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Title: One of the Few: The Experiences of Female Elite-level Coaches in Norwegian Football

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Introduction

Regardless of performance level and in spite of the fact that the number of women active in sport has increased dramatically over the last 50 years, sport is a male dominated arena, especially with respect to positions in coaching. The underrepresentation of female coaches has been revealed in many countries, and it has been estimated that 20-30% of all sport coaches in Europe are women.¹ The proportion of women coaches seems to be even lower at the elite-level. Studies from several European countries show a variation of between 13 and 17%.²

With respect to female coaches in elite-level football the situation is even worse. To our knowledge there are no women coaching in any of the men's national teams in Europe, and statistics from UEFA show that no more than 20% of the coaches of women's national teams are female.³ Furthermore, as few as 1% of any of the UEFA coaching licenses are held by women.⁴ These figures indicate that female elite-level coaches represent a marginal group in the world of football.

This is also true in Norway. According to UEFA 15% of Norwegian coaches are women, however only four (5%) of the UEFA Pro License holders are women, and no more than 20 women (3%) hold an UEFA A License.⁵ The aim of this article is to explore the experiences of some of those highly qualified women. Here we will study five of these Norwegian female elite-level coaches.

Women's experiences in Norwegian football

Women's football in Norway had its inception during the 70's. Since then women's football has been successful both at the recreational and elite levels.⁶ Football is by far the largest organised sport among girls and women, and females account for 30% of the registered players.⁷ Furthermore, the female national team, as opposed to the men's national team, has had great success including the Olympic gold (2000) and the world championship title (1995).

Although women's football in Norway has been quite successful, female players still experience different forms of gender discrimination and stereotypical attitudes. A recurring issue is that their sexuality is questioned, i.e. participation in the masculine football culture implies that female footballers are suspected to be lesbian.⁸ Several studies in other countries have revealed similar experiences among female players.⁹ Another example is that women's football often is trivialised and sexualised, such as was revealed in a discourse analysis of Norway's largest online supporter forum and in an analysis of 'Jenteligaen' ('the Girl League'), the only Norwegian program on TV dedicated to women's football.¹⁰ Also these findings are in line with research from other countries on how women's football typically is portrayed.¹¹ Correspondingly, female players both in Norway and in other countries experience that they often are limited by traditional feminine expectations and that their participation challenges masculine values.¹² It is in these circumstances that the few female elite-level coaches are presented.

Research on female coaches in football

A growing body of research addressing gender issues in football has been noted during the last two decades, but as indicated above the majority of the studies focus on female players and their experiences. Correspondingly, the knowledge about women football coaches' experiences is limited as very few studies have investigated this. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that none of the publications from these studies on female coaches address sexuality, race or ethnicity issues and thus follow the tradition of having a typical heterosexual white look on gender, which have to be criticised.¹³ Except for Bradbury's (2013; 2016) work on ethnic minority football coaches, these areas are also under-researched among male coaches.¹⁴

Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger examined women's barriers in coach education in football at the regional level in Germany.¹⁵ In the educational context, the female coaches ($n=6$)

reported that male participants typically were prejudiced against women coaches and women in football in general; that their presence was questioned and that their participation attracted constant attention that made them feel uncomfortable; and that they had to perform at twice the level as the men to be acknowledged by their fellows.¹⁶

With respect to opportunities in coaching they found themselves outside the male network and overlooked by those (men) at the clubs responsible for the recruitment of coaches.¹⁷ They also experienced that typical masculine behaviours such as self-confidence, ambitions and strong leadership skills were crucial in order to be accepted as coaches, while this at the same time represented a deviation from the norm of being a woman and a stigmatisation as being ‘un-feminine.’ Similar were the findings in Fielding-Lloyd and Mean’s interviews ($n=12$) among participants at a women-only coaching course at the entry-level in the UK.¹⁸ The participants described predominant masculinist discourses where men’s privileges and central position in football were normalised. This constrained their work and training in football, however it was also evident that the coaches self-subjected to these discourses.

