

# Education and Elite Soccer: An Examination of the Female Experience in Norway and Canada

*A Qualitative Study of Elite Female Soccer Players in Norway and Canada*

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*For my Dad who instilled in me the drive to strive for excellence both on the soccer field and in the classroom, and my Mum for providing the inspiration, that no matter the obstacle, to always persevere.*

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# Abstract

Women's soccer has expanded in the last 30 years, from purely amateur to increasingly professional. The emergence of paid women's leagues throughout the world, symbolizes this growth, in addition to the exposure of the Women's World Cup (WWC), U20 and U17 WWC.

This study was undertaken in order to examine the question: What is the experience of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players in combining soccer with education?

The theory and concepts of Pierre Bourdieu were utilized as the lens in which to examine the findings of this research. These include concepts related to field, habitus and the ability to acquire and convert capital from time spent as elite female players, into life and career post-soccer.

Twenty women who were all elite female soccer players in high school were interviewed for the study, ten from Norway and ten from Canada, who were between the ages of 24 and 32. Of the ten from each nation, five were those that reached the highest level of play in their respective countries, and five who did not. The method of research conducted was the life history interview method.

Results showed that the majority of those that were elite female players in high school in Canada went on to finish a university degree in 4-5 years. This is because the soccer structure in North America ties a university education and elite level soccer inherently together. All the elite level Norwegian players did not finish their university degrees in a standard three to four years, with their soccer commitments cited as the main reason. However, Norwegians were better able to continue to play soccer at an elite level, after they were finished university and could balance a career, while Canadians had to make a choice between career and soccer as soon as they were finished with their bachelor degree.

Looking at the results through the lens of Bourdieu, besides educational capital, there was very little ability to convert capital acquired from being an elite female player into skills required for a career post-soccer. These findings concur with past research which has shown very limited opportunities for females in soccer, whether in coaching or administration, once they are done with their own on-field careers. Thus women in both countries need to be

conscientious in building up skills and options for their career, once they have retired from the sport.







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I would also like to thank my advisor Kristin Walseth. She was truly exceptional and inspirational, and I feel incredibly lucky to have had her guiding me through this often, stressful process. Her quick turnaround times with comments, her genuine interest in my topic and ability to connect me with relevant people and literature, and just her overall positive energy, inspired me to give my best to this project. I could not have done this without her help and guidance, so Kristin, thank you!

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# 1. Introduction

Women have fought for equality in society for numerous years on many different playing fields worldwide. The acquisition of educational capital, has been hailed as one important tool for women in the pursuit of equality, as education is widely perceived as an indicator of the status of women and more importantly, as a method to empower females (Jayaweera, 1997).

In addition to empowerment via education, sports are another recognized tool for women to pursue equality in society and encroach upon a traditionally male-dominated arena. A reason for this could be that athletics has been a traditionally male domain and, therefore challenging this masculine realm, would be in turn questioning the supporting ideology that legitimizes the subordination of women (Theberge, 1987).

In examining sport as a tool for acquiring capital and thus empowering women, I have chosen to examine soccer, otherwise known outside North America as “football”, as it is widely recognized as the world’s most popular global game for females. In the last global census by the world governing body, FIFA, it was found that over twenty-six million women throughout the world are registered to play (Schneider, 2007).

I have chosen to compare Norway and Canada for the comparative aspect of this study. Both countries have had impressive results in world competitions over the last ten years, and for women, in both countries, soccer is listed as that sport which has the most female participants. Furthermore, I have direct personal knowledge of both systems both educationally and from a soccer perspective.

I grew up in Vancouver, Canada, and followed the elite player pathway through high school, culminating with playing NCAA soccer at Yale University while receiving my bachelor’s degree. I was subsequently able to use an extra year because of injury to attend the University of Connecticut on a full scholarship, receiving a Masters Degree, while representing the school on the varsity team. I subsequently attended training camps with the full Canadian National Team, as well as playing in the W League, which is the top league in Canada for

women in both Ottawa (2007-2008) and Vancouver (2002, 2005 and 2006). Additionally, for the last three years I have organized a tournament in my hometown for elite female high school players who wish to play university soccer, and therefore have current knowledge of the Canadian soccer system, as it pertains to girls and women.

On the other hand, I have lived in Norway for the last three years playing in the Norwegian Toppserien. I have had Norwegian teammates who were high school students as well as those that were university students and/or balancing a job. I have had approximately eight teammates on the different teams that I have played on who were on the full Norwegian National Team, and many who played at one time for the youth National Teams. I therefore, have witnessed my Norwegian teammates juggling both an elite athletic career with commitments in either school or work.

What drew me to compare the education systems of Norway and Canada was my extreme envy once I heard of the opportunities that my teammates from my Toppserien teams had, to combine their high school education with soccer. Growing up as a die-hard player, with little proper coaching, I looked at the level of coaching that these players received in high school in Norway, and it sounded like my version of soccer heaven. As both Canada and Norway are both top ten in the FIFA rankings ([www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)), share cold, winter temperatures for most of the year, as well as geographical challenges in assembling players for national team camps, they seemed like two countries that would provide an interesting comparison.

Subsequently, I will be drawing on a theoretical framework provided by Pierre Bourdieu, which centers on concepts of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1984), in order to dissect the information that was garnered in my research. Bourdieu's framework was chosen as it gave a good starting point to examine and compare the different kinds of capital acquired both through sport and education. Through the lens of Bourdieu I hope to acquire more knowledge of how elite soccer affects education and the production of capital in both Norway and Canada.



## 1.1. Research Question

*What is the experience of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players in combining soccer with education/career?*

## 1.2. Soccer Specific Terminology: Norway and Canada

**Athlete Assistance Program (AAP):** Tax-free money given by the Canadian government to Canadian National Team athletes in order to support their athletic endeavors. There are three tiers to the system based on seniority and athletic ranking, with the lowest “developmental” card, providing Canadian athletes with \$10,600 per year, and for the top ranked athletes, up to \$18,000 tax free per year. Players who receive this funding are referred to as “carded athletes”.

**Bylaw 12:** In the NCAA, a statute that stipulates that any athlete who plays in the US College Athletics system, must be defined as an amateur, not paid in any way for their participation in any sport. Although aimed more towards male sports such as basketball and football, the ramifications for women’s soccer are that any league that has NCAA players (such as W League or WPSL), are not allowed to pay players. This Bylaw has been cited as problematic for sports such as women’s soccer, and their opportunities for professional growth in North America.

**Carded Athletes:** The term used to describe Canadian elite athletes that receive funding from the government to support their athletic endeavors, as part of the AAP program.

**Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (C C A A):** The association for regulating inter-collegiate sport competition in Canada.

**Canadian Interuniversity Sport (C I S):** The association for regulating inter-university sport competition in Canada.

**Canadian Soccer Association (C S A):** The governing body for Canadian soccer. In charge of all of the Canadian national soccer teams, from the senior teams right through to the youth levels, for males and females.

**College/University:** Post-high school educational institutions. Both words are used interchangeably in the United States. In Canada, universities connote institutions that offer four-year degrees, while colleges are two-year programs that lead into universities. Both offer varsity athletics.

**College Showcase Tournaments:** With the existence of university scholarships, in North America at various points in the year, college showcase tournaments operate, which draw

university coaches from across the continent who scout and recruit players to their respective universities.

**Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA):** The world governing body of men's and women's soccer, that in addition to organizing the Women's World Cup, also organizes the U20 and U17 versions of the event.

**Jenteløftet:** Was an initiative taken on by the NFF in 2008 in order to promote and grow women's soccer, and in particular the Toppserien. It was initially started as a five-year commitment by the NFF, but due to economic problems in the NFF has been downgraded significantly, from the original financial commitment provided.

**National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA):** The organization that is in charge of managing and regulating university sports in the United States. The NCAA is divided into three divisions, Division 1, Division 2 and Division 3. Division placement is based on the size of each athletics department as well as funds provided to the athletic program. In Division 1 and 2, there is money for student-athletes to receive athletic scholarships, which can cover costs of tuition, room and board and books. There are no athletic scholarships in Division 3. Every year the NCAA regulates a national tournament to name a national champion in every division in each sport.

**National Training Centre (NTC):** An invite only group of training for the top high school players in Canada, which feeds players to the national youth teams. There are 5 NTC's: NTC-British Columbia, NTC-Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), NTC-Ontario, NTC-Quebec and NTC-Maritimes (for the 4 most eastern Canadian provinces). In some provinces, players have to travel long distances in order to be a part of the NTC, or in provinces such as Quebec, the girls must tailor their educational track, and attend certain sports focused high schools, in order to be a part of the NTC.

