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FIELDING-LLOYD, Beth and MEÂN, Lindsey J.

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Standards and separatism: The discursive construction of gender in English soccer coach education

Beth Fielding-Lloyd*
Sport Management and Culture
Sheffield Hallam University
Collegiate Crescent
Sheffield, UK
S10 2BP
+44 (0)114 225 5799
Fax: +44 (0)114 225 2394
Email: B.Fielding-Lloyd@shu.ac.uk

Lindsey J. Meân
Department of Communication Studies
Arizona State University
P.O. Box 37100
Phoenix, AZ
85069-7100

Tel.: 602 543 6682
Email: lmean@asu.edu

* Authors listed alphabetically. All correspondence should be directed to Beth Fielding-Lloyd. This paper is based on Beth Fielding-Lloyd's Ph.D. dissertation undertaken at the Centre for Human Communication, Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K.

Abstract

Affirmative action is a problematic, but common, organizational approach to redressing gender discrimination as it fails to address discourses underlying organizational definitions and practices in highly masculinized sites like English football. Unstructured interviews with 27 key personnel and participants in coach education in the north of England within a regional “division” of the organization regulating English football (“The FA”) were conducted to explore the gendered construction and enactment of football and coaching, and the framing of women-only (separatist) coaching courses. Critical discourse analysis identified the deployment of discourses concerning the undermining of standards and the privileging of women as strategies used to neutralize the significance of gender and previous gender discrimination, while re/producing the centrality of masculinity for key definitions and identities.

Key Words: Identities; Football; Soccer, Gender

Introduction

Of all sports, football (known as soccer in the U.S.A., we use ‘football’ to reflect the site of study) has been acknowledged to be *the* dominant, most popular, and influential sport throughout the world (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994). Given the cultural significance of sport (Kinkema & Harris, 1998), and football in particular, it is therefore not surprising that the organizations that regulate football are considered major forces. Indeed FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) is a major trans-global socio-economic and “cultural-ideological” force (Sklair, 1991, p.6). Such an impact is to be expected given the influence of organizations on wider discourses and practices (van Dijk, 1993), especially culturally significant organizations such as sport regulators that combine regulatory power with a privileged access to communication, particularly the Media (van Dijk, 1993; Meân Patterson, 2003).

A key element of the cultural power of sport is its significance as a site for the re/production of male identities (Messner, 1987). As such, football remains fiercely masculine (the USA is a notable exception) and strongly resistant to the entry of women (Bryson, 1987; Meân, 2001). Consequently, the institutions that regulate and organize sport—internationally, nationally, and regionally—have remained strongly masculine organizations (Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Hoerber, 2003) despite policies and promises to facilitate and encourage female participation. While the production and maintenance of traditional gendered boundaries and constructions within many organizations has been widely recognized (Grant & Tancred, 1992), the cultural prominence and influence of key sporting organizations over wider ideologies, discourses and practices makes them especially important sites to explore the re/production of gender and gendered discourses. We take the position that people “do” organizations (Cameron, 1998) and

determine their behavioral norms (Schneider, 1987). Consequently, we focus on the identities, talk, and discursive practices of those who enact or perform the organization—as they implement or enact sport and the practices that comprise it—re/producing knowledge and power in the “everyday” action of “doing” the organization.

Of the national football organizations, the English Football Association (referred to in England and throughout this paper as “the FA”) regulates one of the most staunchly masculine sites in which football remains a strong bastion of traditional hegemonic masculinity (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994). With a long history of actively excluding female participation at all levels, the FA was forced to embrace female players by FIFA in 1993. Logically, the subsequent influx of women players (Premier League Survey, 1996) would be expected to advance to other forms of participation, such as coaching. However, there has been little change to date suggesting active resistance and gate-keeping practices (Foucault, 1970; Gumperz, 1982a).

A key role of the FA is regulating coaching, particularly youth football, accomplished through the training and certification of coaches and implemented through the regional FAs, such as county FAs (CFA). This is significant because all coaches participating at FA sanctioned establishments and clubs must be FA certified, providing a powerful grassroots level of ordinary or everyday enactment of the explicit and implicit FA core values, meanings, and identities. This is a key entry point not just into the organization as a coach, but into football as a player being coached. Hence it is a point at which gate-keeping practices to protect identities and the organization from unsuitable or inappropriate members can occur, predominantly through the language and discursive practices of dominant members (Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b). This is especially significant given that peripheral organizational members (like any identity category member) are most likely to adhere to traditional, hegemonic versions of the identity as part of the

process of working up their own organizational or category membership (Bruins, 1997; Meân, 2001); arguably a key element that contributes to the re/production of gendered organizations observed in many studies (e.g. Grant & Tancred, 1992).

Sport, Coaching and Masculinity

Sporting expertise is synonymous with males and masculinity; hence, coaching is a gendered occupation within which women are “othered.” Female coaches are typically devalued and invalidated (Staurowsky, 1990) and subject to direct and indirect discrimination (Knoppers, 1989; Thorngren, 1990). Despite increasing numbers of women playing sport, the numbers of women coaches have not increased significantly. Indeed, while there has been a small rise in women coaches at introductory levels, 81% of qualified coaches in the UK are male (Sportscoach UK, 2004). Thus, the notion that sporting expertise is linked with masculinity continues, and the effectiveness of policies to actively encourage women in a variety sports remains questionable.

The gendering of occupation results from meanings ascribed to that activity (Hearn & Parkin, 1983) arising from the shaping of knowledge, understandings and definitions that are linked to power and its re/production (Foucault, 1970). Given the link to hegemonic masculinity, predominant sporting discourses value toughness, aggression and competitiveness (Campbell, 1990) and these are therefore valued in coaching. Thus, females are *perceived* as employing a different approach to coaching their athletes (e.g., democratic, nurturing), which is considered indecisive and inappropriate compared to the autocratic and forceful male coach (Knoppers, 1992). Fundamentally, it appears that competitiveness and femininity are viewed as antagonistic.

Nonetheless, there has been an increasing emphasis in many sports upon wider skills desirable in coaching and a broader, less autocratic definition of coaching has come to the fore – at least in policy and practice guidelines. The FA, in their current coach education literature, states the qualities of a good coach include “enthusiasm, patience, open-mindedness, fairness, knowledge of the sport, a desire to learn and a willingness to help other people improve” (Houlston, 2001, p.2). Knoppers (1992) argues emphasizing such qualities should have led to an increase in women coaches, given the predominant discourses that naturalize women as possessing these qualities. The lack of an increase therefore suggests three things. Firstly, these qualities are devalued (as natural) when displayed by women, but celebrated and exalted when displayed by men (Ward, 2005). Secondly, emerging discourses in sport have been either resisted or framed in ways that re/produce traditional power relations and maintain the status quo. For example, skills typically defined as feminine (e.g. nurturance, support and encouragement) have been reframed in coaching as distinct and unique to sport and typical of successful and central category members (i.e., men). Thirdly, and arguably most significantly, a key element of exclusion stems from a fundamental failure to include women in the category (Gumperz, 1982a,b; Meân, 2001; Sacks, 1992) which automatically excludes them from the basic category entitlement of knowledge of sport; in this case football. The significance of this criterion, “knowledge of the sport,” can be seen in its move from what should be an implicit requirement to being explicitly stated in the FA coaching education literature (see quotation above).