In Welford’s study among women in non-playing football roles ($n=12$) at the grassroots level in the UK the participants regarded coaching to have a particularly strong masculine model of behaviour and that coaching courses emphasize traditional male characteristics such as aggression and dominance.¹⁹ For example, one of the interviewees claimed that they had to adapt to such characteristics to pass the coaching course, whereas one of the others felt that she was pressured into a masculine way of coaching.²⁰

The Lewis, Roberts and Andrews’ study among British female football coaches ($n=10$) focused on experiences in coach education.²¹ The participants reported coaching courses to be sexist and bigoted cultures where they felt unappreciated and not being welcomed. It was a

place where abusive, derogatory or sexist language was common; and that the lack of female coach educators was harmful and damaging.²²

The abovementioned studies indicate a common pattern with experiences of gender discrimination, sexism and a dominating masculine culture. These studies are limited to the experiences of mostly white female coaches at the lower levels and primarily in relation to coaching education. Accordingly, there seems to be a lack of knowledge with respect to women coaches' gendered experiences at a high performance level. We have come across only one study that addresses female elite-level football coaches.²³ In contrast to the studies presented above, in a study of female German speaking elite-level coaches ($n=8$), nothing negative with respect to gender relations and male dominance were reported, and 'rather they felt they were accepted and respected.'²⁴ Hence, based on the introduction and literature review, the purpose of this article is to increase the knowledge about female elite-level coaches' experiences. To do this, the following question was formulated: What is the meaning of gender for elite-level female coaches' experiences in football?

Theoretical perspectives

As a framework for our understanding of the female coaches' experiences, it is important to be aware of the context in which these experiences occur. Coakley²⁵ gives a characteristic of sports in general which may very well be applied to football, i.e. that sport is male dominated, meaning that the characteristics of men are used as standards for judging qualifications; male identified, meaning that the orientations and actions of men are used as standards for defining what is right and normal; and thirdly, male centred, which implies that men and men's lives are the expected focus of attention in sport programs, stories, legends, and media coverage.

Another way of describing this is to say that sport and sport organisations are gendered with men as the power holders. Alvesson and Billing²⁶ point to the fact that one can separate between gender-in-organisations, i.e. studying what happens to men and women in an organisation, and gendered organisations, seeing organisational cultures in terms of masculine and feminine values, ideas and meanings. Both perspectives may have an influence on female coaches' experiences of working in a sports organisation whether it is on the level of a club, a district or a federation, but the gender in organisation perspective is influenced by the culture in which these sexes participate.

As shown in some of the studies presented in the beginning of this article the culture of football is very gendered. But what impact does this have on the female elite-level coaches' experiences, what does it mean, and how is it to be a part of such a male dominated culture? In trying to understand and interpret the meaning of gender with respect to the female coaches' experiences, we will have both a feminist and a gender perspective. What we mean by feminist perspective in this context is a desire to unmask and eliminate gender oppression and discrimination in sports.²⁷ More specifically we try to have a critical feminist cultural perspective that examines how gender is played out and affected through cultural interactions. 'A gender perspective implies analysing the importance, meaning and consequences of what is culturally defined as male or masculine as well as female or feminine ways of thinking (knowing), feeling, valuing and acting,'²⁸ but the concept of gender is more complicated than indicated here. Most people will agree that 'gender' includes the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females, and that gender is linked to socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity,²⁹ as it is implied in the gender perspective mentioned above. But Kimmel reminds us that gender is more than cultural difference when he states that:

Gender is not simply a system of classification, by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialised into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference.³⁰

This is particularly important in relation to the female elite-level coaching role, both concerning the socialisation into the role, and in relation to how the role is performed, perceived and experienced.

Being a man or a woman is not a fixed state, and masculinity and femininity can be enacted by both sexes.³¹ People construct themselves as masculine and/or feminine and psychological research suggests that the great majority of us combine masculine and feminine characteristics, in varying blends, rather than being all one or all the other.³² Accordingly, what is feminine or masculine will vary over time and will vary between local and global cultures. Another major contribution from Connell is the conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity and the fact that there are multiple masculinities and femininities. The different masculinities are not equally available or equally respected, but are structured in a hierarchy, where some masculinities are dominant while others are subordinated or marginalised. The most honoured and powerful form of masculinity is 'hegemonic masculinity', which is a normative ideal.