**Norges Fotballforbund (NFF):** The governing body for Norwegian soccer. In charge of all of the Norwegian national soccer teams, from the senior teams right through to the youth levels, for males and females.

**Norges Idrettshoegskole (NIH):** NIH is a sports university in Oslo that many top female soccer players attend, as much of the content is sports related, and complements commitments to elite sport training well.

**Red-Shirting:** In the NCAA, every college athlete receives five years to complete four years of athletic play. If an athlete misses a year of play, this is referred to a “red-shirt year”. Red-shirts are given by schools that have first year players that they do not believe are ready for the rigors of college soccer, or if an injury occurs early enough in the season, the athlete is able to “red-shirt” the year.

**Title IX:** Legislation in 1972 that called for any educational institution that received governmental support, by law, to have gender equal distribution of funds. Title IX subsequently was cited as having a positive effect in the number of girls that became involved in high school and university sports.

**Toppserien:** The top level for women’s soccer in Norway, with Division 1, 2 and 3, below. The Toppserien is composed of 12 teams from around Norway, with a relegation/promotion system, that allows the top two teams from Division 1 to move up to the Toppserien at the end of the year, and the bottom two from the Toppserien be relegated. The league lasts from April to November and many players within the league receive some kind of compensation for their play. The minimum age for Toppserien soccer is 15.

**Varsity Athletes:** Term used to describe athletes that play on university teams in the US and Canada that are fully funded by the university, and compete against other universities in intercollegiate competition.

**Women’s Professional Soccer (WPS):** A professional league started in the United States in 2008 that has teams in major cities across the country. The league coins itself as the top league in the world for women, providing salaries for all players, and having many top international players in addition to US National Team members on its teams’ rosters. The league runs from March to August. The WPS is the second attempt at professional soccer for women in the US, following the first professional league named the “WUSA,” that collapsed after their third season in 2003 due to overspending. The WPS still lies on precarious financial ground and was recently saved from collapse, when an investor stepped in to save a team, which left the league at six teams. 2011 marks the league’s third season.

**WPSL/W-League:** Two separate semi-professional leagues that operate between May and July across Canada and the US. Both leagues are amateur, and only cover basic costs of operating the team, and for the most part do not offer player salaries.

## 2. Background

The following section is somewhat long, yet necessary, in order to understand the background and components that make up both the soccer systems and educational models of Norway and Canada. In addition to necessary information provided to the reader in order to understand the pathway and choices that elite female players from both countries are subjected to, an examination of relevant history and previous research will be presented in order to paint a complete picture.

### 2.1. History of Women's Soccer on the World Stage

The first recorded games of women's soccer were recorded by a team of women called the Dick Kerr Ladies, who used to draw large crowds in the 1920's in Britain, where they were based. They were formed during World War I to raise money for charity, were unbeatable and highly popular, and would attract massive crowds, such as one that was upwards of 53,000 who came to Goodison Park in Liverpool on Boxing Day, 1920 (Hall, 2003).

Subsequently, the male dominated English Football Association (The FA) resented their popularity. Using the excuse that not all the women's gate receipts were going to charity as they had said they were, they took action to do what they felt was necessary to protect the men's game. Subsequently they did so by banning women from playing on FA affiliated fields throughout Britain. This action essentially took away a place for these women to play (Hall, 2003).

Not only were women banned from the field of play because of where money was supposedly being spent, but also the issue was raised about the safety and appropriateness of women being engaged in sport. At this time there was little question, that sports were the natural domain of men, and to be good at sport was an essentially masculine quality. Symbolically men were tied with spheres outside of the home, such as work and sport. Women on the other hand, were expected to occupy roles of reproduction and nurture, taking care of their position within the home (Hargreaves, 1994). Women's presence on the soccer field contradicted these gender roles.

Subsequently through the late 1960's and early 1970's, historical records show that around the world, including in both Norway and Canada, women's soccer again began to gain momentum. Both countries share similar time frames in the development of the women's

games in their countries, while also although half a world apart, share political and social barriers to growth as well (Hong and Mangan, 2004).

A small victory to those that had fought through the years for the recognizance of the sport on the worldwide stage came about when women's soccer was included in the 1996 Olympics. In the gold medal game, the US defeated China, in front of a hometown crowd in Atlanta, Georgia (Scranton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel, 1999).

## Canada

Canadian women's soccer began gaining momentum in the late 1960's with the formation of the Canadian Minor Soccer Association, as a response to the enormous amount of popularity of soccer for youth. Eventually girls made it clear that they wanted to play too, and by the early 1970's female youth teams had begun to form as well across the nation (Hall, 2003).

It wasn't until 1986 that the Canadian women's national team was launched. At that time, the women that were chosen to play had to pay for expenses such as their own cleats and even plane tickets to international matches and training camps that were often few and far between (Brodsgaard and Mackin, 2005). The program peaked in 2003 at the World Cup when the women won three matches and finished an impressive fourth, leading Sweden with fifteen minutes to play in their semi-final, before falling to a heartbreaking 2-1 defeat. This accomplishment was even more impressive as the women had failed to qualify in the inaugural event in 1991, and exited after the first round in 1995 and 1999 (Hall, 2003, McGhee, 2008).

This dramatic turnaround in the Canadian national team can be traced to the 1999 World Cup, which saw the US play in front of over 90,000 screaming fans in the final at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. Subsequently, women's soccer fever found its way its way north of the border into Canada, and for the first time in the program's history, the Canadian women's national team was afforded a full time head coach, in the form of Even Pellerud, a Norwegian who had led Norway's women to a gold medal at the 1995 World Cup. Results came swiftly for Canada, as in 2000, the women recorded their first ever win over the US, 3-1 in Columbus, Ohio, and in 2002, the U19 Canadian Women's Team fell to the US, in the U19 World Cup Final, in front of close to 50,000 fans in Edmonton, Canada's Commonwealth Stadium (Hall, 2003).

Since that time, opportunities in soccer for both girls and women in Canada have increased, in congruence with the seriousness of commitment required of younger players as parents see opportunities that did not exist in the past. In 2002, immediately after the influential U19 World Cup, there were 307, 258 girls registered to play soccer in Canada which represented 39% of the total number of players, for both male and female (Hall, 2003). With youth national teams now in existence, along with a U17 and U20 World Cup for girls, female players now train at a level that has never been seen before, as parents pour money into private academies and trips to tournaments across North America and abroad.

## Norway

As in other countries, the journey for women's soccer in Norway wound its way from exhibition matches, a ban by the game's authorities and a subsequent battle for acceptance by the national soccer association, before widespread popularity and acceptance was achieved (Skogvang, 2007).

The acceptance of women's soccer in Norwegian society proceeded simultaneously with developments in society to give women more rights and opportunities, with the Gender Equality Council established in 1972 and the Gender Equality Act in 1979. Having a law in existence provided a legal entity in which to force gender equality in Norway. The Nordic philosophy states that opportunity is not enough; instead a concerted effort is necessary in order to promote the status of women (Skogvang, 2007).

Subsequently, women began playing soccer again in the 1970's around the same time that these acts were falling into place. However, Norwegian women were still battling for inclusion into the NFF (Norwegian Football Federation), while fighting notions such as playing football made women more masculine, it encouraged lesbianism, and the worry that if the NFF formally accepted women, that it would make soccer a "frøkensport", a sport for wimps (Goksøyr and Olstad, 2002). Målfrid Kuvås was an instrumental figure in orchestrating the fight for women's soccer in Norway through the 60's and 70's, as she organized a women's match between Amazon Grimstad and BUL-Oslo in 1970, which was unheard of at the time. Because of her efforts, she was the first woman to be awarded the NFA's Order of Merit Gold at the NFA anniversary congress in 2002 (Skogvang, 2007).

Finally in 1976, women's soccer was accepted under the control of the NFF, and by 1982, the first UEFA women's championship came into existence, with Norway failing to make the

semi-finals of the 1984 event. In the next championships from 1984-1987, Norway hosted and won the tournament, and marked the emergence of a golden period of achievement for Norwegian women's football (Fasting, 2003).

The European success of 1987 was built upon a large number of women's soccer clubs and by 1988 the number of female teams in Norway had numbered 2496 (Skogvang, 2007). Norway's success on the European stage continued with 2<sup>nd</sup> place finishes to Germany in 1989 and 1991, before they triumphed once again in 1993 (Fasting, 2003). Norway put an impressive stamp on the world stage with a gold medal performance in the 1995 World Cup in Sweden (with a 23-1 goal difference throughout the tournament) and an Olympic gold medal performance in 2000 (Fasting, 2003).

