to fully understand the dialogue. During this stage
253 descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were recorded and highlighted for further
254 detailed examination. Secondly, data from the interview transcripts, observational notes and

255 memos were examined to ensure the captured data provided a clear representation of the
256 participant's views. Thirdly, themes were identified and connected with other participants
257 views. Here clusters of concepts with shared meanings or references, or dissimilarities were
258 generated. The final stage involved a complex process of searching for patterns across data and
259 within the transcripts to identify repeated patterns or new emerging themes. Trustworthiness
260 of the data and subsequent data analysis was applied through member checking. This process
261 was performed in conjunction with the second and third authors, who both have previous
262 experiences of conducting and analysing in-depth interviews (Andrews, 2010; Roberts, 2011).
263 The coded interview transcripts were forwarded to each participant to guarantee complete
264 accuracy of coding, and allow the participants the opportunity to make any corrections deemed
265 necessary. Despite some minor grammatical errors, the data transcripts, codes and final themes
266 were all considered to be an accurate reflection of the interviews and data analysis procedures.

267

268 *Theoretical Framework*

269 The work of Bourdieu (1977) offers a useful lens in order to 'capture the reality of
270 different groups' unequal interactions, and situations' (Cushion & Jones, 2006, p.145), and
271 thus provide a more critical understanding of the nuances of coach education. Bourdieu (2000)
272 argued that in order to 'encounter' rather than reassemble the social world, we should move
273 closer to the site of practice and production so that we may complete 'the sociological picture'
274 (p.50). According to Bourdieu (2004) the social world can be viewed as a multi-dimensional
275 space created on unequal foundations of power between social agents. In the context of coach
276 education, or more specifically, in the context of formal coach learning (i.e. through the
277 participation on a coach education course), it can be perceived as 'a field of struggles'
278 (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.101).

279 Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field according to Smith (2012, p.254) is a 'powerful
280 heuristic' for understanding the social practices and relational struggles in institutional arenas.
281 Crucially, it allows social agents, to pursue, protect and enhance their social position and 'to
282 impose the principle of hierarchisation most favourable to their own products' (Bourdieu, 1989,
283 p.40). Moreover, Hunter (2004) illustrated that focal to the functioning of any social space (e.g.
284 a coach education course) is the concept of capital. Capital, is essentially a form of power,
285 which ensures individuals endlessly do their utmost to maximise their capital, due to social
286 positions being allocated by the volume of capital attributed to them (Ritzer, 1996). As
287 Denison, Mills and Jones (2013) remind us, power essentially dictates who speaks, where,

288 when and with what authority. Therefore, individuals continuously pursue strategies to enhance
289 and transmit their ‘power’ to gain hierarchal positioning (Cushion & Jones, 2006).

290 Furthermore, it is important to note that Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence also
291 demonstrates how inappropriate language and actions are transferred to indirectly establish
292 social positioning. Symbolic violence refers to the imposition of systems of symbolism and
293 meanings upon groups “in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate” (Jenkins, 2002,
294 p. 104). As Kim (2004) reminds us, it is this legitimacy that disguises the existing power
295 relations, thus making them distorted and hidden. In essence, the concept of symbolic violence
296 will lend itself to exploring the ways in which coach educators and fellow candidates interact
297 and communicate with female candidates on association football coach education courses.

298

299 **Results and Discussion**

300 In total, five thematic categories emerged following the data analysis. In this section,
301 the over-arching themes are presented, along with extracts from the interviews. It further,
302 discusses the contextual nuances of women football coaches, following the completion of a
303 formal FA coach education course.

304

305 *‘Why am I putting myself through this?’ Notions of field, habitus and capital*

306 Bourdieu (1986) highlighted how the concept of field can be the site of struggle, for
307 access, for acknowledgment and of acceptance. Agents (i.e. coaches) that engage within the
308 field take up a position that is relative to their individual quantity of capital that they possess.
309 For instance, Cushion and Jones (2006) remind us how capital can occur in a number of forms:
310 economic, cultural, social, symbolic and physical, of which one’s social position is defined in
311 relation to one’s access to the relevant form of capital. Furthermore, habitus is referred to as ‘a
312 system of acquired dispositions or categories of perception and assessment held by the coach
313 at the level of practice’ (Taylor & Garratt, 2014, p.126).