The FA coach education literature states “a major goal of The Football Association is to ensure that every person who wants to get involved in football ... can do so no matter what their ability, gender, age, socio-economic status, sexuality, race, faith or ethnicity” (Howie, 2000, p.48). Yet there is little provision in this literature as to how coaches should actually address

these issues (other than stated policies and complaints procedures). The coach education literature defines sports equity as “about common sense and respect for others rather than taking extreme, over-the-top measures to be politically correct” (Howie, 2000, p.49), though examples of what extreme or common sense measures entail are conspicuously absent. Indeed the notion of common sense is highly problematic and strongly questioned at many levels, particularly as re/producer of traditional discourses and power relations (Foucault, 1970, 1972). Further, contemporary meanings of the term “political correctness” (PC) are often derogatory, and Cameron (1995) describes how the meaning of the term has drifted into a generalized derogation of liberal concerns. Thus, the proximity of common sense and political correctness clearly suggests these notions should work together to guide the coach; suggesting a favoring of “common sense” practices as opposed to “extreme, over-the-top” PC. The PC discourse utilized here routinely simplifies and trivializes complex social and political debate. It suppresses dilemmas of exclusion (Suhr & Johnson, 2003) in favor of taken-for-granted knowledge that appears to be common sense to members of a particular category without recourse to the bias that may come with that position. The representation of (limited) social change revealed in this small excerpt from the FA coach education literature demonstrates how social change has been addressed in ways that actually re/produce normative hegemonic knowledge and practices.

Dealing with Women as Diversity: Separatism

Separatist policies provide separate facilities and means to particular disadvantaged groups, which in this context, are women (Hargreaves, 1994). Such policies are argued to widen access to resources and positions which are, or have been, typically reserved for the more

powerful members of a society; that is, white, heterosexual, men. However, separatist policies can be controversial and problematic (Sinclair, 2000), especially in strongly gendered organizations or occupations highly resistant to the entry and participation of the “other.” This is significant given the highly masculine context of sporting organizations (Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Hoerber, 2003) and that the most explicit means by which the FA is addressing gender inequity in coaching is by the provision of separatist, women-only coach education and specialist posts such as Women and Girls Development Officers.

Separatist education and training.

Advocates of women-only policies reason that the advancement of women requires specific, dedicated organizations as all other organizations are effectively male (controlled by men and male practices) and will never fully embrace the cause of women (Theberge, 2000). Indeed in sport contexts, females have reported strong preferences for single-sex settings (e.g. Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) in contrast with performance pressure in the presence of men (e.g. McDermott, 2004). Generally, women-only settings appear empowering, providing the opportunity and resources to take the first steps to develop sporting ability and expertise. Additionally, they provide women the opportunity to experience female solidarity in a sporting environment in a manner that men have historically experienced; an experience argued to have re/produced hegemonic masculinity in sport (Whitson & MacIntosh, 1989).

Conversely, women-only policies and events are argued to disadvantage, and potentially hinder, equality in the wider organizational and sporting context. Women-only sport contexts have been consistently framed as inferior, enabling separatist policies in sport to potentially

become a “technique for maintaining a socially constructed difference between men and women, symbolically preserving through sports the power of men over women” (Pronger, 1990, p.18). Thus, even a genuine attempt to provide women with space away from highly masculinized versions of sporting activity may be transformed into othering, undermining any potential threat to sport as a male domain. Of course, it is important to note that all the courses were male-only until comparatively recently and effectively remain male-only. This is relevant as whilst the development of separatist courses (or events) is often seen as a good policy to redress imbalances, as a practice it often exists in place of addressing the discrimination embedded in existing courses, allowing both previous and continued discriminatory practices to remain invisible and hence powerful (Foucault; 1970; Bradshaw, 1997).

Separatist posts: Women and girls’ development officers.

All regional or county FAs (CFAs) have one Women and Girls’ Development Officer whose remit is to develop opportunities for women to play and coach. This is argued to be a partial and problematic solution (Hargreaves, 1994) especially in organizations that have been gender-specific. The invisibility of this previous male-specific focus, and any notion of it as problematic rather than natural, lies at the heart of the issue for promoting equality. On the one hand, women’s subordinate position within the organization means that people working with the sole remit to better that position should be welcomed; plus, the very existence of the position brings attention to the problem. Yet, the creation of these positions marks women as different and can be a method of excluding women from the centre of the organization, defining them as outsiders (rather than newcomers) (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Consequently, these officers have

a problematic position to negotiate (especially as they are women) given the highly gendered nature of the identities and practices that comprise this organizational and sporting site.

Analytical Framework

Potter (1996, p.105) focuses on “talk and texts as parts of social practices” that construct rather than describe, and thus have social and political consequences (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This approach places the analytic focus on the strategic design of everyday talk, on the premise that talk is action-oriented and motivated, using critical discourse analysis (CDA) with an emphasis on rhetoric (Potter, 1996). Specifically it can be used to explore the ways in which identities, positions and structures are routinely re/produced and challenged in talk and routine discursive practices. Bradshaw (1997) argues that power is rendered invisible because it is achieved at the micro-level through language, rituals, and values that construct meaning and work to deny issues of power and conflict. Consequently, while intentional efforts to exert power and undermine the less powerful are likely to be denied by those who benefit from the status quo (such as central category members), a focus on talk and discursive practices enables the strategies and motivations that construct and maintain the status quo to be explored. As such, this analytic approach addresses the manipulative nature of modern power, which is organized and institutionalized to such an extent that it manufactures consent and appears to be jointly produced by its “villains and victims” (van Dijk, 1993, p.255).

Identity work is a key part of this analysis, explicitly addressing the rhetorical function of talk as the site where identity is enacted (i.e. worked up and/or maintained) through membership of key categories and their attendant entitlements; such as (claims to) knowledge

(Sacks, 1992; Potter, 1996). This approach borrows heavily from Sacks' (1992) management of category membership to explore what features of talk – such as re/positioning, framing, hesitation, etc., - reveal about the work being achieved in the immediacy and detail of everyday interaction. Categories and their memberships are not natural entities but constructions that need to be discursively produced and maintained (enacted), through collaboration or non-collaboration, in order to achieve or exclude from membership (Potter, 1996; Meân, 2001). Thus, category membership, and the entitlements that go with it, require routine management to maintain or achieve membership. Nonetheless, "...people can fail to be treated as having certain memberships" (Potter, 1996, p.133) if they do not "fit" within the basic category boundary, what Gumperz (1982a) refers to as gate-keeping practices, particularly as members are heavily invested in their identity category and its boundaries. Collaboration or failure to collaborate are acts of power, as this can be seen as an extension of the power to define (Foucault, 1970) which typically lie with those who are central members (Meân, 2001).

