‘Long ball’ and ‘balls deep’: A critical reading of female coach-learners’ experiences of the UEFA A Licence

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Abstract

In this article we present a critical reading of female coach-learners’ experiences of the Union of European Football Association’s Advanced Licence (UEFA A), which at the time of writing have been largely ignored. It comes at a point when The Football Association’s policy, the 2017–2020 Gameplan for Growth Strategy, which focuses on the women’s game, has been completed. We wanted to understand better the challenges faced by female coaches as they navigate their way through the male-dominated educational programmes. We interviewed nine female UEFA A Licence holders who had participated in differing cohorts across a ten-year span. Interpreting the female coach-learners’ experiences through a critical and broadly poststructuralist lens reveals how the language, structure and assumptions inherent in the course affect female coach-learner experiences. The data exposes a catalogue of androcentric assumptions, toxic masculinity, sexualised language, dismissive practices, ignorance of the women’s game, and acts of resistance.

Keywords: androcentric, female coach, coach education, poststructuralism

Introduction

Within this paper, we highlight the educational experiences of nine female coach-learners who attended the UEFA A Licence coach education programme and associated residential weeks. More specifically, we foreground the implicit and explicit power-laden interactions between coach-learners and educators and detail how the attendees dealt with the atmosphere, structure and delivery of the programme, while offering acts of resistance. Currently, there has been little published research considering the female experiences of the UEFA A programme and we believe this paper is timely as the increase in the number of female coaches is critical in maintaining the growth of the female game.

The Football Association (FA) administer the UEFA A programme delivery at their National Coaching Centre at St Georges Park (SGP), based in the United Kingdom (UK), where they regulate and control the certification and educational consistency of coach education programmes through gate-keeping practices and systems governance (Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2013). According to the FA (2020) in England, there are currently 34,581 qualified female football coaches across all levels of their coaching awards, of which 401 hold the UEFA B Licence (compared with 10,778 males). At the highest levels, only 82 females hold the UEFA A Licence (compared with 1,716 males).

Coach education in the UK has been the subject of criticism by a quantity of authors who cite a number of shortfalls including Avner et al. (2017), Lewis et al. (2018), and Stodter and Cushion (2019). These include: what constitutes best practice being accepted without critical questioning; that course delivery presents a decontexualisation of learning which fails to transfer to localised practice; and that coach-learners are prescribed 'the right way' to coach by course educators. Piggott (2012) suggests that within football coach education, educators cast themselves as authoritative agents who try to protect their positions by [re]producing a body

of prescriptive and authoritative knowledge. Such educational programmes have also been criticised by Chesterfield et al. (2010) who suggest that they are often over-timetabled, with high levels of contact time and few opportunities for contextualised coaching *in situ.* In addition, Chesterfield et al. contend that encouragement and opportunities for critical dialogue are limited and, when engaged in, are often discouraged.

While the published work has been insightful, it has not dealt overtly with the experiences of female learners, with Lewis et al. (2020) suggesting that the male-dominated profession of coaching is structurally problematic and, thus, the experiences of women as they negotiate such coach education programmes are themselves a subject worthy of further exploration and research. This paper seeks to respond to this call, offering a critical reading of the experiences of female coach-learners and highlighting the manner in which taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of coaching and the women's game shape the conditions that the female coaches experience. Its aims are threefold: first to seek to give voice to those females who have navigated the UEFA A programme; second to expose the mechanisms by which androcentric practice are presented, [re]produced and seen as normal practice; and lastly to provide a critical reading of the data, one which aims to challenge existing assumptions and inform practice.

Female coaches, coach-learners and experiences of androcentrism

It has been argued that the landscape of sports coaching is distinctively male, where women are subject to explicit and implicit discrimination via a number of sporting, cultural and institutional mechanisms (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2018). These authors go on to report that female coaches who are trying to navigate their way through this androcentric terrain are often left feeling undermined, isolated and, at times, excluded, thereby highlighting issues such as unequal gendered relations, negative ideas of females' coaching competence and poor working

conditions (e.g. a lack of child support care). According to Clarkson et al. (2019), there is an atmosphere of sexism, often compounded by homophobia, racism and forms of biological determinism which cast females as fundamentally 'lacking' because they do not play, and presumably, coach, like men. Consequently, female coaches testify to surviving rather than thriving within their coaching roles and, even when successful, feeling that their authentic self has been compromised, marginalised and devalued (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2018). It is unsurprising, therefore, that many women choose not to engage or continue with formal coach education once enrolled and, consequently, "…a great potential for innovation is lost which could enrich the coaching business by opening up new topics and fresh perspectives" (Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012, p. 57).