314 Within the present study, numerous dispositions of capital, which devalued the
315 women’s social stature, were reported. For example, the majority of the women (9 out of 10)
316 mentioned how they felt unappreciated and to prove themselves. The following three
317 participant’s points below illustrate this point.

318

319 “I just felt like I had to prove myself all the time. I just used to look at them and think
320 who are you to put me down? It was hard to accept. Part of me understands it, when it’s

321 the other coaches, but to feel like I did, just for the tutor's benefit just took the piss"
322 [Charlotte]

323

324 "Because I was like a female he made me feel a bit silly and useless. I was made to
325 make a show of myself most of the time which just killed my confidence. I was starting
326 to ask myself why am I putting myself through this?" [Beth]

327

328 "It was hard because in that environment you felt like you had to earn your place, just
329 because you're a female football coach" [Jennifer]

330

331 It becomes apparent how the majority of the women football coaches interviewed
332 struggled to adapt to the coach education environment, and reported feelings of 'not being
333 welcomed' and a perception of a 'lack of self-worth'. These concerns were initially generated
334 by the language, behaviour and cultural practices adopted by the male coach education team.
335 Bourdieu (1986) discussed how power determines the position and construction of the social
336 agents in the social field, particularly based on the differentiation of power between the social
337 agents. It is apparent that the language, behaviour and cultural practices employed reflect the
338 interests of the dominant group to ensure they acclaim their 'rightful' honour and prestige
339 (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, it could be argued that the reproduction of social inequalities
340 within the field provided a 'sense of the position one occupies in the social space' (Bourdieu,
341 1990, p.235). Consequently, it appears that the women were far from members of the traditional
342 'boys club' – a hypothetical club which the male coaches were typically granted access. In
343 contrast, the women were met with hostility and became increasingly 'angered and frustrated'
344 by being treated like 'an outsider'. For instance, when asked to comment specifically on this
345 topic, the women mentioned how they needed to 'prove themselves', and 'earn the right to be
346 present on a formal coach education course'. Due to the limited number of women on the
347 courses (when compared to men) it could be argued, that as a consequence of their gender, the
348 quantity of cultural and social capital that they possessed was, in essence lowered (Bourdieu,
349 1989).

350

351 *'I'd love to give her one'. Socialisation and symbolic language and violence*

352 The socialisation process appeared to maintain a particular social order throughout the
353 participant's experiences, and the production and exercise of power was illustrated in the form
354 of symbolic language and violence (Jenks, 1993). Symbolic language and violence is often
355 associated with the notion of misrecognition, and involves a series of actions or words that
356 eventually affect performance and commitment (Bourdieu, 1977). When prompted to comment
357 on their experiences of abusive, derogatory or sexist language nearly all of the women (9 out
358 of 10) provided numerous examples to support this particular point. These included derogatory
359 actions by both fellow male coaches and members of various coach education teams. The
360 following extracts cited during the interviews help to support this view:

361

362 “You kind of felt a little bit patronised, so you know, you got the feeling that he would
363 kind of think, oh, so you can kick a ball. It just makes you question whether you can be
364 bothered anymore” [Danielle]

365

366 “You did really well, considering you're a female...that's all he kept saying.” [Faye]

367

368 “The course tutor kept forgetting my name *on purpose* (emphasis intended) and then he
369 just kept calling me that girl which I was really quite annoyed at. It was humiliating. I
370 got to the point when I just blurted out...Why not just ask me my name? I was very
371 annoyed by that” [Charlotte]

372

373 “I overheard one of the lads say *I'd love to give her one*, and then he made a humping
374 action with one hand on the back of his neck and the other on his hips...I also heard
375 one comment about my bum at some point as well. But it's strange; there is a nothing
376 you can do. You are made to feel as though you just have to accept it” [Eve]