The most central discourses of football are strongly associated with men and masculinity (i.e. power, aggression, toughness) (Parker, 2001); hence, the football category *is* male. That is, men have the entitlement to be members of this category and be knowledgeable about it. (Indeed this is so routine that, in England, virtually all males are assumed members until declared or shown otherwise.) In contrast, women are routinely excluded from membership and their entry strongly resisted to protect a central tenet of the category: masculinity (Meân, 2001). As a consequence of the centrality of masculinity, gender has to be routinely managed by *both* men and women in order to maintain and claim membership of the football category. Consequently, it was expected that masculinity and gendered identities would be a key part of the everyday discursive action of members and participants within an organization so central to the football

category, particularly when discussing areas so fundamental to the current and future enactment of football: coaching, coach education, and the participation of women.

Method

The aim of the study was to explore how gendered discourses were organized and institutionalized within a specific part of the FA. As the institution that regulates football in England, the FA and its county (regional) football associations (CFAs) are *the* dominant site for teaching the everyday meanings and definitions of football, coaching, and associated roles and values. Given that football is the national game and a major cultural force, this is highly significant as the FA is also in a powerful position to influence the wider social context (van Dijk, 1993). The publicly stated FA policy is to promote the inclusion and progression of women within coaching (Football Association, 2001) and these aims have been put into action through the implementation of separatist policies which, as noted earlier, have been found to be problematic solutions to the issue of gender equality (Sinclair, 2000). Equally the organization, like the sport, is widely acknowledged to be highly masculine and strongly resistant to the entry of women into the organization and the sport it regulates. Consequently, this study explored a site of FA coach education delivery (at a CFA) where coaches are explicitly taught the meanings, positionings, and responsibilities of their occupation in working to achieve the FA qualifications that are mandatory in order to undertake football coaching in England (and other countries, such as the USA) and to proceed to the higher European (UEFA) levels of qualification.

The Organization: “Scullam” CFA

The research was undertaken at one English County Football Association (CFA) located in a large northern city. One of forty-three currently in operation under the remit of the FA, it was approached as the site of study for geographic convenience. To protect the anonymity of the CFA under study, the pseudonym “Scullam” will be used. Each CFA is responsible for the administration of football in their region (e.g. marketing and delivery of coach education, referee training, disciplinary procedures, administration of league and cup competitions, etc.). According to Scullam CFA’s promotional literature, the broad aims of Scullam CFA are to increase participation (playing and coaching) at all levels and to improve the standards in an inclusive environment (Scullam CFA promotional literature, 2003). Given the historic restrictions on female participation, in 2005 Scullam CFA stated that it aims to have 25% of the boys clubs under its remit offering girls football and, further, to raise the standard of female coaches in the region (Scullam CFA promotional literature, 2005). This unpublished material was provided to coach education participants. To protect the anonymity of Scullam CFA we regret that we cannot provide more specific information on these resources.

Research Design

The study focused on the re/production of key meanings, identities, and discourses of football within two key areas: coach education and development of women’s football. These areas are inextricably linked, as coaches are considered crucial to the aim of building and maintaining female participation and quality as players, encouraging females to progress into coaching, and pivotal to the acceptance of females as a normative part of the game. Hence, the study focused on the provision of coaching qualifications by interviewing participants and key

personnel associated with the provision of coach education and/or the development of women's football.

The research focused on the two lowest coach education courses (Level 1 and Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Football, L1CCF and L2CCF) because these are most frequently delivered by CFAs and the levels at which women-only (separatist) options are typically offered. Further, these are significant courses due to their impact in teaching the fundamental meanings of football as a category to coaches, who subsequently work with a wide range of young and entry level players. Similarly, as introductory level qualifications, these courses work as gatekeepers to continued and further participation, and produce those who will act to gatekeep player participation. Consequently, these courses provide a powerful forum in which the meanings of football are re/produced by those prominently positioned to define and police the category (Foucault, 1970, 1972; Gumperz, 1982a). In addition, L1CCF and L2CCF coach educators are comparatively peripheral members of the wider football category (and the organization that comprises it: the FA). But participants are even more peripheral, aspiring to be included with coach educators. Evidence suggests that peripheral members are most subject to the pressure to re/produce core values and identities associated with central membership (Bruins, 1997) striving to re/produce the dominant discourses of the category to simultaneously work up category entitlement and avoid the risk of being excluded (Meân, 2001).

There are currently five levels of coach education program run by the FA in affiliation with UEFA (Union of European Football Associations): UEFA Pro Coaching Award; UEFA A Coaching License; UEFA B Coaching License; Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Football; Level 1 Certificate in Coaching Football. A primary responsibility of County Football Associations (CFAs) is to deliver the two lowest qualifications (Level 1 and Level 2 Certificate in Coaching

Football, L1CCF and L2CCF respectively). L1CCF qualifies participants to coach children and young people at a grass roots club under the supervision of a higher qualified football coach. The course comprises three units: Safe and Ethical Football; Football Basics; and Delivering Football Coaching Sessions to Young People. L2CCF focuses on “the planning, conducting and evaluation of ethical football coaching sessions” (Scullam CFA promotional literature, 2003). This course comprises four units: Football Coaching: Principles; Working with Others in Football; Preparing Football Coaching Sessions; and Conducting Football Coaching Sessions. It qualifies coaches to work without supervision.

Both courses are open to anyone over sixteen years of age with regular practical experience of football and access to a club (which could be seen as a significant limitation to women’s entry given that an *aim* of the CFA was to achieve provision for women’s football in 25% of the clubs under their remit). The courses consist of class-based lectures and practical sessions on a football field. Practical sessions involve *coach educators* explaining and demonstrating coaching drills. Participants then perform the coaching drills and eventually coach a group of their peers through further coaching drills. Classroom-based sessions are conducted in a traditional teaching format. Participants learn and discuss coaching theory and complete study tasks.

Data Collection

Observations of one L1CCF course and one L2CCF course were completed. An original intention had been to observe a women-only coach education course. However, no women-only courses were scheduled in the fourteen-month data collection period due to an apparent lack of interest (an issue and explanation returned to later in the text). In total, 27 unstructured

interviews were performed with course participants, coach educators, key staff members of Scullam CFA staff and their major partners (e.g. neighboring CFA, Football Development Officers from neighboring Local Authorities). The interview component of the research provides the focus of the analysis reported here. A breakdown of the interviewees' organizational roles and gender is detailed in Table 1.

A total number of 37 participants and 3 coach educators were observed during the two coach education courses (17 on L1CCF; 20 on L2CCF). All were male, except for one female participant on the L1CCF. Participants ranged in age from 16 to mid-40s although most were in their late 20s to early 30s. Prior coaching experience ranged from none (L1CCF) through to employees of an affiliated organization who regularly coached young people and held previous coaching qualifications which were now out of date (L2CCF). All but 4 of the participants were White. All participants were offered the opportunity of an interview.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of reporting the analysis, simplified transcription conventions following Condor (2000) are used in this study (see Table 2). Both authors independently and collaboratively analyzed the interview data, with multiple peer reviewers confirming the consistency of the analysis. Nonetheless, it is argued that the explicit provision of detailed data transcription in conjunction with full analysis renders the process overt and transparent (Potter, 1996) and enables the reader to directly evaluate our interpretations (Sacks, 1992). Thus, the "academic interaction" is "democratized" (Potter, 1996, p.106). Furthermore, the theoretical stance of this study and its version of discourse analysis (see Potter, 1996) problematizes validity and fact within scientific discourse as rhetorical constructions that are dependent on

collaboration, cultural expectations and pre-existing categories. Indeed, in keeping with this theoretical stance, it can be argued that an absolute, fixed meaning – hence validity – is not appropriate here. Thus, while it needs to be emphasized that the researchers independently agreed and collaborated on the coding and its subsequent discourse analysis, the provision of data and the transparency of the analysis is intended to enable the reader to make their own decisions about scientific validity.