In 2008 in Norway, there were 82,000 girls nineteen or younger registered to play soccer in Norway, as opposed to 190,000 males (Skille, 2008).

## 2.2 Education: Comparative Histories and Systems

### Canada

#### A. Kindergarten-Grade 12

Canada with their traditional insistence on the collective concerns of peace, good government and general order, have placed a very heavy importance on good schooling as it is seen as having a direct impact on society (Jones, 1997). Perhaps because of this, more public funds are spent on school systems in Canada, than by any other country. 3.6 percent of the Canadian GDP (in 2002) was earmarked for education (\$6,482 per student), which no doubt contributes to a country-wide literacy level of 99% (<http://estat.statcan.gc.ca>).

The Canadian education system grew collectively in different areas through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the West, especially the province of British Columbia, there was a high prevalence of students with Asian backgrounds, in Ontario (Canada's largest province), the Irish immigrant community played a large role in the development of the school system, while in Quebec, the influence of the Catholic Church and francophone culture played a predominant role in shaping the schooling culture. Although at first, francophones did not place a high degree of importance on school, eventually by the early 1960's, Quebec caught



up with the rest of Canada in placing a great deal of focus on academics, as they saw the large immigrant community tend to slide more towards anglophone education and assimilation because of the discrepancy between the two educational systems (Gidney and Miller, 1990).

Religion and language have subsequently played a large role in the development of the Canadian school system. There has been a great deal of debate between the role of religion in taxpayer schools, as well as the adoption of French language instruction, both inside and outside of Quebec (Gidney and Miller, 1990).

Currently the policy differs throughout Canada in terms of the place of religion within tax-funded schools, with provinces such as British Columbia opting for only public schools to receive full tax payer support. In Ontario because of the historical implications of their schooling system being rooted in the Catholic Church, Catholic schools, in addition to public schools fall under the tax-payer funded domain. Across Canada, it is mandated that those students that are in English speaking schools, must take the French language up until their second to last year of high school, in order to preserve this important part of Canadian history and traditional French culture (<http://canada.gc.ca>).

Perhaps because of this differing history and settlement of different cultures throughout the country, there is not a standardized method in terms of how the schooling system is organized and why each province and territory mandates its individual education systems. It is mandatory for students to attend school until they are 16, and for the most part, school systems divide themselves up by having elementary school (kindergarten-grade 7) and then high school (grade 8-12), otherwise breaking up elementary and high school with a middle school (often for grades 6-8 or 7-9). Currently there are three streams of schools that students can enter in Canada; public (tax-payer fully funded), Catholic (differs province to province in terms of government funding) and private (schools that are on their own and the user pays the full cost) (<http://canada.gc.ca>).

Within all these streams of schooling, there is a basic curriculum that must be followed that is constant through the different types of schools, and standardized Provincial Exams that must be passed, in order to receive a certificate of graduation from the Canadian government (<http://canada.gc.ca>).

For the most part, all Canadian high schools offer extracurricular sports teams that play against other high schools, which play an important component of the school's social fabric.

High schools in Canada have a plethora of extracurricular options, such as volleyball, basketball, cross-country, snowboarding, mountain biking and gymnastics amongst many others. Coaches for high school sports are often teachers at the school.

## B. University

In Canada, the higher education system is regulated by individual provinces and territories as opposed to the federal government. As in Norway, there are both public and private options and liberal arts options, as well as the opportunity to attend more specialized technical schools. In Canada there are basic grade requirements for admission that are strictest at the public level. For the most part, admissions to public university programs are based almost always, solely on the high school grades that have been received by the applicant. From there, there is a sliding scale that is applied based on the quality of applicants that dictates the minimum grade requirement, in order to gain admittance into a certain program (Jones, 1997).

At Canadian universities there are elite level soccer programs that are connected with the university programs, and student-athletes that are deemed of the highest quality, are able, for the most part to receive some kind of funding towards their education in the form of “scholarships” from the different soccer programs (<http://english.cis-sic.ca>). Furthermore, for the majority of public Canadian universities, the student must gain admittance to the university with their high school grades, with no help or special treatment for being a top level player. For the private institutions that provide their own funding, there is more leeway in terms of the amount of money available and the grades required for admittance, especially for those soccer players that are deemed to have the possibility of being “high-impact” players (defined as having qualities that will help the team win matches).

## Norway

The Norwegian school system is divided into 3 parts: *Barneskolen*, *Ungdomskolen* and *Videregående skolen* (<http://www.udir.no>).

### A. Primary School (Barneskole, grades 1-7, ages 6-13)

The main purpose of barneskole is for children in their first school years to play educational games, learn social structures, the alphabet, basic math and to acquire language ability. In

grades 2-7, students are introduced to more complicated math, as well as Norwegian, English, Science, Religion and Physical Education, as well as some degree to geography, history and social studies in the fifth grade. No grades are given, but teachers write a comment/analysis and sometimes an unofficial grade on tests (<http://www.udir.no>).

#### B. Lower Secondary School (Ungdomskole, grades 8-10, ages 13-16)

Once the students enter ungdomskole, they begin to receive grades for their work. Their grades play a role of importance, as they determine whether or not the students are accepted into their high school of choice or not. From the eighth grade, students are able to choose one elective. Often the subjects are related to languages and additional English and Norwegian classes. Before an educational reform in August 2006, students were able to choose a practical elective, as opposed to the languages (<http://www.udir.no>).

#### C. Upper Secondary School (Videregående Skole, grades 11-13, ages 16-19)

Recent changes in 1994 to society and law have made Upper Secondary School, which was once an optional endeavor in the Norwegian school system, into one that has become largely unavoidable in practice. Secondary school in Norway is based primarily on public schools: In 2007, 93% of upper secondary students attended public schools. In 1994, there was a significant change to the upper-level secondary schooling system. Before 1994 there were three branches of upper secondary schooling. There was “general” (language, history etc), “mercantile” (accounting etc) and “vocational” (electronics, carpentry etc) (<http://www.udir.no>).

After 1994, the government mandated that these three different branches be merged into one with the overarching concept being that everyone should have a certain amount of “general studies” that would allow students the opportunity to be eligible to apply for higher education later, especially if they decided to change “paths” from high school, without losing too much credit. For example if one were to take two years of carpentry in the old system, if they decided to switch into general studies afterwards, they would not receive any credit; now they would be eligible to get credit for at least half (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/no.html>).

A final distinctive event in the Norwegian high school system is the existence of “Russ”, which in one’s final year of high school, is both the name of the graduating class as well as a

large party for the last few weeks of school. Many Russ students opt to purchase a stake in “party busses” that can be seen riding around town for a good part of April and May, until the National holiday May 17, when Russ officially ends. Some believe Russ is completely impractical, as these festivities coincide with the final weeks of school and subsequent final examinations.

It is important to note that the high schools that will be examined throughout the course of this paper in relation to the Norwegian elite players will be the less common private high schools. Thus they fall outside of the traditional Norwegian public high school system, although they are mandated to follow the same basic academic curriculum, despite the focus on sport. Subsequently, the public school system offers sports classes, but traditionally, it is common for the top soccer players to attend the private sports high school and take their elite, soccer-specific programming.

#### D. University

Higher education is anything beyond upper secondary school, and normally lasts three years or more. To be accepted to most higher education programs you must have attained a general university admissions certificate (*generell studiekompetanse*). This can be achieved by taking general studies while in upper secondary school or through the law of 23/5 where a person must be above 23 years of age, have 5 years of combined schooling and work experience, and have passed exams in Norwegian, mathematics, natural sciences, English and social studies (<http://utdanning.no>).

Higher education is broadly divided into:

- Universities which concentrate on theoretical subjects (social sciences, humanities, natural science). Supplies bachelor (3 yrs), master (5 yrs) and PhD (8 yrs) titles. Universities also run a number of professional studies, including law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and psychology, but these are generally separate departments that have little to do with the rest of the university institution (<http://www.uio.no>).
- University colleges (*høyskole*), which supply a wide range of educational choices, including university bachelor degrees, masters degrees, engineering degrees and professional vocations like teacher and nurse. The grade system is the same as it is for universities (<http://www.hio.no>).

- Private schools, which tend to specialize in popular subjects with limited capacity in public schools, such as business management, marketing or fine arts. Private schools do not loom large on the horizon, although the fraction of students attending private schools is 10% in higher education, compared to 4% in secondary and 1.5% in primary education (<http://utdanning.no>).