Female coach-learners have criticised FA coach education courses for privileging male physical and psychological characteristics, which in turn influence the assessment and benchmarking of what is deemed accepted coaching behaviours (Welford, 2011). Not only are the coach education systems restrictive and restricting for female learners, but the way coaching as an activity is conceptualised, debated and defined is also dominated by this androcentric view. Thus, women are unfairly judged against a privileged masculine discourse that defines and constitutes accepted current and best practice within coaching; a situation that both excludes the female voice and limits the growth of a more inclusive and equitable understanding of what coaching is and could be. This acceptance of particular ways of being, knowing and learning to be a coach is underpinned by a catalogue of practices and belief systems which combine to manifest themselves in the institutional and cultural orthodoxy of coaching systems and those coach-educators who work with them (Lewis et al., 2018). We suggest the experiences of female coach-learners foregrounded in this paper are not unique to the FA's UEFA A programme and that androcentrism can be found throughout the practices of coaching, coach education and is indeed inherent in the fabric of sport.

A critical (broadly poststructuralist) lens

A number of authors have used a broad range of critical theories, including poststructuralism, to examine sports coaching (e.g. Blackett et al., 2019; Cushion, 2018; Gerdin et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2018) and coach education (e.g. Avner et al., 2017; Piggott, 2012; Zehntner & McMahon, 2019). In doing so, we argue, they have helped to illuminate the hidden, yet powerful, structural and cultural practices that underpin particular and prevailing orthodoxies. Engaging with Foucauldian theory, a number have suggested that particular mechanisms embodied in coaching and coach education, individually and collectively, underpin particular orthodoxies and taken-for–granted practices. Within our paper, we have, also utilised Foucault, but have taken an approach that is slightly more eclectic by drawing on the likes of Mathiesen (the subtlety of controlling structures), Usher (poststructalism and critical educational theory) and Rose and Miller (aspects of governmentality). This critical *bricolage,* we contend, provides new opportunities to sensitise both researcher and those responsible for coach education to practices that hinder female learning and limit what coaching might be.

Foucault (1977) argued that individual actors are the agents of the apparatus of coach education (e.g. organisational climate, language, hidden structures, and texts) and subject to their application. These apparatuses are imbued with powerful conditions, which act upon the individual in a number of possible ways. They can be subtle, often seemingly innocuous and, therefore, hidden and thus deemed innocent. As Mathiesen (2004, p. 11) suggests:

> It is very difficult to pinpoint the limits … you often do not know whether you are "confronted by them", or not; in this sense they are fleeting or transparent.

Within poststructuralist theorisation, the importance of language is paramount because, as How (2003) suggests, through language discursive practices are amplified and orchestrated. Not only is the spoken word recruited to be an agent of the privileged discourse, but also written text and documentation become permanent examples of the authoritative voice which is perpetuated through repetition and recruitment to become the official dialogue of coach education (Rose, 2000). Those who adopt particular forms of official language may, in its usage, engage in micro-aggression where language is used to control, sanction and punish individuals.

Writing of a poststructuralist nature suggests that social practices are fragmented and characterised by contested truths and the development of particular discourses that serve vested and privileged positions (How, 2003; Miller & Rose, 2008). This establishment of so-called truths is predicated on the exercise of a number of mechanisms which operate at different levels and within different contexts. They generate a particular type of discourse, one that invades the very nature of social interaction and, with practice, becomes the defining condition. Thus, we argue that certain pedagogical practices found within the UEFA A Licence programmes lead to what Foucault has referred to as "a society of normalisation" (1980, p.107). This normalisation not only shapes the way that pedagogical practices, in this case coach education, are formed and experienced, but also limits the manner in which we think about and relate to particular social settings. The processes by which certain discourses become normalised and, thus, pervasive, we suggest, are evident in the UEFA A education programme. By identifying such practices, we aim to alert the reader to the concealed machinery by which particular regimes of truth prosper and are reconstituted within and beyond the site of any social intercourse (Foucault, 1977).