377

378 Symbolic violence involves engagement of reproducing the interests of the dominant
379 group (Bourdieu, 1977). In this case, the women coaches experienced what Bourdieu termed
380 as misrecognition: ‘the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they
381 objectively are, but in the form that renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder’
382 (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p.xiii). Symbolic violence reinforces the position of those in
383 power; whilst also disguising the actions and language that they are indeed employing (Cushion
384 & Jones, 2014). Bourdieu (1989) also argued that in ‘advanced’ societies, domination in its
385 principal mode is actually more symbolic than actual. However, whilst this could be argued in

386 this instance, the often abusive, derogative and sexist language evidently affected the women
387 and consequently made them feel ‘annoyed’ and question whether they ‘could be bothered
388 anymore?’

389 Cushion and Jones (2014) summarised in their study that the coaches at Albion Football
390 Club (pseudonym) imposed their language, meanings and system and culture onto the players
391 through a process of symbolic violence. Indeed, so desperate were the players to earn a
392 professional contract, it was accepted as legitimate. In the current study there were a number
393 of similarities. For example, the women reported having to just ‘accept it...as this is how it’s
394 done’. Thus indicating how they considered this behaviour to be standardised and
395 commonplace and so, subsequently, carried an awareness and understanding of women football
396 coaches’ social position. For example:

397

398 “Come on lads...come over boys...right fellas...does he even know that I’m a woman?
399 I mean I am standing right there and quite clearly have a bigger chest than the rest of
400 the other people standing there, it’s quite obvious to me really” [Amy]

401

402 “His favourite line was right chaps, which didn’t exactly make me feel great when he
403 was addressing the group” [Ivy]

404

405 During the completion of the coach education process the women had to repeatedly
406 endure degrading comments such being called one of the ‘lads’ and ‘fellas’, and educators
407 mocking them regarding their athletic prowess. The course educators also turned a ‘blind eye’
408 when other candidates commented on how they would like to ‘give her one’ and performed
409 inappropriate sexual actions in front of the woman. More worryingly, it would appear that the
410 behaviour of the course educators, and the language they adopted helped to reinforce a number
411 of gender stereotypes. For instance, although the woman reminded the educator on several
412 occasions, they continued to refer the woman as either: ‘lads’, ‘boys’ or ‘fellas’. This lack of
413 sensitivity towards their gender, and the treatment they received caused some of the women to
414 question their commitment to coaching and their desire to continue with the coach education
415 process. Indeed, one of the coaches did reveal how she recently had to leave a coach education
416 course, due to the inappropriate sexual advances from a member of the coach education team,
417 following an evening of drinking in the bar. This will be reported in more detail in a follow up
418 paper.

419

420 *'Disgusting, absolutely disgusting'. Where are the female role models?*

421 Norman (2012) suggested that increasing the cogency of existing high-performance
422 female football coaches as role models, may inspire other women to perceive football coaching
423 as an achievable profession. Drawing on the data collected in this study it was evident that only
424 one of the 10 women interviewed had ever experienced working with a female football coach
425 educator. The ratio of the male and female coach educators that the participants had been
426 exposed to during their coach education experiences was 46:1 in favour of the males. The
427 women's frustration with this state of affairs was evident, and typically perceived as harmful
428 and damaging. The following points below offered by 6 out of the 10 participants help to
429 illustrate this point.

430

431 "How they cannot have a female member of staff when there's females on the course
432 is disgusting, absolutely disgusting" [Beth]

433

434 "I think if another female can get like high up then it obviously might help us to think,
435 you know, they can do it so it's not just a male dominated industry" [Eve]

436

437 "It would, maybe, be good to see a female coach educator as well to balance it out so
438 people can say yes, women can be coaches too" [Faye]

439

440 "100% lack of female role models. Who do I have to look up to?" [Charlotte]

441

442 "[Laughs] they didn't take me seriously. I was the only girl so I can see why I found it
443 hard" [Amy]

444

445 "I would have felt more comfortable and confident with a female coach educator there.
446 It would attract more females and be a less intimidating environment" [Danielle]

447

448 Similarly, when questioned about the behaviour of their fellow male candidates that
449 were present on the course, three of the participants illustrated how they were afforded a
450 genuine lack of respect. For instance:

451

452 “What really wound me up though, was that as soon as it was my turn to coach, all the
453 men seemed to take it in turns to mess about. You know, mess things up on purpose.
454 Make you look stupid. I don’t know why the course tutors team allowed them to get
455 away with it too be honest – but they did” [Ivy]

456

457 “You really have to bite your tongue. When I was coaching you could see them laughing
458 and sniggering, really taking the piss. They would openly hold conversations with each
459 other when I was trying to explain a drill or practice. I was like, come on guys, show
460 some respect” [Jennifer]

461

462 *‘Why are you isolating them?’ The need for women only coach education courses*

463 When questioned about possible strategies to help improve the current situation for
464 women on coach education courses, one suggestion was the introduction of women only coach
465 education courses. This recommendation was highlighted by 8 out of the 10 participants. For
466 example:

467

468 “Maybe doing female courses so we feel comfortable in our own environment. If female
469 football coaches feel more comfortable then there might be more than there is now
470 doing courses” [Eve]

471

472 “I think female only courses would encourage more girls to do it, yes, definitely”
473 [Danielle]

474

475 “I would prefer it if it was all women course if I am honest... I can understand why not
476 all women carry on going higher than a level one, if they know they’re going to be
477 surrounded by men, who, in the most part are sexist pigs” [Helen]

478

479 “Why are you isolating them on different courses? Why don’t you put all the women
480 together so it’s like a little bit of camaraderie?” [Beth]

481

482 “It was embarrassing. I was having to deliver to all these men and didn’t have one other
483 female there to support me or for me to even look at to make me feel, well, even just
484 calmer than I was” [Ivy]

485

486 “Confidence is mainly the biggest barrier. I think delivery to boys the same age is
487 difficult and if it were girls it would be different. That could put girls off” [Amy]

488

489 Norman (2012) suggested the need for the creation of supportive networks for women
490 to develop ‘in a more accommodating, encouraging environment in which they are not afraid
491 to learn and sometimes fail, but have the opportunity to take the lead’ (p.232). The majority of
492 women interviewed expressed their positivity towards women only courses, suggesting it
493 would be less ‘embarrassing’ and supplement ‘a little bit of camaraderie’. Using the words of
494 one of the coaches, ‘if female football coaches feel more comfortable then there might be more
495 than there is now doing courses’, which may help to increase the number of women football
496 coaches performing, and sharing coaching practices and experiences away from an often male-
497 dominated environment.

498

499 *‘Pointless and not realistic at all...has to be a certain way otherwise you fail’. Time for*
500 *change?*

501 Previous coach education research has suggested that the content of the theoretical
502 elements of coach education courses needs to come under much more scrutiny (Nash &
503 Sproule, 2012). Chesterfield et al. (2010) reported how questions were raised regarding the
504 design and delivery of formal coach education programmes and that their participants were

505 critical of the ‘one size fits all’ approach. In the present study, some women reported a number
506 of positive aspects. For example, when questioned about the courses organisation and content,
507 Amy and Georgia’s comments included:

508

509 “Beforehand I wasn’t really sure what to expect, but I was happy with what we had
510 learnt after I had completed the course” [Amy]

511

512 “It was good because I didn’t really know a lot of technical detail before we started so
513 what I picked up really helped me learn more about what and how to coach” [Georgia]

514

515 Similar to Chesterfield et al. (2010) the findings suggested the women experienced
516 some positive learning episodes during their formal coach learning. Positive comments
517 generally included reference to the practicality and relevance to some of the coaching material.
518 However, others made reference to its unrealistic application in the real world setting and the
519 value and effectiveness of the awards. Coach education has previously been described as being
520 too focused on sport-specific skills and tactics (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2004). When
521 questioned about the course applicability and its value in the real world of coaching Beth, Helen
522 and Jennifer stated:

523

524 “All I was thinking was when the hell would I use this? I couldn’t exactly say to half
525 the team just go and sit over there for twenty minutes whilst I coach this lot could I?”
526 [Beth]