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that there is no connection between high level sports with universities in Norway as there is with universities in North America. Although there are intramural opportunities through student organizations within the different universities, for primarily social purposes, elite level female players, play in clubs that stand outside of the university domain. Therefore elite level players, will attend university classes by day, and then go to their club in the evening for training. There is also absolutely no correlation of receiving any kind of funding through the university for sporting prowess, and any funds received by players come from either their soccer club or through funding obtained via the National Team.

## 2.3 Comparative Elite Female Player Pathways

In both Norway and Canada, players start at the youth club level, lacing up their soccer cleats for their local team, some as young as when they are five. In both countries, they join a pipeline and a player development pathway that funnels them up through youth national teams, culminating with the top of the pyramid, an opportunity to play on their A or full national team, and have the honor of representing their country at major events such as the Women's World Cup and Olympics ([www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com), [www.fotball.no](http://www.fotball.no)). The following is a description of the history of the soccer systems from their inception in the 1970's, to where they are today, as well as the player development pathway that women in both countries take, in order to reach the top level.

### Canada

Currently in Canada, the official player pathway, marks players playing club soccer until they are approximately twelve years old, when they have the opportunity to be selected to a Provincial Team (each representing, one of the ten provinces, and three territories of Canada). Once the girls are about thirteen, they can be selected from their Provincial Team, to one of five National Training Centre programs (NTC- British Columbia, NTC-Prairies, NTC-

Ontario, NTC-Quebec, and NTC -Atlantic). From the NTC's, they are able to be selected to a youth national team, which start at the U15 age group, in preparation for the U17 team that represents Canada for the opportunity to play at the U17 World Cup ([www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com)). Once the player graduates from high school, almost all attend university in either Canada or the United States.

For many Canadian parents, the emergence of scholarships to universities has emerged as a legitimate return on the investment that many of them pour into their daughter's soccer. For players who are at the top end of the sport, they can be offered scholarships to American universities worth upwards of \$120,000 total (Hall, 2003). Currently on the roster of the Canadian National Team, approximate 90-95 % of players ([www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com)) have attended a US university and reaped financial benefits because of their soccer abilities. The other approximate 5-10%, have attended Canadian universities, which allow for a tuition waiver for elite athletes on the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP).

In the summertime (May-August) there is the W League that operates currently in seven Canadian cities, which is the only opportunity for elite soccer for Canadian women after university. The majority of Canadian National Team players play either in the WPS (Women's Professional Soccer) in the United States or in various European countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Germany (McGhee, 2008).

The Canadian women's national team is currently ranked sixth in the world, as of March, 2011, their top placement since the world rankings emerged in 2003 ([www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)).

#### A. High School

In Canada it is again difficult to make a generalization on the school system for elite players as there are ten different provinces and three different territories, and all are in charge and mandate their own individual school systems.

In almost all cases, Canadian elite female soccer players attend secondary schools, with their non-sports playing peers. In some provinces, top players are able to get credit, and not have to attend mandatory physical education classes because their elite sport participation counts as making up the quota of physical exertion required. In British Columbia, one of the largest provinces in Canada, soccer specific academies within public schools exist, but often do not have the top players in attendance.

Subsequently, there is not the Canadian equivalent to private sports-focused schools such as a Wang or NTG that exist within the Norwegian system, and for the most part, athletes on Provincial and National Teams choose institutions of high school learning, based primarily on their neighborhood, or target schools specifically for academic purposes.

## B. University

The majority of Canadian elite level female high school players attend university the year immediately following their high school graduation. They play for a university team that they are recruited to often after being seen at a “College Showcase Tournament”. Currently the three largest Showcases in Canada for girls are held in Vancouver (Western Canada Soccer Showcase and the Whitecaps West Coast Showcase), and Toronto (The Umbro College Showcase).

In order to play in these showcases, players pay a fee, and play matches in front of university coaches, who come specifically in order to see them play. These coaches are in search of players that they can offer scholarships to, who they feel can help their university team win and whose attributes both on and off the field, are what they are looking for ([www.westerncanadasoccershowcase.com](http://www.westerncanadasoccershowcase.com)). With this in mind, coaches begin scouting players when they are in grade nine, four years before they graduate from high school. The opportunity to play university soccer is one that is a large motivation for many high school girls who play soccer at the top level in Canada (Hall, 2003).

For Canadian higher education institutions, there are three leagues in which university teams from these schools compete. The majority, participate in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (<http://english.cis.sic.ca>) with one, Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, in NCAA Division 2 ([www.sfu.ca](http://www.sfu.ca)), and the other smaller colleges, competing in the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association (<http://www.ccaa.ca>). These schools can offer benefits for varsity athletes in the form of scholarships and free gear. “Varsity athletics” is the term coined for the competitive sports teams in the university, as opposed to “intramural” or “club” that are recreational, and not funded by the individual schools.

For the most part, varsity athletes in Canada, have all their soccer travel expenses covered to games, usually receive free clothing and soccer shoes, and in most cases are able to receive some form of financial help because they are representing their school. National team players

and prospects receive tuition waivers to Canadian universities in order to counteract the defection of Canada's top young players to US universities. Top Canadian high school athletes often leave for the US for their post-secondary education, because of stronger competition and greater financial support, which has weakened the competitive level at Canadian universities (Hall, 2003).

Subsequently, it is important, for the purposes of this paper to discuss American universities, since many of the top Canadian players travel south after their high school graduation. This phenomenon of a Canadian "female soccer player-drain" can be explained simply by the fact that the United States college system has a great deal of funding that allows the athlete to train with the resources of a professional team (Hall, 2003). The funding originates from the greater university athletics program, including men's football and basketball, which draw a great deal of income to the sports programs as they are often as big as professional sports in the US in terms of fan base, interest and attendance ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)).

For female soccer players who are in the same athletics department at the universities, the benefit from the success of men's college programs rippling into their realm can be attributed to the inception of Title IX in the US in 1972, which mandated:

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...*

—United States Code Section 20 (Kuhn, 1976:49)

Although it was not the intention of the original ruling, Title IX caused universities to make funding for university athletics programs equal, allowing for women sports programs, such as soccer, to benefit from the large amounts of money that men's college football and basketball programs bring to universities. Furthermore, college soccer was essentially professionalized in the sense that the women by law had to receive exactly what the men did. Thus those women playing college soccer benefitted from personal physiotherapists for each team, strength and conditioning coaches, and a great deal of free athletics gear, making NCAA soccer, a place where the majority of top Canadian female athletes and soccer players, dream of doing their schooling.



### C. Professional Opportunities

Once Canadian players are done with university, their choices become extremely limited within North America, to have the opportunity to continue playing at a competitive level (McGhee, 2008) and continue at a trajectory to make the Canadian National team, if they have not already done so.

In existence currently in North America, there is Women's Professional Soccer (WPS), whereby Canadians are considered foreign, and those that participate are only allowed to be one of six foreign players on each team ([www.womensprosoccer.com](http://www.womensprosoccer.com)). However, the league is currently in a state of disarray. The WPS Champion LA Sol folded at the end of the 2009 season, and before the start of the 2011 WPS season, two teams have already ceased to exist. These include the St Louis Athletica that folded mid season in 2010, and San Francisco based FC Gold Pride, with FIFA World Player of the Year Marta, who folded due to lack of funds, shortly after winning the 2010 WPS Championship ([www.allwhitekit.com](http://www.allwhitekit.com)).

Subsequently, most Canadian women that are finished with university and still have the desire to play, compete in amateur soccer in leagues named the W League or the WPSL. There are no Canadian teams currently in the WPSL, but seven in the W League, which are based in three of the largest Canadian provinces, BC, Ontario and Quebec. Both of these leagues are made up of a reported fifty percent NCAA players (McGhee, 2008) which makes abiding by NCAA rules relevant and crucial. However, because of NCAA Bylaw 12 on amateurism that asserts that college age players are not allowed be paid or play on teams with professional athletes, teams in these leagues must remain at an amateur level, which stunts the growth of the professional game on a more widespread level (McGhee, 2008).

Subsequently a small handful of Canadian players ply their trade overseas in leagues in Europe, particularly Norway, Germany and Sweden. For players to have the opportunity to play in these leagues, they have to be seen as immediate impact players. Because of worker visa laws in these countries, clubs have to guarantee a certain amount of money for the women to be allowed into the country to play for their teams. With the problems in the global economy over the last few years, women's soccer has been affected, as clubs are very hesitant in laying out this kind of money for top players.