According to Finley there was a conceptual counterpart 'hegemonic femininity', but to reflect the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order it was replaced with 'emphasised femininity'.³³ Connell meant that no forms of femininity are equivalent to hegemonic masculinity, because femininity is always constructed in the overall subordination of women to men.³⁴ By 'emphasised femininity', Connell refers to the form of femininity, defined as 'the level of mass social relations,' that is based on women's 'compliance' with their subordination to men and 'oriented to accommodating the interests and

desires of men'.³⁵ According to Finley it is 'the type of femininity that is culturally extolled and is highly commercialized and legitimated.'³⁶ In the following quote Connell suggests that there are multiple femininities.

One form [of femininity] is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. I will call this 'emphasized femininity'. Others are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance. Others again are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation.³⁷

Later Connell and Messerschmidt called for more research on femininities

The concept of 'emphasised femininity' focused on compliance to patriarchy, and that is still highly relevant in contemporary mass culture. Yet gender hierarchies are also impacted by new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women-which are increasingly acknowledged by younger men. We consider that research on hegemonic masculinity now needs to give much closer attention to the practices of women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities.³⁸

Based on and inspired by Connell and Messerschmidt, Schippers³⁹ developed an alternative model, which is used by Finley in her article about 'Skating Femininity'.⁴⁰ This model is particularly relevant for sport, which is characterised as a masculine arena, in which women have been looked upon as intruders. Accordingly, female athletes in 'masculine sports' often have not lived up to the characteristics of 'emphasised femininity'.

Krane shows how women in less traditional sport settings, are resisting, challenging, and transforming expectations of emphasised/hegemonic femininity,⁴¹ and in a study among

skater girls the participants saw themselves as participating in an 'alternative' girlhood against the culturally valued emphasised femininity.⁴² Schippers justifies the use of the term 'hegemonic femininity' as a handmaiden to hegemonic masculinity.⁴³ It consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and by doing so, guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women, and thus sustains the current gender order.

Schippers does not call the other forms of femininities 'subordinate', because they have the quality content of masculinity, and thus are not considered inferior traits. They are instead called 'pariah' femininities because they contaminate gender relations between men and women when they are embodied by women. As an example she mentioned that when women exhibit physical violence it may destabilise male dominance unless it is feminised. Once feminised, it will be perceived as another type of femininity such as 'bad-ass girl'. This is an example of pariah femininity because it 'constitutes a refusal to complement hegemonic masculinity in a relation of subordination and therefore is threatening to male dominance'.⁴⁴ This also illustrates how women and men can perform both masculinities and femininities. As mentioned above, what is perceived as masculine and/or feminine and thereby sustains gender hegemony will vary over time and by culture. In a local context, practices may emerge that confront or reject hegemonic relations. Schippers calls these 'alternative' femininities. According to her model pariah femininities are stigmatised and less threatening to hegemonic gender relations, whereas alternative femininities are resistive because they disrupt relations of male dominance.

Methods

The results presented in this article are based on five in-depth interviews with female elite-level football coaches who took part in a larger Norwegian research project entitled 'The elite-level coaching role and gender'. The project aims to increase the knowledge about Norwegian elite-

level coaches with a particular focus on the experiences of and the attitudes towards female coaches. The interviewees were recruited from among the respondents ($n=309$) in a survey investigating the characteristics of Norwegian elite-level coaches.⁴⁵ A total of 40 interviews were completed, however only the results from the five female football coaches are included in the present article due to its scope. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality and were informed that the project was registered and approved by the Norwegian Data Supervision Bureau (NSD). They also signed a declaration of consent and received an information letter with contact details of the head of the project if they later had any questions or wanted to withdraw from the study.

A semi-structured interview guideline was developed and tested among four elite-level coaches before the actual study. First-hand contact with the interviewees was established through e-mails by the head of the project, who is also the first-author of the present article. The e-mail contained information about the study aims followed by an inquiry to participate in the study. After confirming their willingness to participate the interviewees were contacted by phone to determine where the interview would take place. Two of the interviews were conducted by the first-author and the third-author carried out the last three.