527

528 “If I’m going to be honest, it’s hard because the way the practical’s are delivered they’re
529 very structured and focus a lot on stop stand still. When I coach back at my club, if
530 you’ve got something to say you’re in and out within about 20 seconds. On my course,
531 you had to speak for about one, sometimes even two minutes, which to me is pointless
532 and not realistic at all...has to be a certain way otherwise you fail. He said something
533 like the FA would tell you to do it this way, but I’m telling you to do it this way” [Helen]

534

535 “I’ve not used hardly any of the content since I passed, and I don’t think I will to be
536 honest. I think the FA need a re-think. I think it might be time for a change” [Jennifer]

537

538 The evidence contained within the present study suggests that the FA's coach education
539 programme had very little, if any impact on the development and professional practice of the
540 women coaches. One of the more qualified coaches (UEFA A' licence) stated they had 'not
541 used it since' and another was going to find it 'hard' to incorporate because of its 'stop stand
542 still' nature. According to Chesterfield et al. (2010) 'the best practice presented standards set
543 by the coach educators were considered to be somewhat out of kilter with the respondent
544 coaches' understanding of their daily realities' (p.306). In this respect, Guskey (2002) suggests
545 that rather than conveying change in candidates by endeavouring to adjust their beliefs and
546 values, coach educators need adapt and acknowledge how their practices can be contextually
547 applied in 'live' coaching situations in the real world coaching setting.

548 The women stated how the course educators were keen on developing 'competent
549 workers' equipped with the skills to do the 'job'. However, this seemingly came at a price. It
550 was clear the course educators requested the candidates to abide and emulate their own values
551 and ideologies. Subsequently, the women, such as Helen and Ivy, commented on how they
552 'couldn't deviate from the format presented to them', and so 'had to do what the educator told
553 me'. Interestingly, they spoke about a reluctance to challenge the educator workforce and were
554 worried about asking questions. For instance, using Beth's words 'you did it their way
555 otherwise you fail'. Sadly, such a finding is not unique, and is consistent with previous
556 authoritarian behaviour found within football coaching (Cushion & Jones, 2006).

557

558 **Concluding Thoughts**

559 The findings from this study provide a revealing insight into some of the challenges
560 and difficulties women experience in their attempt to gain certification through the FA's formal
561 coach education system. The women interviewed reported a number of issues associated with
562 the often sexist and bigoted nature of the coach educators, and their male peers. Primarily, it
563 has been established that some of the women didn't feel particularly welcomed and found the
564 atmosphere intimidating and often uncomfortable.

565 The woman recounted numerous examples of being exposed to overtly sexist behaviour
566 and ensured degrading comments such as being referred to as a 'lad', 'boy' or 'fella'. Therefore,
567 based on the evidence reported, it is our contention that researchers, coach educators and
568 women football coaches must begin to critically engage and reflect on their formal coach

569 education experiences to increase awareness and transform representation to reconstruct the
570 field.

571 Our findings also demonstrate how there is a major shortage of women coach educators
572 and potential role models, which may help to address some of these particular problems. This
573 in itself is somewhat worrying state of affairs given that role models are ‘a source of norms and
574 values and operate as standards for self-evaluation’ (Norman, 2012, p.236). Consequently,
575 women are finding it difficult to comprehend and integrate themselves in an established male
576 dominated coaching hierarchy.

577 According to Lyle (2002), coach education ‘acts as a gatekeeper to the profession and
578 ensures, therefore, that the competence of the practitioner can be assured’ (p.275). However,
579 the findings of the present study suggest that there is still a disconnect between what coach
580 education organisers and coach educators perceive as being relevant for personal development,
581 and what coaches actually desire.

582 In summary, consulting and listening to the experiences of women football coaches
583 may help to ensure that future coach education provision meets the developmental needs of
584 those women wishing to pursue a career in sport coaching. A failure to do so may unfortunately
585 lead to more of the same, and consequently through no fault of their own, women coaches may
586 continue to find themselves in an obtuse position. Hopefully this paper can begin the process
587 of widening the discussion surrounding women’s experiences of formal coach education
588 provision. Future investigations should consider different sports and NGBs in order to ratify a
589 number of the claims documented in this paper.

590

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596

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