Table 1: Organizational role and gender of interviewees

	Male	Female
Coach Educator	3	0
Participant	12	1
FA staff	6	5

Table 2: Transcription conventions (Condor, 2000)

(1)	measured pause of one second or greater
(.)	audible pause of less than one second
<u>Talk</u>	emphasized talk
talk-talk	self – interruption
[...]	omitted talk
()	unclear reading, no hearing achieved
‘talk’	intonation of quotation (e.g. active voicing)
[talk]	clarifying or supplementary information
talk { talk	overlapping speech

{ talk	
talk =	contiguous utterances

Results and Discussion

Two key discourses were identified as deployed to frame women-only coaching courses and women's football, and to re/produce traditional hegemonic definitions and identities: differences in standards and sexism against men (modern sexism). Whilst these were identified as distinct discourses that reflected previous research on the *standards discourse* by Cohn (2000) and *modern racism* by Wetherell and Potter (1992), the intertextual and symbiotic linking of these two discourses needs to be acknowledged as part of their power and re/production.

The Standards Discourse

The term *standards discourse* is borrowed from Cohn's (2000) work in the US military demonstrating that difference in the physical training of men and women was used by men as evidence of their oppression. Cohn argued that the invoking of a standards discourse constructs "an apparently 'objective' and neutral ideology that links equal status with same standards" (2000, p.131), but that these complaints really reflected men's sense of loss and anger at the male organizations attempts to include women. Anger, loss, and other forms of resistance to change can, in turn, be linked to the threat and loss of male identities linked to the prevailing discourses located within the organization (Cohn, 2000), especially when the organization is strongly linked to wider discourses and ideologies about gender; such as the military and sport (Meân, 2001).

Separatist sport policies, such as women-only coach education, often invoke connotations of lesser standards and categorize women as outsiders in sport (Hargreaves, 1994).

Categorizations are stressed as social and cognitive phenomena involving self-categorization and self-concept (Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Tajfel and Turner, 1986) which are evident in language and discursive interactions as enactments of identities (Meân, 2001; Potter, 1996; Sacks, 1992).

Categorizations are fluid, strategic and motivated (Antaki, Condor, & Levine, 1996) and thus can take salient (but irrelevant) social and contextual features and make them relevant, such as gender or race. This means that categorizations can be based upon social features that are made significant to enhance psychological boundaries and construct difference. This process serves to promote particular forms of social action (Hopkins, Reicher, & Levine, 1997) and failure to collaborate in the construction of shared identities and meanings (Cameron, 1998; Gumperz, 1982a,b; Meân, 2001).

While the observed pattern of impact due to diversity in organizational contexts remains inconsistent (Williams & Meân, 2004), many detrimental consequences have been observed. In reviews of the organizational literature, these have been summarized as lack of trust, poorer working experiences, increased segregation and decreased commitment (Cunningham, 2004), as well as poor social cohesion, higher levels of conflict and poor communication (Mannix and Neale, 2005). However, we stress that it is through organizational member's everyday discursive practices that such categorizations are enacted for motivated and strategic purposes (Antaki et al., 1996; Gumperz, 1982a,b; Meân, 2001, Potter, 1996). Therefore, central members of the football category can routinely position women-only courses as justification for the saliency of gender and the exclusion of women from the coaching category via the standards discourse—that is, if women need “assistance” to access coach education, are they capable of achieving the

standard necessary for category membership? Consequently, affirmative action can be utilized to deny inequality and injustice in football coaching and defend the argument that women simply do not meet the necessary (male) standard, and that the status quo is the natural order. Indeed, affirmative action works to increase the saliency of gender as the defining category, increasing perceptions of difference irrespective of any real differences in football or coaching skills and knowledge (Gumperz, 1982b; Meân, 2001).

In keeping with the previous research, the analysis revealed the re/production of the standards discourse (multiple occasions in 17 of the 27 interviews); a key aspect of this being a construction of “otherness,” difference, and inferiority. This can be seen in the next two extracts.

Extract 1: Fred, male coach education participant

433 F: Well (.2) why would-why would you have to have a women’s course? (.1) That’s what

434 I would ask.

435BF: It kind of automatically says it’s lesser or:?=

436 F: =Yeah. (2) Why can they not do (.) the standard course? Why does there have to be

437 (.) a special course?

After Fred has questioned the purpose of separatist coach education (line 433), the researcher attempts (line 435) to suggest the competing explanations of separatism: that such policies mark women as inferior *or* that they are a necessary tool to promote inclusion. However, it is unfortunate that the first explanation given provides the opportunity for Fred to interrupt and claim support for his subsequent invoking of the standards discourse. The word “standard” (line 436) invokes direct comparison by implying that the alternative course available to women is different in content to open-entry coach education: the standard against which women must be measured. The selection of the word “special” (line 437) has connotations of *special needs* from the traditional educational context where abilities may be of a lower standard, or additional help

is required in order to achieve the same goals, again marking women as deviant from the normative standard. Simultaneously, the use of the term "they" (line 436) invokes a distinction between male and female coach education participants; dividing them into a "them" and "us" dichotomy and enabling Fred to other female participants from himself and his category membership. Clearly, the standards discourse has been utilized here to position women coaches as not doing what is required to meet "the standard," thereby framing women coaches as not doing the category "properly" (Foucault, 1970) and undermining their claim to membership. Consequently, Fred is able to focus on problematizing women-only courses rather than "standard" open-entry courses meaning that continued discriminatory practices are rendered invisible (Bradshaw, 1997).

A similar argument is evident in the following account where the speaker appears to suggest that women are demanding different treatment than men; a discourse that will be examined in the following section *Modern Sexism*. However, the same account is included here because the speaker also infers that a woman choosing to participate in separatist coach education must have a hidden deficiency or low ability that would prevent them from attaining the standard.

Extract 2: Simon, male coach educator

135BF: What about erm (.1) the argument that (.1) some women might not want to go on mixed

136 courses{()}

137 S: {()} Well again that is-that's a (.) you know that's basically sayin' 'Well I only want to go on

138 this [sarcastic] because of' and that's err (.) bein' elitist if you like. Not elitist but erm () That's

139 somebody (.) you would look at that person and be thinkin' 'Well why? There's gotta be

140 something underneath it (.) as to why she wouldn't go on that course.'