As an example, three players, a goalkeeper and two field players from the Canadian National Team in 2008 went to play for a newly promoted top league Swedish team. Two of the three were cut halfway through the season, reportedly because their impact was not deemed enough, for the amount of money the Swedish team was forced to pay them as foreigners, in

order to get them a working visa. Canadian players that were either born in an EU country or have parents or grandparents that make them eligible for EU citizenship are able to capitalize on EU laws that allow for the movement of EU workers through national boundaries. These players with dual citizenship with an EU nation can be seen as attractive to European clubs, as they are able to legally get jobs outside of soccer to supplement their income. Also they do not fall under the financially restrictive visa laws that hamper a great deal of player exporting from North America to Europe. In cases of players that go from North America to Europe, assuming that they are able to get jobs, they then become a part of that country's system, in the sense that a Canadian player thus would be able to combine work and soccer at a high level as a Norwegian female would be able to do.

#### D. National Team

For those women that are on the Canadian National Team and identified by National Team staff as “carded athletes”, they receive funding from the Canadian government. Known as the *Athlete Assist Program (AAP)* this money is supposed to go towards helping off-set expenses that exist for elite level athletes. For those identified at the top level, they can receive upwards of \$18,000 tax free/year, in comparison to those that are on a developmental card receiving \$10,800 (McGhee, 2008).

Subsequently, for the majority of the women that are at the National Team level, this money that is received via their carding is the only economic capital available to them at different points throughout the year. In the past the National Team has engaged in a residency camp, such as one in the lead up to the 2007 World Cup and 2008 Olympics, that forced players to stop their educational studies and impeded their ability to hold jobs. In this case, a private benefactor donated an amount that topped up players AAP money to \$40,000/year (McGhee, 2008), but in almost all cases, those that are participating on the Canadian National Team, are unable to pursue full-time uninterrupted university studies, or have regular jobs to supplement the meager earnings that they receive by being on the Canadian National Team (McGhee, 2008).

## The Impact of Title IX

As previously mentioned Title IX played a crucial role in the development of both women's soccer in North America and the connection between education and top soccer. Because of

this, it is necessary to understand the history and implications of Title IX into the footprint of women's soccer in Canada.

A great deal of research exists from gender and sport in the 1970's, as it was a crucial time both legislatively and historically for the growth of opportunity for women in sport in both Europe, and North America.

Subsequently, research findings from this period suggested that the participation of females in sport was encouraged because it allowed women to explore and expand their physical capabilities (Duquin, 1978). Immediate benefits included the positive perception of body image (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1978), strong achievement motivation (Birrell, 1978) and higher grades (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1978). Sports were seen as providing long-term benefits as well including the development of self-discipline, fair play, respect for authority and good citizenship (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1975). It has also been suggested that girls' participation in sports might have prepared them for adult roles and for working with other people in positions of professional responsibility (Lever, 1978).

In more recent research, similar positive benefits to women's involvement in sport were suggested. In a study in which 24 NCAA Division 1 female athletes from three different institutions were interviewed, findings demonstrated that in a team setting, sport facilitates female bonding, and the development of a positive group identity and common goals. Empowerment was found at the societal level when athletes noted that their participation in sport challenged limiting societal perceptions of women (Blinde, Han and Taub, 1994).

Despite all of these positive reasons for an expanded place of women's sport in North American society, it was by legal force that women's sport in the NCAA exploded to the level of success and support that it enjoys today. Title IX was an educational amendment to the Civil Rights Act in 1972 that called for any educational institution that received governmental support, by law, to have gender equal distribution of funds. Subsequently, this ruling had a positive affect on the number of girls involved in sport at the high school level and university level as schools were now forced to provide opportunities for female athletes that did not exist before (Stevenson, 2007).

Before Title IX, the amount spent on women's college athletics was estimated to be two percent of what was spent on men's programs. Because of this discrepancy, in addition to inadequate funding, women's university sports had to deal with substandard equipment and

facilities, inadequate coaching, lack of interest amongst students, and lack of publicity (Cox, 1977). Final regulations for enforcing Title IX were released in 1975, and they required schools to be in compliance by 1978. The rules included stipulating that girls had to be allowed to try out for male teams involving non-contact sports if no girls' team was offered. In addition, there were several factors listed that would be used in assessing compliance, including accommodation of interests and equipment, and availabilities of facilities for practices and games, including access to fields, coaches, locker rooms, and travel costs (Stevenson, 2007).

The ripple effect on participation numbers in soccer because of Title IX was felt in Canada, as there was a marked increase in participants in female soccer, similar to the US, in the years after the passage of Title IX. In Canada in 1980, there were no more than 16,000 registered, female soccer players, but by 2000, there was an astonishing total of 270, 145. The ratio of male to female players steadily declined, from an estimated one to eleven in 1980, to less than one to two by 2000 (Hall, 2003).

In the US between the fall of 1971 and the fall of 1977, the number of women participating in organized high school sports increased over 600%, from 294,000 to 2,083,000. Surprisingly, this occurred despite a 5% enrollment drop among high school women over the same period (Coakley and Westkott, 1981). For women's soccer, the growth has been enormous on and off the field as currently over 300 schools offer NCAA Division 1 soccer and some teams draw 1,000 or more fans per game ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)).

While Title IX has played a crucial role in the growth of women's soccer and for opportunities for women to combine a university education in a first class training environment, another piece of legislation has played a role in hindering that growth. NCAA Bylaw 12 was put in place for NCAA teams, with the goal of insuring competing players' amateur status. In order for NCAA athletes to maintain their amateur status, they cannot play with players that are considered professional (being paid to play in any form), nor can they receive any compensation for their play themselves (McGhee, 2008).

This legislation, aimed more towards ensuring players in big name sports such as men's football and basketball don't accept professional contracts while still in university, also has to be followed by women's soccer as it is under the same NCAA umbrella, and has had a negative ripple effect on professional opportunities in women's soccer. With many of the athletes in leagues such as the W League and WPSL still in college, owners of teams are

stifled, and perhaps appreciate that they have an excuse in limiting their expenditures and not having to pay the players. Many players that are finished with university, just happy to be able to get the opportunity to play at a high level, subsequently accept little to no pay in order to continue playing at the only level of soccer available (McGhee, 2008).

## Norway

Girls begin playing in their local clubs, often with other girls, and sometimes with boys. Once they become teen-agers, players deemed the most talented are signed by top clubs in their area and from there, begin their ascension in women's soccer. Players must be a minimum of fifteen to play in the Toppserien ([www.fotball.no](http://www.fotball.no)). Players in the Toppserien range in age from 15, such as Ada Hegerberg ([www.kolbotnilkvinnefotball.no](http://www.kolbotnilkvinnefotball.no)), and Caroline Graham Hansen ([www.stabak.no](http://www.stabak.no)), to 40 and over, such as former Norwegian stars, Margrunn Haugenes (Amazon Grimstad) ([www.amazonfk.no](http://www.amazonfk.no)) and Reidun Seth (Arna Bjørnar) ([www.arna-bjornar.no](http://www.arna-bjornar.no)), who made appearances in the league in the 2010 season.

Currently, there are four divisions of women's soccer, from 3<sup>rd</sup> division, up to the Toppserien, or top league. Both the Toppserien and Division 1 Leagues run throughout all of Norway. Division 2 and Division 3 are regional leagues, with playoffs at the end for the top teams to decide who moves up to the next division. In both Division 1 and the Toppserien, the bottom two teams at the end of the season, move down a league ([www.fotball.no](http://www.fotball.no)).

Top players from the various club teams are identified as young as 14, for opportunities with the Norwegian youth national teams. Youth national teams are selected a handful of times each year, and meet up for training and matches against other players of the same age representing their countries. Norwegian youth national teams compete within UEFA against other European nations at the U17 and U19 levels for the chance to go to the U17 and U20 World Cups. Subsequently when Norwegian female players are too old for the U19 national team, they can be chosen for the U23 National Team, with the hopes of making the full A National Team, which competes for trophies such as the European Championship, the Women's World Cup and the Olympic gold medal ([www.fotball.no](http://www.fotball.no)). Norway's women's national team is currently ranked ninth in the world, as of March 2011 ([www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)).

### A. High School

In Norway, elite female soccer players are encouraged to attend top level sports school for their studies, and take the "soccer line." In doing so, they practice an average of an extra three

times a week, while juggling academics as well as practice in the evenings with usually a Division 1 or Toppserien team. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the curriculum of two private schools in the Oslo area, that many current Norwegian National Team players attended, and that the majority of the Oslo based, Norwegian Youth National Team players, are currently attending. When deciding where to attend Videregående Skole, female players have the option in addition to the top sports high schools in Oslo, Wang or NTG, of attending a public school and taking a sports line, or just taking regular classes.