The adoption of a critical position also permits greater insight into the working of the UEFA A programme, allowing us, as researchers, to examine the ways in which the female participants

are co-opted by the prevailing orthodoxy and themselves become co-conspirators. Foucault, in his later theorising (1978), suggested that by the internalisation of certain behaviours and beliefs, the subject, the female learner, becomes responsible for the 'conduct of their own conduct'. The subjectification of the individual allows the subtle nature of the discourse to be hidden because, in its adoption by those it seeks to repress, it has the power to recruit the subject to be accountable and complicit at the same time. This acquiescence manifests itself in an embodiment of practices that serve to reproduce the privileged orthodoxy and authoritative truths. As Mathiesen (2004) indicated, if power was clearly visible in these regimes, it would be more easily identified and witnessed, and where it is totalising in its effect, it could be faced, tackled and confronted.

Adopting a critical approach enabled us to design an interview schedule capable of exploring cultural and social intricacies. As such, this permitted us to become critically aware of the problematic effects of dominant discourses and the [re]production of power relations (Denison & Avner, 2011). The lead author, as a female and a professional coach, had first-hand experience of the UEFA A coach education programme as a participant. While we argue, that she was in a strong position to engage with and conduct the interviews and field data process, we also are aware of the problems inherent in assuming an insider status and the ethics of disclosing the thoughts of professional colleagues and friends.

Methodology and method

This paper focuses on the experiences of female learners positioned at the upper end of the coach education ladder. In attempting to give voice to the coach-learners, semi-structured interviews were conducted to hopefully gather insightful data to uncover the *what*, *why* and *how* (Aston, 2016). The interview schedule was informed by the research's central aims, a literature review, our own critical commitments and the lead author's experience of FA coach

187 education as a participant and educator. The design of the interview schedule centred on five
188 key areas: (1) course content and design; (2) learning environment; (3) the learner's
189 experiences; (4) peer and coach-educator relationships; (5) female coach-learner insight.

190 The interviews were conducted face-to-face (n = 4) or by telephone (n = 5) by the lead author
191 each lasting over an hour in length; engagement (e.g. initial contact, briefing, interview and
192 any required follow up) with the interviewees was conducted over the period of a year (2018-
193 2019). Many of the interviewees knew the primary researcher and we argue that this familiarity
194 encouraged participants to offload their thoughts and experiences and engage in meaning
195 making (Aston, 2016). Our process of collection, analysis and write up was a recursive and
196 iterative process, which necessitated working back and forth between the data, theory, and an
197 understanding and questioning of the data (Taylor, W., 2014), thus refuting the idea that
198 analysis of data is something that occurs after the fieldwork and before the write up (Markula
199 & Silk, 2011). The analysis and reading of the data were guided by central poststructuralist
200 tenets, revisiting a number of critical theoretical text and being mindful that there are many
201 readings of any social phenomenon and that they are influenced by other associated conditions
202 such as incompleteness, and spatial and temporal contextualisation.

203 ***Participants***

204 Once ethical approval had been obtained, nine female coach-learners were identified as suitable
205 participants, primarily because of their relevant and in-depth knowledge and their course
206 experience. Although we remain sceptical of the notion of generalisability, participants were
207 deemed to be representative, with nine out of the 82 existing female UEFA A Licence holders
208 in the UK engaged with during the study. The process for recruiting the participants was guided
209 by the following selection criteria: (1) female; (2) UEFA A Licence holder; (3) a minimum of
210 10 years of practical coaching experience; and (4) current member of the FA Licenced Coaches

Club. In addition, participants were selected due their participation in a variety of UEFA A programmes over a 10-year period (2009-2019).

Dealing with data and the politics of voice

For qualitative researchers, dealing with pages of interview transcript is both a perplexing and, we would argue, an ethically laden task (Taylor, W., 2014). The sheer amount of material that confronts qualitative researchers can be daunting and necessitates ethical decisions about which aspects of the data should be committed to paper and, thus, given voice, and which should remain on the computer and, thus, silenced. The politics of voice were very much at the forefront of our thinking during the management of the data process and we were mindful of the time given to us by those whom we interviewed and the emotional labour involved for the women who talked to us about their experiences and thoughts regarding the UEFA A coach education programme. With this is mind, only where requested to do so by the participants, we have made use of pseudonyms.