At first, Simon attempts to construct his account as gender-neutral by choosing "person" (line 139) rather than "woman," followed by the use of a gender-specific pronoun (line 140: "why she

wouldn't go on that course"), which suggests that he is aware of the controversy and is trying to hide it in neutral gender language. This account is also individualized (i.e. lines 139-140: "that person", "she"), meaning that these utterances serve to locate blame firmly on the individual. A woman's reluctance to participate in open-entry courses is explained by focusing on women themselves as deficient (line 140: "something underneath it") rather than alternative explanations that would problematize the organization and wider discourses surrounding women in sport. Simon employs active voicing (Potter, 1996) – a form of quoting - to enhance the facticity of this claim (line 139-140). Active voicing is emblematic, rather than actual quoting; thus, Simon is not claiming that he has literally witnessed this utterance but that he has witnessed many examples and that this is typical or emblematic of what people say. This functions to work up the truthfulness of his account, simultaneously working up his category entitlement and building both consensus and corroboration. Additionally, the use of "you know" (line 139) is further consensus building as it is an appeal to the listener; an inclusion to create shared positioning that makes the claim all the more reasonable and leaves the listener to disagree and be impolite and/or risk exclusion or remain silent and provide consensus.

The standards discourse is particularly potent and meaningful in the sports context as its objective ideology and focus on achieving desired outcomes connects with the central ideologies of sport. The underlying rationale of sport is that it is rule bound and standardized to ensure equivalency and "fair play"; that is, a level playing field. Rules must be followed to make competitive sport meaningful. Hence, any person who can be framed as not following the standardized rules across all contexts can be judged as participating unfairly and positioned outside the category. Therefore, the standards discourse functions very successfully as an acceptable way to express severe doubts over women's competence as coaches by framing the

separatist approach as unstandardized and thus unfair. Conversely, arguments that the field is currently tipped in favor of women succinctly suppress opposing arguments and potential scrutiny of the previous “field,” rendering previous and current discriminatory practices invisible (Bradshaw, 1997). Thus, the issue of whether the organization ever did enact a level-playing field is avoided. Indeed, the listener might assume that they once did as the implication is that *now* it is tipped in favor of one group (women).

The derogation of women in separatist coach education enables men to undermine women’s entitlement to the football category whilst simultaneously working up their own entitlement. Consequently, the issue is especially “tricky” (Sacks, 1992) to manage for women organizational members given their problematic membership of the football category, the salience of their gender category, and the gendered issue. For example, in the following account, Deborah discusses others’ opinions of women-only coach education courses.

Extract 3: Deborah, female Women and Girls’ Football Development Officer

217 BF: Erm so you-you’ve no personal experience of women only courses?

218 D: Erm no I haven’t.

219 BF: ‘Cause I was gonna ask like how-how do you think they would differ from (.) mixed

220 courses?

221 D: Err (.) I mean I’ve spoken to different people who’ve been on them erm (1)

222 and I’ve spoke to men who (.) their (.) opinion of them (.) and they reckon that

223 they’re not as credible purely because if it’s a bunch of women only it

224 obviously-how can it ever be the same level? Which err (.) I find it a bit cuttin’.

Deborah attempts to construct her account as gender neutral (just as Simon did in Extract 2) in her choice of the term “people” in line 221. This choice minimizes both the fact that the “people” on separatist courses are women and that she is constructing a clear binary between what women and men think. This is the safer strategic choice for Deborah who must simultaneously manage

her competing membership of organizational and gender categories. To be heard as critical of central category members (men) and aligned too closely to her gender category potentially risks her organizational category membership.

Deborah employs a form of active voicing to represent men who are critical of separatist coach education. In particular, her utterance "they reckon" (line 222) tells us that she is expressing the view of others. However, the choice of this colloquial term (rather than "say", "think" or "argue" for example) invokes negative connotations of other's opinions and strongly suggests that Deborah is separating herself from this opinion. Active voicing is typically used to work up category entitlement, build consensus and increase facticity (Potter, 1996), thus providing support for a speaker's account. But Deborah also employs this strategy to distance herself, and her specific word choices connote her disbelief and questioning of that view.

Deborah implies in line 224 that the basis of others' denigration of women-only coach education is simply because of the participants' gender (Line 224: "obviously – how can it ever be the same level?"), claiming that she has witnessed male category members invoking the same standards issues that were articulated by the male speakers previously. Additionally, the utterance chosen in line 223 ("a bunch of women only") is strategic in its vagueness. Providing specific detail can be utilized to work up category entitlement whereas vagueness (a "broad categorization of the event" (Potter, 1996, p.169) is a defensive rhetoric that may undermine entitlement. An interpretation of this account could be that Deborah's vagueness strategy is wholly serving to minimize the significance of, and thus undermine, these men's accounts of which Deborah is clearly critical. However, the combination of this strategy with active voicing suggests Deborah is utilizing vagueness to signify men's undermining of women's entitlement. The men in this account could use a more formal term for a group of participants on a separatist

course. However, this choice would work up the significance of the women's presence and thus their membership entitlement. Consequently, Deborah claims, through the language choices in her active voicing, that "many" men derogate separatist coach education and its participants.

Deborah attempts to refute this denigration, not only by demonstrating her personal opinion of these remarks (line 224: "I find it a bit cuttin'") but also by juxtaposing the men's opinions with those who have participated in separatist coach education (Line 221-2: "I mean I've spoken to different people who've been on them erm (1) and I've spoke to men"). It is the witness to an interaction who has greater entitlement to be considered knowledgeable (Sacks, 1992) and here Deborah implies that those who have participated on such courses have the greater entitlement to be treated as knowledgeable in comparison to men. This is illuminated particularly by her word emphasis in line 221: "I've spoken to different people who've been on them".

Thus, Deborah's phrasing can be seen as a form of active voicing in the ways that it serves the same functions; increasing her entitlement to knowledge and increasing her claim's facticity by inferring that she has been a witness to such utterances. The active voicing enables Deborah to make intertextual links to familiar, wider gendered discourses (that men are dismissive of women's sporting abilities) that further work up the facticity of her account (Meân, 2001) that, ultimately, men in football do not perceive women to belong to the category. Consequently, if a coach education course consists solely of non-members, it is deemed worthless and sub-standard, delegitimizing women's attempts to work up their category entitlement through women-only coach education.

Ultimately, the provision of women-only coach education courses is a challenge to the male dominance of football coaching. The coach education participants and coach educators in this

study who claimed injustice did not seem to make the necessary connection to the injustice that women have faced in English football throughout its history. These accounts demonstrate how separatist policies personalize women in sports (Hargeaves, 1994) and detract attention from the political need for affirmative action. Separatism is narrow in its vision as it conforms to ideas that deviations from male norms are inferior and, by separating women from men, maintains the social construction of their difference (Pronger, 1990). As such it enables a continuation of othering processes in sport and the re/production of the category as male.