For those top athletes that decide to go to Wang or NTG, in some cases, their tuition at these private schools, is waived. This is because they are seen as students that will give the schools added prestige and allow the potential of attracting more students. For the rest however that attend NTG or Wang, their tuition can be upwards of 30,000 Norwegian kroner (approximately \$6000 CDN). NTG, asserts on its website to be “Norges Toppidrettsgymnas” (Norway’s top sports high school), since its inception in 1981, and currently has five different locations and top high school athletes in fifteen different sports ([www.ntg.no](http://www.ntg.no)). For female soccer, there are NTG high school programs offered in Oslo, Kongsvinger and Tromsø. Admission to NTG is selective; students must try out in order to be offered a place in the soccer program. The school projects an image of producing champion athletes, as their website lists the accomplishments of their past and present students, who have “214 World Championship and 36 Olympic medals.” NTG boasts that while many schools call themselves “Toppidrettsskoler” (top sports school), NTG has the results and the history to back up that assertion. The caliber of staff that NTG has for female soccer is impressive with 2000 Olympic Gold Medallist Monica Knudsen on staff, in addition to Katrine Pedersen, who is the Danish National Team captain and member of 2010 Toppserien champion Stabaek. Emelie Haavi, currently the youngest member of the Norwegian Women’s National Team, is a student at the school, as well as thirteen members of champion Stabaek being listed as current or former staff or students at NTG ([www.ntg.no](http://www.ntg.no)).

Wang rightfully makes similar assertions of a place for top athletes to be molded, while combining high school studies. Amongst other accomplishments, Eli Landsem, current Head Coach for the Norwegian Women’s National Team, used to be the head of the soccer program, as well as Dan Eggen, a former men’s National Team player has been involved in the Wang soccer program as a teacher. Wang’s website lists training trips that the players have taken for the girls program to London, as well as listing physical testing regiments for

the players, further cementing their case for running a serious program for top players ([www.wang.no](http://www.wang.no)). In addition to NTG, Wang also has locations across Norway; in Oslo, Moss and Stavanger, and boasts many current and former youth and full Norwegian National Team players that have been Wang students at one time or another.

## B. University

Unlike Canada, Norway's educational system has no affiliation with soccer teams that compete for the university. Norwegians that attend university, play their elite level soccer for a club, completely independent of the school system. Because of this, many of those Norwegians interviewed, that were playing at the top levels took university classes part time, or put off their higher education studies altogether, especially if they were in an intense period with their soccer. Some of those interviewed attended NIH, which is the Sports University in Oslo, as there was more of an understanding nature given to missing class time, based on the athletic nature of the school's curriculum.

One indirect benefit to the Norwegian system is the student loan/grant that university students receive from the government. Norwegian students receive a stipend from the government during the time that they are in university, in recognition that it is difficult for these students to have the time to make money, while they are taking classes. For the most part it acts as a loan that is paid back once a student is finished with school and has a job. Often athletes try and stretch out the time that they are in school, attending different programs, in order to have an income coming in that can allow them to combine their studies with their sport.

## C. Professional Opportunities

The top soccer league that is offered for women in Norway is called the Toppserien and consists of twelve teams. The Toppserien has been consistently ranked as one of the top ten leagues for women in the world, in terms of quality of play (<http://women.soccerway.com>). In a 2009 study on the Toppserien, 24% of respondents were signed to a full-time professional contract, 39% to an amateur or part time contract, 1% on a loan contract and 37% to another kind of contract. Of the 137 women who participated in the study, 84% received less than 100,000 kroner (approximately \$16,000 CDN), 8% made between 100,000-250,000 kroner (\$17,000-\$42,000 CDN), and the remaining 8% made between 250,000-500,000 kroner (\$42,000-\$84,000 CDN). Not surprisingly because of these figures, more than half of the

respondents had a job besides playing soccer with 70% saying that it was economically necessary (Bøe and Eide, 2009).

It is worthwhile to note, that the research for this study was conducted in the first phases of “Jenteløftet”. This was an initiative that was taken by the NFF in order to promote and grow women’s football in general in Norway and in particular the Toppserien. The goals of Jenteløftet in terms of the National Team were to bring home medals at the Euros in 2009 (accomplished), as well as in the Women’s World Cup in 2011, and 2012 Olympics ([www.fotball.no](http://www.fotball.no)). Jenteløftet was launched in December 2007, with the idea that it would be a five year initiative by the NFF to supplement each club with one million kroner (\$170,000 CDN) for increased administrative support, as well as travel expenses to away matches, and an annual pre-season training trip to La Manga in Spain (Bøe and Eide, 2009).

However, with the downturn of the economy happening at the same time as both an upgrade to Ullevål National Stadium, and the NFF overspending with an attempt to bid for the 2016 Euro’s, cuts had to be made and Jenteløftet was one of the first to be hit. 400,000 kroner (\$68,000 CDN) has been withdrawn for the 2011 season, with another 600,000 kroner (\$102,000 CDN) taken back from what was initially promised for the 2012 season (Kolle, 2010). These statistics are relative to those quoted in the Bøe/Eide study, as the opportunity to earn any kind of a living from the soccer field for Norwegian women now will be even less in the years to come, because of these aforementioned financial cuts to Jenteløftet.

#### D. National Team

For women who play on the Norwegian National Team, they receive a form of funding for their participation on the team that supplements the money that they receive from their club in order to allow them to put an extra focus on their football. This figure is derived both on the role that they play on the national team, their age, as well as if they play within Norway or play in another country. Although the amount was cut in half in 2009 (<http://www.nrksport.no/1.6423944>), fourteen women on the team are selected for funding, which amounts to currently, 70,000 kr/year (\$11,700 CDN).

With the Toppserien running matches from April to November, the national team coach does not have the option of pulling her players away for more than a few days at a time. Furthermore, with over half the National team based in Oslo (the top 3 finishers in the



Toppserien in 2011, all hail from the Oslo region), the coach has training sessions two mornings a week where she is able to work with many of her players, again disrupting academic and work routines very little and allowing players the ability to hold jobs or continue with their education if they so desire, while receiving this added income.

## 2.4 Past Research: Combining Education and Elite Soccer

### Canada

Ashley McGhee, in her 2008 paper *Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the Changing Landscape of Elite Women's Soccer in Canada*, interviewed members of Canada's W League Whitecaps, as well as players and staff members of the Canadian Women's National Team, in regards to their experience in the lead up to the 2007 World Cup and 2008 Olympics.

McGhee focused on a project that was underway in 2006 when she was compiling her research, in which Greg Kerfoot, the owner of the Vancouver Whitecaps and benefactor to the Canadian National Team program, donated over 1.5 million dollars to help the Canadian women prepare in a full time residency for the 2007 and 2008 major events. McGhee discussed how the women benefitted from this additional funding, but also spoke of the negative components of control and power, as the head coach had full control and discretion over this money.

In 2006-2008 when this program was in place, it was mandatory for National Team players to be in Vancouver training daily under the guidance of Even Pellerud, the head coach, and his staff. As a condition, players would be given a one-month severance package if they were released from the program, which could happen at any time and obviously did not lend for much economic security or stability. In the words of one of those Canadian Women's National Team players that were interviewed for McGhee's study, "If I got dropped tomorrow, I'd get my October month (money) and then I'd be toast. Toast from my carding, toast from Greg Kerfoot ('s money), and have to go find a job that pays you three thousand a month. So it's pretty harsh if you do something wrong or you're not performing or something like that and you fully get dropped. You're done. So Even (Pellerud, Canada National Team coach at the time) has full reigns over that."

Furthermore, McGhee's research demonstrated that elite level female Canadian players in general felt that they had to make a choice between the pursuit of a career or competitive soccer. She highlighted that many of the women took advantage of coaching as an option to make extra money, as it was accommodating to a changing schedule inherent with high level soccer. Additionally, coaching paid a salary between \$40-\$75/hour, which allowed players to train during the day and only have to work a few hours in the evening, in order to continue being self-sufficient. In comparing the pursuit of a career versus maintaining status and ability as an elite level player, McGhee highlighted how players felt that they had to choose either one or the other, and were not able, in order to compete at the highest level, to do both.