To gain the interviewees' confidence may be a challenge when talking about personal experiences and sensitive issues such as gender issues. This was however relatively uncomplicated in this study due the fact that both interviewers were women and had broad, though different experiences from sports. The first author has been concerned with various issues related to gender equality and diversity in sport for several decades, and is well-known among many athletes and coaches in Norway. She is a former athlete herself at the international level. The third-author has experience as a footballer at the elite-level in Norway, and she has also coached football. The interviews lasted 75-90 minutes and covered the following themes: the coaching career; hiring processes in coaching; coaching of men and coaching of women;

relationship and influence in club and/or association; the meaning of gender and authority. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded into thematic text segments by the use of MAXQDA, a software program for qualitative data analysis. After having read through the text many times, and used memos for emerging themes relevant to answer the purpose of the study, different segments of the text were assigned a code name. The code system was organised on two levels with the following categories at the first level: gender relations, job opportunities, and self-confidence. Examples of codes at the second level were: lack of respect (gender relations); male dominance (gender relations); terms and conditions (job opportunities); and competence doubt (self-confidence). This is in accordance with what Sparkes and Smith describe as higher-order and lower-order themes, when using computer assisted data analysis⁴⁶.

The five coaches were between 36 and 50 years of age and coaching was their primary occupation. Two coached national teams; two coached the elite-level in clubs; and one coached both a national team and at the club level. Three were head coaches; two were assistant coaches and all but one coached female teams. All had experience as players; four of them at the international level. As emphasised in the introduction, the number of female coaches at the elite-level in Norway is very low and those familiar with Norwegian football will be able to deduce likely names of the participants. Thus, all quotes presented are provided with pseudonyms so that the reader is unaware as to who said what. Accordingly, quotes that have the potential of identifying individuals have been omitted or reformulated.

Results

The analysis of the interviews showed that the coaches experienced their gendered situations differently both in relation to how it impacted their participation in coach education, their self-confidence, and their value on the elite-level coach job market.

Male dominance in coach education

It was normal for the participants to be one of the few or the only woman when fulfilling their coach education. In the beginning of the interviews, this seemed to be unproblematic: 'Personally, I have never experienced any unpleasant or difficulties in relation to this ... I have taken courses with mostly men' (Ellen), 'I have always participated in courses with almost only men, and have never had any problems with it, but we are different' (Ida), and 'I was alone at a course and ... Most of the participants were very nice and positive' (Ingrid). Once again Stine differed and was more direct in her answer: 'I was the only woman at the course and that in itself is a bit challenging I think. And then I experienced being considered as incompetent.' However, later in the interview Ellen, Ida and Ingrid also talked about uncomfortable experiences: 'And then there is always a bit of teasing and joking ... men that try to be humorous on our behalf. It came out all wrong ...a little laugh at someone else's expense' (Ingrid), 'I experienced that there is a specific attitude towards others that ... they are polite enough to be silent when you are talking, but they don't listen to you' (Ida), and:

... both as an athlete and as a coach one could have wished a better gender balance, I have experienced that here there are only guys, and that one is not accepted because one is a female coach. (Ellen)

Though our coaches' experiences varied, some of them mirrored the negative findings from the few studies presented earlier, however it may be noted that those did not concern elite-level female football coaches.

The Norwegian Football Association has arranged educational courses for women only and some of our coaches had participated in such courses with positive outcomes. They felt that they were among people like themselves, which made them more secure, also in relation to participating in discussions. Two of them had also taught at such courses and had received very positive evaluations: ‘The feedback from the participants was that it was easier to be active. Some had taken mixed gender courses before, but they had experienced that they dared to contribute more (at the women only course)’ (Ida). But the content of the course may be more important than the gender distribution of the participants. As shown in the literature review even at female only courses the participants mentioned that men’s privileges and central position in football were normalised,⁴⁷ and that they were discriminated against during education.⁴⁸ Ellen indicated the same when she stated that if one should continue with mixed gender education at a higher level, it is important that the teachers also are updated and schooled about women's football. And she continued:

The point is that all discussions are related to men's football. Because as women coaches ... we follow what happens in men's football in the same way as the male coaches do ... meaning for us it is not a problem to take part in a discussion about what's going on in the highest male league, but for a male coach to take part in a discussion about the highest female league, is often impossible, because he has not seen one single female match.