Modern Sexism: Making Gender Neutral

There was evidence at this site that affirmative action practices, such as the promotion of women coaches in football, have been constructed by some as discrimination. Similar arguments were constructed in interviews in Wetherell and Potter's (1992) study of modern racist discourse or *new racism* where discussions struggled between fairness and favoritism and policies were not seen as equal opportunities, but unfair opportunities. Wetherell and Potter (1992, p.193) found "it was presented as only obvious that a rational society would want the best possible doctors, lawyers, politicians and teachers selected on their merits. Anything else could be characterized as acts of favoritism". Studies of modern constructions of racism can provide us with valuable insights into modern constructions of sexism and useful parallels can be drawn (Swim, Aikin, Hall and Hunter, 1995). Both modern discourses work to undermine claims for equality by restricting definitions of discriminatory practices and promoting skepticism about the extent of the problem (Swim, Mallet and Stangor, 2004). Therefore, measures to address inequality are resented and unsupported (Swim et al., 1995; Swim et al., 2004) rendering them as unnecessary and unjust, and diverting debate away from scrutiny of previous "naturalized" discriminatory

practices. In 15 of the 27 interviews conducted, there were multiple instances of modern sexism when affirmative action policies were viewed with suspicion and reframed as favoritism and unfair opportunities.

Denying both the gendered nature of experience and attempts to transform gender relations in sport serves to defend and maintain the existing structure of power. The derogation of women in separatist coach education enables men to undermine women's football category entitlement whilst simultaneously re/producing their own category entitlement. For example, in the extract below, talk about separatist coach education becomes a vehicle to demonstrate injustice as the speaker suggests his career has been negatively impacted by affirmative action policy. This also works to intertextually reference the standards discourse (Cohn, 2000) exemplified above. He works hard in this account to both discursively re/produce his category membership and defend the status quo by questioning the legitimacy of efforts to change power structures within women's football coaching.

Extract 4: Adam, male Sports Development Officer and coach educator

528 BF: So you don't necessarily agree with women only=

529 A: =No.

530 BF: Junior Team Awards. (.) Why not? What's=

531 A: =I think that's because I'm a male workin in women's football (.) I-for instance I- I'll give you

532 an example I-I went (.) when I got the erm when I got the scouting job with the FA

533 BF: Yeah

534 A: Erm an' I went to see [senior female FA employee] an I went there an' had an

535 interview with her an' she said what was I expectin an' she-an' she said 'What do you

536 want (.) out of this long term?' an' I said 'to coach (.) because that's what I'm good at an'

537 that's what I am a coach (.) I see the scoutin' as a step in to the international set up and I

538 want to coach.' (2) She said 'No chance.' (2) I said 'Why?' (1) She said 'Because we're

539 promotin' women only coaches for women footballers.'

540 BF: Right.

541 A: So I-an' I think that it should just be the best person for the job whether-whether they're
 542 female or male (.) we then went to watch two weeks later after I got the job I went to
 543 watch erm England v Holland under eighteens (.) now I looked at the England bench
 544 and the England-the England staff consisted of the England manager Hope Powell an'
 545 her assistant erm who was at the time erm conductin' her B license (.) she was trainin' for
 546 her B License. Now I'm not sure that somebody at that level should be in charge of an
 547 international team (.) just simply because they're female

548BF: Right. Yeah.

549A: D'you know what I mean? I looked at the Holland bench an' there was four men in charge
 550 (.) an' a female physio (.) now I'm not sayin that's right but what I'm sayin is that an' we
 551 look at other {countries }

552BF: {they were} more qualified for the job?

553 A: Yeah. They were seen to be the best people (.) for the job (.) so I'm not quite sure-I'm not
 554 quite sure that's right but they're not-they're not afraid to put male coaches in with female
 555 footballers.

Adam demonstrates a complex management of his own stake in his account. He defends his own failure to progress as a coach in women's international football by re-framing it as not due to his own limitations but to FA politics; and unfair politics at that. In lines 554 – 555 he constructs the FA as being afraid to promote male coaches, serving to formulate the stake of senior figures in the institution who are motivated to promote women at the expense of apparently more qualified men such as him. By invoking all male coaches as being victimized due to organizational policy the account is constructed as being less about him and more about a wider sense of fairness. Effectively it removes some of Adam's personal stake in the account (i.e. defending his failure to be employed) and implies that victimization of male coaches is widespread policy in English football. This perceived injustice is explicitly contrasted to the

policies of another country's FA (Holland) which are seen as fair and gender-neutral. By carefully managing this stake, Adam has discounted any other reason for his failure to progress in coaching women.

Issues of stake are extremely salient in this account as Adam could be aiming to gain credibility after his failure by blaming others. Coaching women is widely perceived as being second rate in comparison to coaching men (Knoppers, 1989). Therefore, by this logic, to be a failure at a second rate occupation must mean that Adam's coaching skills are vastly sub-standard; a straightforward interpretation that he must counter against. By managing his stake he can work up an account of himself as a knowledgeable and truthful victim of policy. For instance, Adam claims that he does not necessarily agree with the Holland women's team being coached entirely by men in line 550 ("Now I'm not sayin that's right.") and lines 553 – 554 ("so I'm not quite sure-I'm not quite sure that's right."). Here he demonstrates some, albeit limited, recognition of the wider issues surrounding the inclusion and progression of women coaches in football, defensively inoculating against possible accusations that he is wholly against women entering coaching or that he believes men always make better coaches than women.

Adam's stake management is also evident when he is asked why he does not agree with separatist coach education. He replies "I think that's because I'm a male workin' in women's football" (line 531) [emphasis in original], which is a form of stake confession (Potter, 1996). When stake is extremely salient, it may be difficult to ignore. But when the stake is confessed, this "works as a display of honesty and objectivity: the author is someone who can stand outside his interests" (Potter, 1996, p.130). Therefore, when asked why he finds separatist coach education problematic, he confesses his stake immediately to work up the truthfulness of his account by constructing his honesty and objectivity. Thus, when he later implies that he has been

witness to bias against men in women's football, his entitlement to that knowledge has been worked up successfully. Adam's account is not just about *his* victimization but works as a real-life example of *all* men's victimization in this context. Interestingly, this example of stake confession simultaneously works as stake inoculation in that it enables Adam to defensively compare his version to other men's versions and minimize his own stake in the account.

Adam works hard to enhance his account's facticity, which is at odds with the FA's publicly stated policies. In lines 531-532 ("for instance I-I'll give you an example") he successfully constructs his entitlement to be knowledgeable in this context by working up his category entitlement as it emphasizes that he was a witness to the following account of unfair treatment and implies that the account is one of many such occurrences. Adam later employs active voicing in his account of a conversation with a senior female FA employee (lines 535-539). The active voicing of a generalized conversation works up an account's facticity, as discussed in the analysis of extract 3, and invokes Adam as a witness in order to give special credence to his account. This is particularly effective here as the conversation is ordered in a detailed narrative which makes a construction of events believable (White, 1978) because they appear to be "well-formed", "coherent" and, ultimately, correct (Potter, 1996, p.170).