Subsequently, a member of the Canadian National Team staff asserted that for Canadian players, the university level was all that they had outside of the National Team to develop their soccer, and this was a large difference between the European and Canadian systems. In the words of this staff member discussing opportunities for female players after university, "There is nothing. Unless you are young enough to be a NCAA player with scholarship, but that is until you are graduating, and that is where your real soccer career should take off. Here it takes down. So actually when you are twenty-two and twenty-three years old, where you haven't really peaked yet, you have nowhere to go. And that is the biggest difference between Europe and Canada. You are offered a three month soccer league (WPSL or W League) and outside of that you have basically amateur or super amateur, grassroots, recreational leagues, which does not help you in development, it takes you actually the other way." This asserts that in gaining technical, tactical and physical skills necessary to be a top player, once players are finished with university in Canada, there are very few options to continue their development.

Players on the National Team according to McGhee's study, speak of having to stop the pursuit of their education in order to follow through with the demanding schedule of the National Team, especially in the years leading up to major events. According to the players interviewed in McGhee's study, in order to receive the increased funding with the Full Time Players Program in 2006-2008, as well as the opportunity to be on the national team, they were pressured to put off or limit their educational and career pursuits, in order to relocate and focus solely on their soccer endeavors.

McGhee's study also addressed the physical demands of the National Team, and thoughts of life post-soccer. "Another thing I sacrifice is the health of my body. I don't know to be honest

if I will be able to walk when I am forty years old. I have three stress fractures, one in my leg and two in my feet. I have ankles that are shattered” said one of the players. “Knock on wood that my knees are ok, but who knows for how much longer, you know? There’s a lot of health things, school things, work, like I have sacrificed getting a real job, like who knows what I am going to do when I am done soccer? I don’t know life outside of soccer right? There is no reality to my life outside of this.”

However, players felt that experiencing the highs of success, made all the hardship worth it. Said a Canadian player who was on the field in the historic win over China in the 2003 World Cup that catapulted Canada into the semi-finals, “To look into your teammates eyes at the end of a the game, or go to the World Cup and beat a China, to make it into the semi-finals, there is no dollar figure on that, and that can’t be replaced with anything” (McGhee, 2008: 79).

Worth noting additionally, was that McGhee’s study was the only relevant study that I was able to find that gave insight into the relationship between elite female soccer players in Canada and their ability to combine soccer with an education/career. As McGhee noted in the conclusion of her research, there is no comprehensive historical archive of women’s soccer in existence in Canada, and with a richness of experience found in the player and staff that she interviewed for her study, there is much more information that has the potential to be gleaned (McGhee, 2008).

## Norway

Norway has a richer source of research on female soccer players than that found in Canada. However, as a native English speaker with only a couple of years of Norwegian language behind me, at times I found it challenging to read the literature that was available, as it was obviously, almost entirely in Norwegian. Although it took a great deal of time, it has added richness in understanding the opportunities available for Norwegian women in combining both soccer and education, in comparison to their Canadian counterparts.

A bachelor study by Kristine Bøe and Kjell Andre Eide (2009), entitled Sport and Higher Education, was extremely helpful in giving insight into the kinds of funding that Norwegian soccer players have the opportunity to acquire, in addition to their educational pursuits while playing in the Toppserien.

Of 201 Toppserien players that Bøe and Eide sent questionnaires to, 137 responded and agreed to take part in the study. The respondents were between 16 and 38 years old, with the majority being between the ages of 16-20. Only five women total, of the 137 had children, while 85% were below 30 and chose to place sports first in order of priority, over a job and education.

In their research, Bøe and Eide did not find that the completion of high school was influenced by playing sports at the highest levels. However, 21% of elite female players said that sports had reduced educational opportunities, while 73% said that their elite soccer pursuit had little or no affect. In terms of the level of schooling pursued at the time of the study, 41% were not enrolled in any kind of schooling, 7 % were enrolled in part-time classes, 15% were enrolled in sports-specific high school programming 34% were enrolled in regular university, while another 3% were enrolled in some other kind of educational program. Additionally, 40% of those interviewed, had already fulfilled a university or higher education program of some sort. According to Bøe and Eide, it can be subsequently deduced from their research that combining education with top-level soccer is not an impossible combination.

On the other hand, Bøe and Eide found that over half of the players felt that pursuing a university education had impeded their football careers. This figure was even higher for those that had taken a higher educational degree. According to Bøe and Eide, this showed that it was difficult for players to hold focus on their soccer while they were studying. An alternative according to the researchers was to focus entirely on the sporting career, while putting off a job or education until later. 37% of those interviewed said that they would be willing to do that, although many of them followed that statement by saying that this was not a reasonable possibility for them.

94% of players felt that the combination of a job/education with elite level soccer was a reasonable combination, which indicates the possibility that players felt that it was good to have stimuli from other environments. On the other hand over 85% felt that they were pressed for time every day, no doubt an indication of pressure from many different fronts. For those that were in the midst of taking higher education, the percentage of those that felt pressed for time was even higher, a resounding 94%. 76% felt that they would be able to finish their program without interruption. For those that did not take higher education, that were playing in the Toppserien, the highest percentage in terms of the reason given as to why they did not,

was because of it not being traditional in their family to do so (66%), followed by 62% that said that it was not traditional in the soccer club that they were at, to do both.

In terms of what to do after finishing with soccer, 64% of the respondents of Bøe and Eide's study said that they had thought seriously about what they would do when they were finished with their sporting careers, while 68% expressed that they were not worried about what they would do. Indicating that those that had a higher education worried less about their future, to the statement, "I often worry about my future prospects when I am done as an active sportswoman", 85% of those that were in the midst of their higher education said that they did not agree with the statement, 82% of those that had finished their studies said that they did not agree, while 41% of those that had no higher education did not agree, indicating that they worried about what they would do when they were finished. Subsequently it could be deduced, that according to Bøe and Eide's study, peace of mind in terms of the future, was directly correlated with whether or not one had university degrees.

From these figures it seems as though for many Toppserien players, combining education and elite level soccer is both possible and a necessity, but at the expense of full attention to soccer. Although the material is very helpful in giving a statistical analysis to some of the questions posed in this study, weaknesses in Bøe and Eide's work in elucidating a complete picture of combining education with elite level sport, is that the study does not indicate important economic and demographic factors.

For instance, questions that make it difficult to come up with a definitive answer include knowing what level of soccer the Toppserien player plays at. Those at the National team level, most likely would have a higher time commitment than those just playing at the club level, which would thus have an affect on the time they would have to pursue an education. Also, those that are still at an age where they are living with their parents, or receiving money from their parents, would have an economic advantage and opportunity to put more time into their soccer. These are just a couple of missing links in the research, that otherwise is fantastic and helpful at painting a clear picture on the challenges of women juggling elite soccer and education in Norway.

In addition to the study by Bøe and Eide, other helpful research is in existence, in terms female Norwegian elite sport and its relation to education. In a study called "Penger Inn, Vettet Ut-Om Idrett, Utdanning og Kommersialisering" (Gammelsæter, Herskedal, and

Solenes, 2008) (loosely translated to mean “Money In, Common Sense Out- Sport, Education and Commercialization), female handball players, the second most popular sport for women in Norway, playing in a top league, similar to the Toppserien are interviewed for the purposes of understanding their abilities to combine education with elite level sport. In terms of statistics cited in this report, of the 71 players that responded to the questionnaire, from the top handball league, 10% of player identified as being on a fulltime contract, and 51% were on a part-time contract while the rest received little financial backing from handball. Again as with Bøe and Eide’s study, almost all the players combined school, or a job, with elite level handball, with only 3% identifying that they did not do either in addition to their sport. All of those interviewed for the study had completed high school, in addition to 6% who were still in the midst of completing high school. 47% said that they felt that their commitments to handball had either some or only a little effect on their academic results at the high school level.

Of those handball players that were finished with high school, 88% were either taking or had finished a higher education, with only 9% having taken no higher education, and 3% who took another form of education after high school.

The average of women in Norway who have a higher education and are between the ages of 20-39 is 40%. Seen in conjunction with the findings of “Penger Inn, Vettet Ut?”, of 53% of top level Norwegian handball players holding a higher education, if anything it could be deduced that elite level sport participation is more likely to influence women’s decision to take a higher education.

For those that were in the midst of taking a higher education at the time of the study, 60% were between the ages of 21-24, which would indicate a normal study progression. 37% however, said their involvement with elite level sports, in a big way or in some way reduced opportunities for education, while 17% felt that it was problematic to combine higher education and handball. The biggest problem for those that wanted to take higher education but didn’t was the lack of interesting or appropriate classes in the area. It could be hypothesized then that players prioritized their location because of handball opportunities, but thus opportunities to accrue the education they wanted, dropped because of this decision.