We talked openly about the data and considered what questions could legitimately be asked of it (Taylor, W., 2014). A number of readings, returning to theory, and follow-up conversations provided tacit agreement regarding the most potent and considered aspects of data that in turn should be highlighted. The following section foregrounds four themes which we believe are representative of the feelings and considerations offered by the interviewees. Here, we offer the data foregrounded not as evidence, but rather, as our critical and broadly, poststructuralist commitments suggest, as an illustration of the situations the interviewees found themselves in and as an illumination of the barriers and pressures they experienced and endured.

*Footnote: some of the participants have been give pseudonyms where requested

Overpowered and silently silenced

Language and voice

The importance of language, its use and misuse, intent and effect, is difficult to overstate. A number of the interviewees stated that from the start of the course they felt verbally under attack and that they had to answer questions a certain way in an effort to justify their presence on the course. Florence declared that as soon as she entered the room on the first day, it started:

> *Where do you work? What do you do? What do you know? I sat back a little and lacked confidence, I felt out of it.*

Not only did the participants feel under pressure to measure up to others' expectations, but also the course tutors did not manage the early discussions or seemingly take an interest in the way the cross-talk excluded some individuals. The following paired quotes illustrate Chloe and Jada's frustrations:

> *At first, it was difficult in the group discussions; you are in a group of 8 to10, it's hard to get your point across with so many all-male voices. I had to keep fighting it, to show I have knowledge to get them to start listening. (Chloe)*

> *The educators created discussions and had these 'home groups' where we chatted about sessions, but they did not facilitate it properly, … there were some strong male characters in the group, given too much of a platform … In one of the groups I challenged a coach … my tutor was doodling on a pad whilst we were having a heated discussion about him not giving anyone else a chance to talk. (Jada)*

The verbal interaction experienced during delivery was androcentric in nature, with the male voice dominating the cross-talk and the manner in which others were permitted to add to the conversation or excluded outright. This marginalisation of the female voice took on an overtly

sexual tone in the downtime outside the programmed delivery. The experience of the bar talk, for Morgan, was shocking, and left her feeling angry and isolated:

> *I only went twice [to the bar] … some things are hard for females to get involved with. I recall a time one of the lads was talking about when he was fucking his wife and he was "balls deep". I walk in and thought what can I bloody do with that? I was mortified, embarrassed and awkward; how do I fit in? I don't want to listen to that … It is always the social bits, the downtime, which is inappropriate … the isolating parts.*

Riley also experienced such excluding language, citing an incident where an ex-professional seemed to have the attention of some younger and more impressionable males. Riley remembers the ex-player saying:

> *"I have a little girl and I am steering her away from footy because they are all lesbians." So, I tried to sort of laugh it off a little … but I think other lads on the course who were younger felt it was a bit harsh, a bit much, and they felt uncomfortable around the situation because … some just joined in with him.*

The examples of bar talk forced the female learners to adopt certain positions: whether to attempt to join in the conversations and actively challenge the tone and content and run the risk of further isolation, or to accept passively the nature of the cross-talk and act as a co-conspirator, leaving them silently silenced.

The trust placed in the male course tutors to govern the conduct of others was often misplaced, with the tutors legitimising the disempowering experience for female learners. Morgan was acutely aware that her presence was a challenge to the androcentric domain of many of these courses and she recounts the mood change as she entered the classroom to deliver a mock coaching session:

I felt like I was ruining the normal male environment … I was first on, and the tutor knew I was on … they [the other candidates] were swearing a lot, and saying certain things, and I knew that as soon as they knew I was there, things would change. The tutor said, "... oh, Morgan is here". Where do I fit in … do I alienate myself or do I become one of them, one of the lads? The tutors were a part of it … they do not really know how to deal with it. They were not sure how to engage with a female … I will be honest, the constant references to "her indoors" really pisses me off.

By the tacit endorsement of certain forms of language, either by repetition or by a lack of challenge, each verbal encounter reinforces the acceptance of a particular male voice. Brogan goes on to explain how language was used to exclude female learners from conversations and learning opportunities:

There would be a group talking, boys, tutors, men, doesn't matter who it is – for them swearing is acceptable, the word cunt or slagging each other off is acceptable, the moment a female steps into that everybody's behaviour changes, no swearing, or if they do swear "… oh, sorry, Brogan". I think it is a manifestation of people, and the course culture, and I think the tutors should not be joining in, they should toe-the-line and it's a fundamental issue. One told me you need to "man up", you are coaching for the men's pro-game.