Self-confidence

Different factors may have an impact on the coaches’ self-confidence. Being a member of a minority group is in itself one such factor. One becomes more visible, which may lead to more pressure to show that one is good enough to get respect, at the same time as one is kept out of

the male coaches' network: '... when you are alone with 30 men on an educational course, even when you are much better than most of them ... you will keep silent, if you don't have a lot of self-confidence' (Benedicte).

The participants also differed with respect to self-confidence, in spite of the fact that they were the most qualified and best female coaches in Norway. Fielding-Lloyd and Mean⁴⁹ showed how male football leaders and coaches believed that there is a general lack of self-confidence among women and as a consequence the coaching role is not for them. Benedicte supported this line of thought: 'I don't believe that so many of the female coaches themselves have the self-confidence that is needed.' At the same time, she said: 'I have always felt that I have had respect ... at least in the elite-level environment, but I have been a lonely bird among all the male coaches from the beginning.' Ellen on the other hand expressed high self-confidence. She was tough and did not analyse or pondering situations too much, whereas Stine said '... maybe I don't have as much self-confidence as I ought to have to be a football coach. I should have some more of it.'

The study of Fielding-Lloyd and Mean⁵⁰ also illustrates how the social construction of gender in a masculine environment may influence women's self-confidence. The authors used critical discourse analysis in the study of an educational football course and:

... identified the consistent re/production of women as not confident in their own skills and abilities, and framing of women themselves as responsible for the gendered inequities in football coaching. Women were thereby strategically positioned on the periphery of the football category, whilst the organization was positioned as progressive and liberal.⁵¹

The social construction of gender has consequences for women's self-confidence and for how others experience them.⁵² Since coaching is a masculine arena this may influence how the female coaches experience their own competence and how the environment experiences them. A consequence may be that women become reluctant to advance their careers through a lack of self-belief and motivation, as was found in a study by Norman.⁵³ One of the participants told about her thoughts before she went to a high level coaching course as the only woman:

I was very nervous and worried about going ... I didn't think it was some kind of vendetta because I was a woman. But I think that the instructor's incompetence combined with my insecurity, gave a very bad result, quite simply. (Stine)

Though the female coaches varied with respect to their own self-confidence they all agreed about the self-confidence among their male counterparts. Ellen expressed it as follows: 'A common male thought is probably that "I can manage 10% of this, so therefore I can do it," but a common female thought is, "I can only manage 90% of this, so therefore I can't do it"'. According to the participants, male coaches therefore have a tendency to overvalue their characteristics and skills, whereas female coaches undervalue themselves.

Value on the elite-level coaching job market

As indicated in the introduction Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger⁵⁴ found that informal and personal decision-making practices played a fundamental role in the recruitment of female coaches at the regional level. Further that these undermined formal guidelines and gave disproportional weight to stereotyped preferences when recruiting coaches. Elite-level coaches seem often to be headhunted through acquaintances, relationships and networks, which is

dominated by men.⁵⁵ Hence, public announcements of such positions are rare. For a minority group, like women, it can therefore be difficult to be recruited to such jobs.⁵⁶

Though all the coaches had been headhunted to their present positions, they had different opinions about the meaning of the male network. Most of them thought that not being a part of a male network could have negative consequences in relation to job opportunities. However, the impression was that they did not reflect very much upon it. Ingrid said that ‘One can state that men employ men’ whereas Ellen stated that ‘It is men who occupy most of the positions, at least in the football association and in many clubs ... male networks exist in most areas of society and also in football.’ Ida did not look upon the male network as a barrier:

I have not thought about it. After all I have a job here, even if I am a woman. So something has to have been positive in relation to that fact. It is almost only men who have been a part of the employment process.

Studies from other countries show that male coaches are preferred when coaches are hired, and that female coaches are only relevant for female teams.⁵⁷ This was also the fact in our study. The participants interpreted this as a lack of respect, since female coaches seldom coach men’s teams. As Benedicte noted:

There are not many jobs available ... If you can’t get any male team, which today is impossible to get. The coach for the female national team is one position only, and then we have 12 teams in the highest league for women. But there is a deep prejudice against female coaches so there are not many jobs to seek, if you have a coaching ambition.