Extrematization is employed by Adam a number of times to warrant his claims. In line 546 ("I'm not sure that somebody at that level should be in charge") Adam has extrematized the woman's authority by claiming that she is "in charge." The woman, as he states in line 545, is not in charge of the England women's team; she is Hope Powell's assistant. Additionally, his claim of the inappropriateness of the assistant's authority is extrematized and, subsequently, strengthened by his emphasis on the phrase "that level". His claim is warranted further by extrematization in lines 550 – 555 when he compares Holland's approach to employing coaches

for their women's international team to the English FA's approach. Adam claims that the Dutch FA employ "the best people"(line 553), whilst the English FA are "afraid"(line 554) to employ male coaches. The argument that other organizations have chosen the best coaches available (lines 541-542 and 553), regardless of gender, implicitly suggests that the FA deliberately employ sub-standard coaches. This account would, of course, be impossible for the FA to warrant and is a form of extrematization at odds with the coaching history of English women's international football as *all* past England Women's coaches have been male (see Lopez, 1997, for a detailed history of the English Women's team). Adam's claim that the FA are "afraid" (line 554) to employ male coaches undermines the alternative construction that two female coaches (Powell and her assistant) are a small minority compared to the long history of male coaches in charge of the England Women's team. However, it must be acknowledged that the employment of a relatively under-qualified coach at the assistant international level is a problem that leaves senior women coaches open to rhetorical attack and could also be reflective of the poor value placed on the England Women's team who have been historically neglected by the FA in comparison to international women's teams in the US, Norway and Italy (Lopez, 1997).

Even though Adam is talking about Powell's assistant as being under-qualified and, consequently, not good enough to be involved in the England Women team's coaching, the implication goes beyond the assistant to imply that Powell is not good enough as she is not properly selecting her colleagues. An alternative construction could be that these women are "the best people for the job," but this is not what Adam is saying. Using the Dutch bench as an example constructs a clear dichotomy that clearly suggests that those on the England bench were an inappropriate choice and could suggest that men are better coaches. However, Adam is careful not to say this explicitly, and his word choice is illuminating in line 553: "They were seen to be

the best people." The word "people" is gender-neutral and masks the fact that all the people on the Dutch bench were male.

Adam does not make clear *who* it is who saw the male Dutch coaches as the "best people" and does not warrant this claimed knowledge. How does he know that these coaches were the best people for the position? It must also be questioned why one could not look at the England bench and assume the same. Adam avoids addressing the issue that the Dutch coaches may have been chosen primarily because they are male and thus, it could be argued, has made these assumptions because the implicit standard is male. By claiming that affirmative action (employing women coaches for women footballers) is discriminatory, men and women are constructed as interchangeable in status and power; inferring that coaches should, and do, progress successfully in accordance with their abilities. This surface perspective of power constructs it as a positive, neutral phenomenon which is equally available to all (Bradshaw, 1997). Adam's assumptions pay no attention to, and therefore undermine, the differences in men and women's opportunities and choices in English football. This modern sexist discourse only serves to mask the gendered nature of experience (Riley, 2002) and render the fierce masculinity that has resisted the entry of women (Bryson, 1987; Meân, 2001) as neutral.

A common argument was that separatist coach education is discriminatory as it bars men from participating and the following extracts demonstrate this stance, particularly in their word selection. The following account was discussed previously (Extract 2) but is also included here as the analysis reveals the speaker's simultaneous application of modern sexism alongside invocation of the standards discourse identified earlier, demonstrating the intertextual and symbiotic nature of these discourses.

Repeated Extract 2: Simon, male coach educator

135BF: What about erm (.1) the argument that (.1) some women might not want to go on mixed

136 courses { () }

137S: { () } Well again that is-that's a (.) you know that's basically sayin' 'Well I only want to go on

138 this [sarcastic] because of' and that's err (.) bein' elitist if you like. Not elitist but erm (.) That's

139 somebody (.) you would look at that person and be thinkin' 'Well why? There's gotta be

140 something underneath it (.) as to why she wouldn't go on that course.'

The term "elitist" refers to deliberate selectiveness and looking for the best of a group. Simon, with sarcastic emphasis in his active voicing, appears disgruntled in his claim that women coaches believe they deserve special treatment. Some softening utterances are presented (i.e. line 138: "if you like. Not elitist but erm") which help to avoid him being seen as overtly sexist.

Softeners are a common feature of modern discourses of prejudice as there is a concern within such accounts not to be heard as prejudiced, leading to disclaimers and softeners framed within a liberal and egalitarian rhetoric (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Gough, 1998; Riley, 2002). However, the word choice of "elitist" is also problematic for Simon as it could be interpreted as meaning that women participating in separatist coach education are good, given the connotation that the elite are the best. Therefore, Simon's self-correction and withdrawal of this description in line 138 could also have served to avoid the suggestion that women coaches are particularly good at their occupation. Rather, women coaches are framed as benefiting from policy that privileges them at the expense of men, whose historic and continuing privilege at this site is minimized.

A similar argument is presented in the following extract.

Extract 5: Fred, male coach education participant

409 F: I-it's saying that erm (.) well why-why do we have to segregate the men from the

410 women? It's sexist in the fact that no men are allowed there

The language choice of the term "sexist" (line 410) is particularly significant as, for example, the word "unfair" could have easily been used. However, the word "sexist" is most commonly used to refer to men's subordination of women and has strong connotations. Yet Fred has strategically

used the same term to work up his claim that it is *men* who are being oppressed in this context. Male organizational members may resent and distrust change and, subsequently, reframe change intended to promote gender equity as a strategic bias against men (Connell, 2006), serving to negate and undermine women's claims for fairer treatment. The alternative that is being implicitly offered is to maintain the status quo as the best people will naturally succeed. Of course, this alternative does not recognize the oppressive context that female coaches have faced at this site as it serves to mask the gendered experience. Because women coaches were never explicitly barred by any rules or policies, the contemporary presence of such a barrier to men enables Fred to minimize the significance of past injustice whilst emphasizing the present, making similar appeals to fairness and standardization as were evident previously.

Several accounts which demonstrated a distrust of separatist coach education were based on a basic misunderstanding of their function, which could have very real effects on women's experience of coach education. Here we will return to Adam's interview where he demonstrates a lack of understanding and awareness of women's oppression in sport.

Extract 6: Adam, male sports development officer and coach educator

626BF: Can I-do you (.1) do you think that women's only courses are (.) necessary or (.) [always
 627A: [I don't
 628 think they're always (.) I don't think they're necessary. I don't think it's necessary to sort of
 629 make it very insular (.) I think it's y'know I-I think it's much better to throw it-to-to throw it
 630 wide open and let people-an' let people sort of share various experiences.

The language choice of the term "insular" (line 629) is utilized for its connotations of closed doors; opportunities that are available to some and not to others (in this context, men). Adam shows no recognition of the organization's historic insularity and exclusion of women and the need to actively combat problems arising from this as entrance into the category of English

football has never been "wide open" (line 630). Like Fred previously, the alternative that Adam appears to be offering is that by sharing "various experiences" (line 630) the best people will naturally succeed. Given his position as a sports development employee with responsibility for the advancement of sporting education and opportunities, it is particularly troubling that Adam appears to be so naïve about the functions of coach education within a highly gendered site. Yet alternatively, the argument can be made that misunderstandings of separatist coach education are actually strategic, rather than naïve. Misunderstandings in a gendered context can be motivated to limit the power of alternative explanations that would threaten male power (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Thus, misunderstandings of separatism at this organizational site enable men to reframe them as unnecessary and unjust.