Because of the constant use of language as a form of knowledge exchange, the ever-present undertone of sexist and dismissive comments became wearing for some. Maddison went on to recount:

My biggest pet hate is when people say "Ah, you're a good female coach, aren't you" and I'm like no, I'm a good coach, there's no need for that female part in front.

Wini found the informal interchanges equally tiring and frustrating. Some conversations were not directed toward any particular member of the cohort, but became background noise of side comments and throwaway lines:

> *You still got some of that "it's just totally a man's game" and "what the hell are you doing here" kind of thing ... Not singling you out, but it was just like silly little comments, "Oh, she likes playing with balls", and stuff like that.*

The androcentric voice defined not only what was deemed of value in the learning interaction, but in the informal settings where the verbal violence explicit in the sexual nature of' 'bar room banter' also resulted in the physical exclusion of the female learners. Morgan and Brogan were both aware of the powerful nature of the manner in which language shaped the course experience:

> *... I think getting a language right that everyone understands is important ... getting the female content into the course, it is essential. (Morgan)*

> *... they are making jokes at a female's expense; it is a very 'laddy' environment. Even the other candidates will not include you in that type of banter, people use language to include or exclude and it is the same with jokes and banter. (Brogan)*

Androcentric referencing

Text and curriculum

Even though the female coach-learners we interviewed had experience of attending differing courses over 10 years, some aspects of the delivery remained constant. Morgan explained:

> *I was the only woman, no females, no tutors or mentors, no learners, no female administration staff, no female analysis staff, all males. I was the only woman; I found*

it really tough and really isolating … It's all male directed, male material, everything is to do with male football, I only spoke when they asked me a question. The lack of female content affected my motivation, I would like to link what I am learning to female sport, but there is no opportunity to. No references, no talk, no pictures, no audio, all-male content.

Anderson (2005) refers to this form of androcentrism as producing a hierarchy of knowledge where the point of departure or symbolic referencing for what is presented as authoritative knowledge is done with reference to the masculine. Here, not only were the discussions centred on the men's game, but the structure of classroom practices and examples were male dominated. Maddison, Chloe and Brogan recall:

The course and topics were just linked to the male game. No workshops focused on the female game … Everything was based around the elite male game and Premier League statistics. (Maddison)

There were no references from the Women's Super League. We had a few guest speakers, all male, all related to the men's game, and I was in the women's game. It would have been nice to have a female speaker on the male-dominated course. (Chloe)

I think they should have women's football; they do not at the minute, they do not have any reference to it at all which I think is a bit shocking. (Brogan)

The privilege afforded to the male game also manifested itself in the documentation and content of the course. In doing so it acted as a justification for androcentric referencing and legitimated the continued endorsement that the delivery was really about and for the male game.

Maddison added:

No references to gender specificity, no workshops focused on the female game, nothing specific that I can remember. In the folder there is a few pictures of female coaches but that's it.

The exclusion of the women's game from the content of the curriculum further marginalised the female coach-learners by casting their experiences as not worthy of representation, discussion or consideration. By presenting a limiting and limited version of the game, the male candidates' learning opportunities were also restricted and that helped to legitimise the notion that the female game is merely a simpler version of the male one.

Taken-for-granted practice

Assumptions

It was not just the language used and the content of the course itself that left the females feeling isolated and devalued. Subtle, but important aspects, such as the equipment used, reinforced the sense of exclusion:

Everyone got Nike kit. I am a short female, why would I wear men's kit? Do I look like a medium man? I looked ridiculous, I did not feel comfortable; it is another example of being undervalued and draws attention to me. I looked like an idiot. I felt like I was doing the gardening. (Morgan)

At times the male candidates and tutors not only exposed their lack of knowledge of the female game, but they also cast doubt on the quality and depth of knowledge of the female game. Riley, remembering a conversation, reported:

... some of them would ask you questions and are quite keen to learn but some of them are literally "Oh well, you wouldn't get that in a women's game, would you? Do you

get girls that, like, know the offside when you do a 11v11", and they haven't got an idea about women's football whatsoever.

While Chloe valued the opportunity to display her coaching ability the first time, the learners, as a group, were asked to work with a team in a live setting where the default position was again the male game:

We all had to coach in front of the peers. For the first one we were coaching the peer group … but for the second session we had a male team come in and for us to coach them.