And Stine expressed it like this:

It's almost only men who are doing this. I think that I will never get a job as a coach for a male team in a higher league ... that is because I am a woman. If I had had the expertise that I have, and had been a man, I could have been very attractive.

In spite of the fact that the women were well aware of the challenges it can be to be an elite-level coach in the male dominated world of football they personally also had many positive experiences:

Personally, I have not experienced it as uncomfortable or difficult to be a woman. I have received a lot of positive feedback being a female elite-level coach ... but I know that such attitudes as 'women can't coach football' exist, but no one has said that to me directly (Ellen).

Others expressed the same feelings: 'I have always felt that I have been respected by the male elite-level coaches' (Ida), 'I have only received positive comments about being a female coach at such a high level' (Ingrid). But the coaches agreed that it was easier for male coaches to gain respect and authority. This was also possible for women, but they had to work harder: 'You have to prove yourself first – if you deserve respect' (Ida), 'They don't think we have the knowledge and competence that are needed ... and there is an expectation that you have to perform twice as good as a man in the same shoes' (Benedicte).

Our interviewees therefore felt that their experience and competence were undervalued in comparison to male coaches. But they seemed to have accepted their position as 'outsiders' when they expressed acceptance or understanding of the fact that they first had to show their skills and competence and then get the needed respect. Most of them were pleased with the jobs

they had achieved: 'I am not going to complain because I have had many OK jobs. And I have very much liked what I have been doing and am doing' (Benedicte). She continued: 'I will guess that when I started here it may be that someone experienced it as strange at the beginning ... But when you show that you know your subjects and have something to contribute, then the respect comes.'

Success as an elite-level coach is dependent on how much you win. At this level, you have to win or you lose your job. In other words, it is an insecure job for both female and male coaches. The participants indicated that this is something they reflect upon: 'If you shall coach a team in the highest league you have to be mobile. And at the same time you never know: do I get a new job next year or do I get fired' (Ellen). Ida expresses a classical gender stereotype when she said:

Sometimes I have been thinking that it could have been fun to try to coach a male elite-football team ... And I believe I have the knowledge and competence, but at the same time I know what I have now. ... You can get fired after five months... I believe that women need a bit more security in their daily life, knowing that it is something that will last for a certain time.

Many elite-level athletes become high-profile coaches after their career has ended. Though, Stine said that: 'You don't need to have been a horse to become a jockey,' She agreed with most of the other coaches that her experience as an elite-level player was positive: 'For me it has been important ... but I think that there are many roads to Rome.' Ingrid also agreed that her experience as an elite-level player was positive: 'For me it has given me a kind of confidence, the fact that I have the feeling for the play. Even though it was some years ago, I can recognise situations that the players are in.' The fact that most of them had a 'famous' name and had been

in the media, may also have led to the fact that they more often were contacted with respect to new coaching jobs.

Summary and conclusion

The results indicate that the culture of football in Norway is very gendered; it is male dominated, male identified, and male centred, as described by Coackley. Football represents a gendered organisational culture, which can be seen in the domination of masculine values, ideas and meanings. This is in accordance with the studies presented earlier, but the findings from our study show how this impacts on the female football coaches' experiences, both in relation to , their coach education, i.e. courses dominated by men and masculinities; with respect to their self-confidence, which for some of the women were surprisingly low, and how they look upon their own chances in the job market, which they also considered relatively low. It is clear that the male dominance is a challenge for women in all the areas mentioned above. They agreed that male elite-level coaches more easily get respect and authority, that the men's competence is more valued, and that the men's chances in the job market is much higher than for female than for male elite-level coaches.

With respect to the theories mentioned earlier, and the model of different femininities as developed by Schippers⁵⁸ one can state that all the female coaches expressed a form of hegemonic femininity, meaning that to a certain degree they seemed to accept the world the way it is, i.e. the dominating male football culture with its values and gender stereotypes. On the other hand, just by the fact that they are elite-level football coaches one can say that they represent a form of pariah femininity, and as such they threaten, to a certain degree, hegemonic relations between masculinity and femininity.