The reframing of women-only coach education was demonstrated again later in Adam's interview.

Extract 7: Adam, male sports development officer and coach educator

598 A: We did the first one and we did-it was more or less a womens only course. We then
 599 opened it out to a couple o' people that were involved with the girls league that were
 600 male.

Adam's discursive efforts to work up the legitimacy of his actions are particularly evident in his word choice in line 599: "opened it out to a couple o' people." This choice is illuminating in that he does not choose to say "men" but "people," the safer strategic choice as it is gender-neutralizing, minimizing the fact that these "people" were men participating in a course intended for women. The implication is that even though some men attended this women-only coach education course, its purpose had still been served as the men were involved in girls' football. Changing the focus of this particular course onto the course content, rather than the experiences of the attendees, strategically serves to further separate out types of football and serves to other

women as players and exclude them from the main category. Women-only coach education has been framed as being not about football *per se*, but *women's* football; distinguishing it as a marked form and further reflecting his position that the knowledge and skills required for coaching football fundamentally differ according to the "gender" of the game. Not only does this reframing miss the point about what women-only forums provide and have serious consequences for the coach education experiences of female attendees, but it also renders them redundant.

Men often position themselves as the oppressed sex when discussing gender equality (Gough, 1998) and, indeed, there are no rules excluding women because of their gender from any form of FA coach education as there are for men. The symmetry of gender based groups allows men to present the non-existence of an official men's group as something that is missing and, therefore, unjust (Riley, 2002). This is also a form of extrematization in that these men are taking this point to an extreme position in order to further their argument which fails to recognize that existing masculinized sporting discourses exclude women with great ease, rendering any such actual legislation frivolous. The gendered discourses surrounding coach education mean that open-entry courses *are* male courses for all intents and purposes. Yet, these men render the history of, and continuing commonality of, male-only courses as symbolically invisible; reflecting their investment in protecting the category (Maingueneau, 1999) and suppressing alternative versions that would threaten entitlement. By minimizing this dominance any dissenting voices that call for continued change are trivialized, as these accounts are presented as unjustified and not credible (Riley, 2002). Simultaneously, in silencing the need for change, existing practices which discriminate against and oppress women in football are justified and the onus is put on the women coaches to adjust; to tolerate open-entry courses where they are likely to be subject to chauvinism, isolation and subordination.

Indeed, it is ironic that only 1 of the 37 participants on the two courses observed was female and no women-only coach education courses were scheduled at Scullam CFA throughout the 14 month period of data collection. This was apparently due to a lack of interest shown by women in the region which explains women's near-absence at this organizational site not as a consequence of the category's central discourses but of women's inherent traits and qualities. Such an explanation is troubling as it may indicate to some that the inclusion and encouragement of women in coach education is a redundant policy. Yet in contrast, it could be argued that this lack of interest signifies how women have learnt not to see sport and sport leadership as a feasible, significant aspect of their futures. Furthermore, the lack-of-interest argument draws parallels with the *blaming-the-victim* process which represents problems in ways that find fault in the least powerful groups (Sage, 1987). Indeed, explaining women coaches' non-engagement with separatist provision as a result of their own traits and qualities firmly locates the solution to their unequal status in the football category within the women themselves. This individual approach (Knoppers, 1992) enables the FA to put the onus of change onto the less powerful minority who are led to believe that the problem "lies in their own psychology" (Kanter, 1977, p.261). Therefore, it is women who are expected to learn how to behave in accordance with normative (i.e. male) practices (Knoppers, 1987), and adapt to discursive practices that oppress them, whilst the FA's accountability for women's minority status in football coaching is diminished. In effect, the organization can argue it is actively attempting to facilitate the entry of women and therefore cannot be blamed for the failure of women to take up the opportunity; a position which renders invisible the underlying institutionalized nature of problem. Certainly, within the highly masculinized site of English football, it is far easier to blame women than it is

to “take on the male power elite” (Staurowsky, 1996, p.206); easier as it avoids meaningful ideological and structural change (Sage, 1987).

Ultimately, our disappointment at the lack of opportunity to directly observe separatist provision did not prove to be a severe obstacle to the study. All social interactions are gendered as gender is the fundamental social interaction (West & Fenstermaker, 1993) and *all* members of society do gender (Garcia, 2003). Consequently, there was an abundance of evidence available in this study to explore how women-only coach education courses are perceived and positioned in an institution dominated by discourses of masculinity.

Conclusion

Affirmative action policies in sport (separatist coach education or particular recruitment policies) are complex and problematic. They can provide women with the resources and opportunities to participate in a setting free from male intimidation and harassment. However, in the wider context, separatist policies can hinder gender equity as they re/produce difference. In the site studied, separatist policy was strategically reframed by dominant organizational members to support the prevailing male hegemony and render change as both unjust and unnecessary.

This study has demonstrated how males within the football category (coach educators, development officers, coach education participants) construct the FA as deliberately encouraging below standard female coaches in order to comply with publicly stated policies of promoting gender equity. This invoking of the standards discourse employs an apparently objective, neutral ideology in order to imply the inferiority of oppressed groups (Cohn, 2000). However, this is achieved without appearing to be overtly oppressive as these constructions were often framed within a new sexism discourse, drawing parallels with discourses of new racism (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This was evidenced by speakers’ anxiety not to be heard as sexist, often by a

complex management of stake. Yet, simultaneously speakers worked to mask the gendered nature of sporting experience by neutralizing the gendered construction of their accounts, thus rendering affirmative action policies as unjust and illegitimate. Equally, these served to frame current practices and the privileging of women as key issues, forefronting them in a manner that distracts and suppresses attention from the previous privileging of maleness. Male dominance is rendered symbolically invisible and power is entrenched within the prevailing meanings of the category (Foucault, 1970) which in turn serve to “promote particular forms of social action over others” (Hopkins, et al., 1997, p. 325).

The denial of women’s oppression in this context and the invoking of ideas around women’s inferior abilities serve to defend and maintain the hegemonic masculinity of football coaching as the natural and correct order. Men and the dominant organization in English football (the FA) are presented as unaccountable for women’s subordinate positioning in football coaching. Rather, the men at Scullam CFA are reclaiming the notion of oppression to suggest that it is *men*, in this context, who are being victimized and implicitly offering the alternative that the status quo should be maintained. This option is the most attractive for men in the football category as they appear to demonstrate a fear of change within an institution that, whilst once belonging to them, is beginning to change and open its doors to women. This is significant because the previous absence of women served to define the institution and its attendant identities, categories, and definitions. In constructing the separatist approach of women-only coach education as illegitimate injustice, the speakers neither acknowledged the exclusion that women in football have faced throughout its history and nor that in some organizational contexts, in order to achieve equality, differential treatment is necessary (Scott, 1988). Furthermore, there was evidence of a lack of awareness as to the extent of change still necessary. Quantitative

change, however successful, is an inadequate solution to gendered oppression in sport if the discursive power remains with men, enabling male organizational members to routinely define and re/produce the identities and discourses central to their investment in the category.

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