While undertaking coaching sessions with male peers or male players, the female learners were also encouraged to adopt masculine coaching behaviours or to use tactics that were associated with the male professional game. In their words:

If you are a female coach, they [educators] think there is an elephant in the room because they expect everyone to be guys. We are also asked to coach like a man. (Brogan)

The tutors' understanding of the female game was poor, they have not had much experience of the female game. I looked at the game from a female point of view and some of the lads were saying you could maybe do a long diagonal ball 60 yards in the opposite corner and you're thinking that would not happen in a women's game, so what I actually want is to play it there and then back to there. (Riley)

The pressure to coach like a male reverts back to a form of biological determinism where the males' game is defined by physicality, strength and aggression and the female game, and its coaching, is judged not on its own merits and qualities, but by its lack of male characteristics.

These assumptions were evident in the manner in which the males on the course wanted to interact with and define the female learners:

> *Some of the men do treat you as a sister or a daughter at times. Sometimes it is too much though; "[they asked] … do you want me to move the goal, the balls, etc.?" (Florence)*

Resistance

I thought, "Fuck this"

As Malpas and Wickham (1995), Derrida (1998) and Foucault (1970) contend, where power is present, the opportunity for resistance and counter conduct exists, and at times the female learners were able to identify instances where they could challenge the orthodoxy. As one acknowledged:

> *We did a task where we had to research a team … I asked to do an analysis on the then Women's World Champions and I really enjoyed that. It was relevant, I learnt lots, it helped me in my role, I had to present back to the group in 20 mins. I thought, "Fuck this". For the last two and a half years I have had to listen to men's football; I did 45 mins! I thought, "Keep going, this is the only bit of women's football on the whole course, you're going to sit through it". I could see they had switched off, it just wasn't relevant to them. Welcome to my world! (Morgan)*

While examples of resistance provided agency for the females, there was always the chance that such acts would damage their position and further alienate them from the others. Derrida (1998) contends that central to this form of resistance is a sense of loss; e.g. that female coach-learners may have to remove themselves from a process of education that that they are

fundamentally keen to participate in and gain from. Despite these fears, as Jada recounts, challenges are made:

> *We watched a session … on setting a block, I watched the session where a bloke was about 15 yards too wide, so it was the easiest thing to go around, on the half-way line and totally unrealistic, and it did not look anything like it should have, and when I said it back, it did not go down well.*

There were some opportunities for the female coach-learners to challenge the ongoing practice experience on the course and also to make their voices heard at a more senior level. Notwithstanding these opportunities, the feeling that their views would be dismissed and that they would be cast as troublemakers was still there

> *I was the token gesture female on the award; when I was at SGP I did bump into senior management. I was asked, "How's the course?" I told the truth; I said, "I'm disappointed with the lack of female content, reference points, a lack of inclusivity." I found that quite tough; you make a choice as a female when you decide to feed that back. I knew on the back end of that conversation that I would be made a scapegoat … (Morgan)*

In addition to the commitment to challenge the orthodoxy, some of the candidates believed they had an obligation to help normalise the presence of female coach-learners on the course by very their attendance:

> *… there was this feeling of I need to do well for females everywhere so when the next person steps up into this environment people are going to be a bit easier on them. (Brogan)*

Chloe took on the challenge by fronting up in terms of adding to the classroom conversation and practice sessions, believing that by excelling in these aspects she had more chance of being included and valued.

> *In the very beginning, it was a challenge, just in terms of the environment, me getting to know them and being the only female, I felt like I had to play and speak up and coach and for them to think "You know what, she's good and we will talk to her and get her involved more."*

A critical reading of the data

This paper is framed within critical and broadly poststructuralist paradigms and we acknowledge that our reading of the data is co-constructed, where notions of reality and truth are both multiple and subjective. Our readings are particular and peculiar to the female coach-learner on the UEFA A course, and, as such, we recognise the importance of the context and the spatial and temporal conditions in which their experiences were founded. We further acknowledge that this reading of the data is unique to our own histories; it is ours and ours alone and we take responsibility for that.