But as a group they expressed very little protest or resistance femininity, which could have represented alternative femininities, and thereby led to a disruption of the male dominance.

This does not mean that they were very pleased with the situation or did not want or had any ideas for change. For example, they were aware of the male powerholders in football and the consequences for women, but they did not seem to actively protest for changes in the system.

There is a parallel between the different femininities described above and feminist theory. In relation to feminism these coaches represent in many ways a liberal feminist perspective, i.e. equality on the men's premises; they operate within the current conditions of patriarchy which they do not attempt to challenge or change. If the coaches had had a more radical perspective, i.e. showed more resistance, they would probably have expressed alternative femininities, which in the long run could lead to more change and more female power. Such tendencies could be gleaned from some of the participants, particularly when they talked about their experiences in male and female only coach education courses, and the wish to change the content in them, which was due to the fact that men's privileges and central position in football always were normalized.

One major finding is that in spite of a culture characterised by masculinity the coaches had varied experiences. At the same time that they have had negative and uncomfortable experiences they also told about positive experiences and situations in which they had been treated with respect by men. One way of expressing this is to say that the coaches' experiences demonstrate both difference and diversity. This is contradictory to most other studies of female coaches, except from the study among female elite-coaches by Hofmann and co-authors.⁵⁹

Our study concerns elite-level coaches, and it may be that when women get to such a high level they experience more respect and less direct discrimination than female coaches at a lower level. On the other hand some of them indicated that they had been harassed at coach education courses and that they could have coached at higher level if they had belonged to the opposite sex.

Another surprising finding was the lack of self-confidence among some of the coaches, and their clear perception of the high self-confidence among male coaches in general. This mirrors traditional gender roles, and one can speculate if some of the female coaches had the expectation that 'this is the way it should be', because high self-confidence is more of an expected male than a female characteristic or stereotype.

As mentioned earlier other studies indicate that female coaches through their coach education 'learn' and thereby internalise a feeling of not being 'good enough'. But such experiences from their education combined with the feeling that their experience and competence were undervalued can be very negative signs in relation to recruitment and retention. The low number of female coaches at this level is not only a challenge for Norwegian football, but also for football internationally. In an interview study among national-level female coaches in the United Kingdom, the participants suggested the following ideas to increase the recruitment and the retention; role modelling and mentoring; greater frequency and quality of coaching opportunities; the creation of supportive networks, and a policy of positive discrimination.⁶⁰ One practical consequence of our results should be, as some of the coaches also suggest, more female only courses, which can be looked upon as positive discrimination. But this does not necessarily, lead to any changes in the recruitment and retention of female coaches, as the study by Fielding-Lloyd and Mean⁶¹ suggests, what seems to be more important is to change the content in the educational courses. Elite-level coaches should not only learn about the technique and tactics of the game of football, but also about gender and power. Both future male and female coaches should learn about the reasons for the male domination in soccer and the women's underrepresentation and experiences. Such a socio-cultural education may make it easier for both future male and female coaches to understand the needs and behaviours of both genders, and may lead to some cultural changes in the world of football, particularly with respect to both coach education and the number of female coaches.