Nonetheless, we contend our analysis and presentation of the data in this paper does support our general tenet that the experiences of female coach-learners on the UEFA A course are beset by sexism, an androcentric atmosphere and a lack of knowledge about and value afforded to the female game (Lewis et al., 2018). By illustrating these female learner experiences, we argue that we have shed light on the manner in which the male game is deemed normative and this condition is sustained by privileged male authoritative voices, behaviour and expectations, which we contend suppress and marginalise females. In doing so, we hope to have added to the

463 critical literature on coach education that contends there is more to do in tackling systematic
464 and institutional sexism.

465 As Usher and Edwards (1994) assert, a crucial component of the manner in which dominant
466 ways of knowing are established and maintained is by privileging a certain lexicon; one that
467 includes and excludes speakers and secures positions of power, and for those who cannot, or
468 choose not to, engage, this lack of a voice renders them silently silenced. As Rose (1999)
469 suggests, a regime of enunciation can influence who can speak and how language is authorised,
470 according to what criteria of truth and what forms of rhetoric, symbolism, persuasion, sanction
471 or seduction. Privilege here is concealed within language and, in the case of the UEFA A
472 Licence, certain words and phrases act as metonymies, where reference to 'the game' is
473 constructed, consumed and understood as the male version of football and running 'a good
474 coaching session' is one that explicitly exhibits masculine traits of power, speed and physicality
475 (Rose, 1999). Because these meanings are unspoken and consumed without notice, they pass
476 without attention and are, as Mathiesen (2004) suggests, more difficult to challenge.

477 The more overtly excluding language which was commonly experienced by the female learners
478 involved heavy use of the male nouns (chaps, lads, guys), instances of accepted cursing
479 (fucking, cunt) and derogatory female categorisation, often with sexual overtones (missus at
480 home, they are all lesbians, fucking his wife, her indoors). While seemingly easier to identify
481 and confront, these common acts of linguistic violence become examples of micro-aggression
482 (Sue, 2010). Because of their ongoing usage, they become a form of background noise, one
483 that is corrosive and wearing for those it objectifies and who are also subject to it. If female
484 learners want to participate in day-to-day banter they have to use phrases and language which
485 have currency and allow them to 'speak the speak', even if by their usage they corrupt their
486 authentic selves (Bodine & Crawford, 1998). In consequence, female learners become co-opted

in their own passivity by accepting this normalised language and conduct, rendering them agents of their own acquiescence (Mathiesen, 2004; Lewis et al., 2018).

As Rose (1999) agues, language does not act independently of other structural conditions, space and apparatus, with the 'bar area', a space the female learners described as "inappropriate, isolating and awkward", being an example noted by a number of the interviewees. Because of the cultural misogyny evident in the bar, female learners governed their own conduct in two ways. The first was to try to join in with the banter (and become a co-conspirator and endorse the behaviour) or the second was by self-isolating in the downtime (thus endorsing that the bar is a 'male space' where men sexualise women through language and behaviour). We suggest that the female coach-learners we interviewed feared the consequences of challenging this pervasive orthodoxy, since they might be labelled a 'killjoy' or 'fun sponge' or 'too sensitive', resulting in further marginalisation.

In discussing the structural conditions, it is important to consider the ways these elements (e.g. distribution of coaching kit, content and workshops or set analysis tasks) are considered and organised and how the tasks and objects of rule are codified and regulated by certain conditions (Rose, 1999). Here, objects of rule, for example technical and tactical coaching detail, inviting male teams in as bodies for sessions and tasks linked to the male Premier League, Europa or Champions League, were contextualised and structured via reference to the men's game. Even the distribution of kit excluded the female learners, with the male sizing and cut leaving the females feeling uncomfortable and in some cases subject to ridicule. The women's game was hidden by the dominant assumptions about the ways that football and its coaching are reproduced, consumed and considered.

The importance and role afforded to the coach-educators on the programme is difficult to overstate. The processes of observation and normalisation judgements and the examination of

certain tasks formed a process of disciplining practices and power (Foucault, 1977). The coach-educators acted as agents in the legitimisation and governing of these existing truths by managing the manner in which they were presented and given importance, and by their actions displayed that "the navigation of power relations involves critically analysing the present conditions in order to identify norms and practices that might reinforce the *status quo*" (Taylor, D., 2014, p. 5). To that point, Foucault (1977) identified disciplinary power as a disciplinary mechanism, where a hierarchal figure (coach-educator) can judge and endorse all practices, including those within and outside of the curriculum, that produce and exclude individuals, to reinforce and normalise whatever was 'true' (Denison & Mills, 2018).

It is important to highlight how female coach-learners engaged with acts of resistance through micro-interactions within the UEFA course. Foucault (1990, p. 95) contended that "where there is power, there is resistance"; however, whenever and wherever resistance is exhibited it could be deemed as unacceptable and unprofessional and represent the 'wrong kind' of learner (Downham & Cushion, 2020). Within the present study, some female learners made efforts to challenge the conformity of how power traditionally operates through acts of resistance, by speaking up, fighting to be heard, highlighting the women's game and reporting their concerns about the nature of the course back to senior management. Here, where regimes of truth and cultural orthodoxy were challenged, female learners used their judgement to shift alliances and rise up from oppression to fight, resist and refuse 'what is' (Foucault, 1991).

Conclusion

This article in part answers the call of LaVoi et al. (2019) for researchers to focus on gendered power and how this can both include and exclude women within organisations and their socio-cultural environments. We have sought to illuminate female coach-learners' experiences of the

535 UEFA A Licence, using a broadly critical and poststructuralist lens to analyse the operatisation
536 of power and how this condition might exclude and marginalise the female learner. In doing
537 so, we have highlighted the regimes of truth that female coach-learners might experience within
538 this educational space. Our findings mirror the work of Lewis et al. (2018) and Clarkson et al.
539 (2019) who reported that female coach-learners struggled to understand, integrate, negotiate
540 and navigate their way through the FA coach education pathway and were left feeling
541 intimidated, devalued and uncomfortable.

542 We argue the UEFA A is currently delivered by men for the consumption of men and
543 reproduced by men, suggesting this gives rise to "a society of normalisation" (Foucault, 1980,
544 p.107). The result of this is that the body of knowledge generated by such normalised practices,
545 deemed of value and imbued with power, is both limited and limiting. It limits female coach-
546 learners who might wish to engage in the FA's award structure and, we argue, is limiting in its
547 rejection of the ways women's football and its coaching might add to the wider game. Anderson
548 (2005) calls for a reconsideration of the way knowledge is generated, suggesting that feminist
549 epistemologies would be the mechanisms that produce, validate and distribute new forms of
550 knowledge which do not in their dissemination and practice, exclude and devalue women's
551 experiences or contributions.

552 Following our critical reading of the data, we argue that there are a number of important
553 implications for the delivery of coach education. While we acknowledge the FA have begun to
554 address the underrepresentation of female coaches in the game with the 2017–2020 Gameplan
555 for Growth Strategy (The FA, 2020), we caution them not to be self-congratulatory. Although
556 the increased numbers may be deemed positive, this does not mean that the courses are more
557 inclusive or that certain practices have diminished. It could be that women are now hardened
558 to the androcentric nature of the delivery or have found new and robust ways to 'put up' with
559 the sexist dialogue and the marginalisation of their own practice. Furthermore, it could be

suggested that research such as ours and others (e.g. LaVoi et al., 2019: Lewis et al., 2018; Clarkson et al., 2019) indicate that the FA suffers from systematic and cultural sexism and that the way their coach education courses operate are indicative of ingrained institutional practices and not the causes of them. It must be difficult for female coach-learners to be secure in the value afforded to them when, in walking the corridors of the National Centre, the vast majority of women they see are deployed in service roles, in the restaurant, behind the bar or in the administrative systems. The importance of positive role models is difficult to overstate. Coach-educators of all genders who set examples and engender an atmosphere that includes and actively promotes the women's game should be given lead positions among those who design and deliver coach education. The 'just add woman and stir' approach does not seem to work. Not dealing with the sexist banter in the course downtime just reinforces the idea that tolerance, just like equity, can 'be turned off and on' and 'as long as we include more pictures of women in the course workbook everything will be all right'. We would go further than the recommendations made by LaVoi et al. (2019), who argue that men with positional power should learn more about embedded sexism and gender bias in sports coaching and suggest that those who pander to a non-androcentric reordering should not be given responsibility for delivering coach education. If the game of football is to harness the power it is believed to have in effecting positive social and cultural change in communities and within individuals, it must address androcentrism and the effect it has on coach education. Only by being critical of its own assumptions and practices can 'the game' be considered as being inclusive of all who play and coach it. If there is a real commitment to addressing the central concerns highlighted within this paper, we may see a future where a richer contextualisation of what constitutes football coaching is evident to all.

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588

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590 None declared.

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