Notes

1. European Commission, *Gender Equality in Sport*, 19.
2. Diegel et al. in Pfister, 'Outsider: Female Coaches', 74; Fasting, Sisjord, and Sand, 'Elite-level Coaches', 8; Kajtna, 'Slovene Female Coaches', 78; Riksidrottsförbundet, *Vägen till Elittränaskap*, 63; Storm and Tofft-Jørgensen, *Elitesportsmiljøet i Danmark 2012*, 103; Swiss Federal Institute of Sports Magglingen, *Elite Sport in Switzerland*, 63.
3. Union of European Football Associations, *Women's Football*, 21.
4. *Ibid.*, 22.
5. Union of European Football Associations, *Women's Football*, 72.
6. Fasting, 'Small Country – Big Results'.
7. Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, *Årsrapport 2014*, 75.
8. Norges Fotballforbund, *Skeiv football*; Skogvang and Fasting, 'Football and Sexualities', 876-877.
9. Caudwell, 'Sexuality within Football Contexts'; Harris, 'Playing the Man's Game'; Harris, 'The Image Problem'; Mennesson and Clement, 'Homosociability and Homosexuality'.
10. Hovden and Hjelseth, 'Negotiating the Status', Lilleheil, *Jenteligaen*.
11. Caudwell, 'Women's Footballing Bodies'; Christopherson, Janning, and McConnell, 'Two Kicks Forward'; Griggs and Biscomb, 'Theresa Bennett'; Kristiansen, Broch, and Pedersen, 'Negotiating Gender'; Knijnik and Horton, 'Only Beautiful Women'; Peeters and Elling, 'The Coming Age'; Pfister, 'Sportswomen in German Press'.
12. Cox and Thompson, 'Multiple bodies'; Fasting, Pfister, and Scraton, 'Kampen mot Kjønnstereotypene'; Fisher and Dennehy, 'Body projects'; Jeanes, 'I'm into high heels'; Knijnik, 'Femininities and Masculinities'; Meân and Kassing, 'Managing Hegemony, Femininity, and Heterosexuality'; Moreira, 'Marta past Messi'; Munk et al., 'Negative

Societal Reactions’; Perets, Levy, and Galily, ‘National and Gender Identity Perceptions’;

Scraton, et al., ‘Still a Man’s Game’; Skogvang, *Et felt i forandring*.

13. Bruening, ‘Gender and Racial Analysis’

14. Bradbury, ‘The Under-representation and Experiences’; Bradbury, Van Sterkenburg, and Mignon, ‘Institutional Racism’

15. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, ‘Poor Thing’; Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, ‘A Man’s Job’.

16. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, ‘Poor Thing’, 63-69.

17. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, ‘A Man’s Job’, 250-258.

18. Fielding-Lloyd and Mean, ‘Coach a Men’s Sport’, 7-18.

19. Welford, ‘Talking Too Quietly’, 371-372.

20. *Ibid.*, 371-372.

21. Lewis, Roberts, and Andrews, ‘Putting Myself through This’.

22. *Ibid.*, 6-10.

23. Hofmann et al., ‘Football is like Chess’

24. *Ibid.*, 30.

25. Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 249-250.

26. Alvesson and Billing, *Understanding Gender*, 5.

27. Edwards and Hargreaves, ‘Sport feminism’, 395-402.

28. Alvesson and Billing, *Understanding Gender*, 7.

29. Giddens, *Sociology*, 432-479.

30. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 1.

31. Connell, *Gender*; West and Zimmermann, ‘Doing Gender’.

32. Connell, *Gender*.

33. Finley, ‘Skating Femininity’, 360.

34. Connell, *Gender & Power*, 183.

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35. Ibid., 183.
 36. Finley, 'Skating Femininity', 360.
 37. Connell, *Gender & Power*, 184-185.
 38. Connell and Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity', 848.
 39. Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other'.
 40. Finley, 'Skating Femininity'.
 41. Krane, 'Athletic and Feminine'.
 42. Kelly, Pomerantz, and Currie, 'Skater Girlhood'.
 43. Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other', 94.
 44. Ibid., 95.
 45. Fasting, Sisjord, and Sand, 'Elite-level Coaches'.
 46. Sparkes and Smith, *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health. From process to product*, 143
 47. Fielding-Lloyd and Mean, 'Coach a Men's Sport'.
 48. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, 'Poor Thing'.
 49. Fielding-Lloyd, and Meân, 'Women, Confidence and Responsibility'.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid., 345.
 52. Connell, *Masculinities*.
 53. Norman, 'A Crisis of Confidence'.
 54. Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, 'A Man's Job'.
 55. Fasting, Sisjord, and Sand, 'Elite-level Coaches'.
 56. Kerr and Marshall, 'Shifting the Culture'.
 57. LaVoi and Dutove, 'Barriers and Supports', 27.
 58. Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other'.
 59. Hofmann et al., 'Football is like Chess'.

60. Norman, 'Developing Female Coaches'

61. Fielding-Lloyd and Mean, 'Coach a Men's Sport', 19-20.

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