It is interesting to note that in “Penger Inn, Vettet Ut?,” almost all of the women said that there was a history of higher education in their families. As seen in Bøe and Eide’s research, 84% of handball players were not worried for what they would do after their handball careers

were over, perhaps because of their high education level. Similar again to Bøe and Eide's research, only 3% of handball players planned to have a job in the sports arena when they were finished, leading credence to the idea that skills acquired on the handball court, would have little or no value in their career once they were finished playing the sport.

## 2.5 Women's Soccer: Barriers to Growth

Questions today arise as to why there is such a gap in opportunity for male and female soccer players. The above history elucidates some of the answers; women's soccer is truly in its infancy stages, while the men's game has had a large head start in opportunity and professionalization, a gap that women are still fighting to make up today. Observing the opportunities for women in Canada and Norway to make a living out of their soccer, it is safe to say, that for women in both countries the chance to play soccer as a legitimate job, is very limited.

On a broader scale, there are many reasons for this lack of financial opportunity. In North America, researchers agree that the institution of sport has long served as a male entity, where males, both young and old, receive preference in access to not only recreational participation, but also professional involvement in sport (Young and White, 1999). In the historical development of the game in Norway, a Scandinavian country, celebrated for its open-minded cultural ideology, there were fears when women's soccer first began to grab a hold, that women would become unfeminine and therefore non-heterosexual, should they pursue soccer to the highest level (Fasting, 2003). Gender in both countries has played a negative role for women in their desire for an opportunity to play the game in the professional realm, as they face the clash between objectifying stereotypical male roles to succeed, and having to embody femininity in order to ward off notions of lesbianism (Lenskyj, 1999).

Media attention to women's soccer can also be said to play a role in the little exposure, and thus sponsorship that would help the game grow from a financial standpoint as there has been exclusion of female athletes and sport by the media in North America (Connell, 1987, Hargreaves, 1994, Theberge and Cronk, 1986). Norway is not much better as shown in a 1998 study, as only 15% of the content in Norwegian newspapers about sport, contained anything related to women's sport (Lippe, 1998). Furthermore, women continue to be marginalized, as females represent very few of those involved with decision-making and leadership for both

FIFA, the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) and the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) (Hall, 2003, Skogvang, 2007, Crolley and Duke, 1996, Williams, 2003).

From those men that are in positions of power in the women's game, their regard for women as serious athletes has been seen as shocking and controversial at times. No less than Sepp Blatter, the President of FIFA, made the comment in 2004, in suggestion to the women acquiring more attention, money and opportunity in soccer, that they should consider wearing revealing "hot pants" (Christensen and Kelso, 2004).

With such difficult circumstances, it seems logical to pose the question of why the women have a desire to be involved in such an environment, one that offers very little opportunity from a financial standpoint. For many a sense of self is tied into their identity as a top soccer player (Roderick, 2006), as well as for others the intrinsic joy that they feel when they reach a goal on the field trumps the hardship that they may have dealt with, economically and otherwise off the field (McGhee, 2008, Miller-Little, 2009).

This "love the game" (Miller-Little, 2009) keeps many women in the soccer sphere in their 20's, as despite the existence of the Toppserien in Norway, or the limited opportunities to play after university in North America, there is little opportunity to make a comfortable living from the game. This extreme sacrifice goes against both logical reasoning and past research, as in many careers, the financial incentive is what drives the hard work (McDonagh and Pappano, 2008). With Women's Professional Soccer in the US faltering, and the Toppserien also on unstable financial ground because of the NFF's decision to reduce its contribution of funds to the Toppserien through "Jenteløftet," it does not look like the women's game will have any further financial stability in either country, in at least the short term.



### 3. Theory

In developing a conceptual framework with which to explore the field of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players, their educational pathway and subsequent production of capital, the theories of French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) will be utilized. As Jarvie and McGuire argued, “research on sport, leisure, and the body occupies a central place within his (Bourdieu’s) research” (Jarvie and McGuire, 1994: 183). Subsequently others have drawn upon the teachings of Bourdieu in order to examine sports-related phenomena (Wacquant 1995, Jarvie and McGuire, 1994, Shilling, 1993). Bourdieu viewed education as having transformative, convertible potential, in evaluating the role of formal education in relation to sporting practices (McGillivray, Fearn and McIntosh, 2005).

#### 3.1 Bourdieu’s Social Theory: Components

Bourdieu has three main components that compose his social theory. They are field, capital and habitus. I will include a fourth and fifth component of his theory, conversion, and doxa, as their characteristics are relevant in discussing the utilization of capital acquired as a soccer player, and the ability to use those skills and knowledge at a later time.

##### A. Field

Central to outlining Bourdieu’s social theory is the concepts of field, capital and habitus. Bourdieu describes the field as:

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network or a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agent of institutions, by their present and potential situations, in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital), whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology etc.).

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97)

Furthermore, the social field refers to a set of dynamic organizing principles, ultimately maintained by social groups which identify and structure particular categories of practices that

occur within a social space (such as education, art, sport, economics etc) (Shilling, 2005). Each of these fields has a relative autonomy from the other, and while some forms of capital can be converted into another (physical capital=soccer skills can be converted into the economic field), other forms of capital are not transferable from one field to another. An example of this would be a highly skilled artist, not having any capital on the soccer field and vice versa.

## B. Capital

The concept of capital is central to Bourdieu's discussion. Generally, for Bourdieu, "capital is a form of power: the capacity individuals and groups might have to impact upon, change or control situations. The degree of capital available to the social agent will determine the extent of control he will have over himself and others" (Tomlinson, 2004:168).

According to Bourdieu, there are many different forms of capital that serve to file people in society into a hierarchy that subsequently allows them efficacy within the field of question. These forms of capital and how they relate to female soccer players from both Norway and Canada are stated below.

- a. **Economic Capital:** Immediately and directly convertible into money and/or property rights. In soccer it would be the money received from a paycheck (Skogvang, 2007) or money from advertising on jerseys or in the different stadiums (Shilling, 2005).
- b. **Cultural Capital:** Convertible on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications. Cultural capital is relevant to the discussion of the production of educational capital for female soccer players in Canada, as female players, especially in North America find themselves on an elite soccer pathway that encourages them to acquire educational qualifications, which is subsequently described as cultural capital. In Norway, cultural capital in the field of football, could be defined as coach education, education in general, soccer lingo and knowledge about the rules etc that cause one to be seen as a "soccer expert" (Skogvang, 2007).
- c. **Social Capital:** Made up of social obligations or connections, which is convertible in certain conditions into economic capital. Subsequently, the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent subsequently depends on the "size of the network and connections that can be mobilized, as well as the volume of the economic, cultural

or symbolic capital possessed in his own right to those whom he is connected” (Bourdieu, 1985: 51).

Furthermore, social capital could be identified as networks created through being a soccer player, for example teammates or club supporters (Skogvang, 2007). The higher up on the ladder of elite soccer that players climb and the longer that they are at that level of the game, the more social capital they are able to acquire (Bourdieu, 1985).

- d. **Symbolic Capital:** Capital related to reputation and image. It can be argued that there is symbolic capital associated with being a top professional athlete, in terms of media attention the gives legitimacy and status. Furthermore, recognition that one receives for being a good soccer player thus would serve as symbolic capital in manners such as ones name or photo being in the newspaper (Skogvang, 2007).
- e. **Physical Capital:** Bourdieu’s (1985) depiction of the body as a commodity, especially relevant for professional sports participants. The soccer player, like the boxer sees their body as, “the template and epicenter of their life” (Wacquant 1995:66). Subsequently, physical capital in the form of physical abilities such as endurance and speed, as well as strength, are all necessary components of being a good soccer player, and thus are directly converted into other forms of capital relevant for this discussion. Technical soccer skills such as heading and dribbling would be subsequent examples of physical capital (Skogvang, 2007).

### C. Habitus

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is described as the set of durable dispositions that people carry within them that shapes their attitudes, behaviors, and responses to given situations (Bourdieu 1985). Thus the habitus is as much conscious as it is unconscious, and is embodied in individuals. According to Bourdieu:

There is a two-way relationship between habitus and field, where the field as a structured space tends to structure the habitus, while the habitus tends to structure the perception of the field (Bourdieu, 1998:15).

In terms of the importance of education and the player’s perception of it, versus putting their time into becoming top football players, according to Bourdieu other factors, such as their

families influence and perception, as well as the inherent affirmation they receive from coaches etc in terms of their skill set, all are descriptors of the habitus. They would all play a role on the player's perception of the field/the production of capital that is worth pursuing.

Furthermore Bourdieu describes habitus as being formed in the context of people's social locations and inculcates in them a set of tastes and a worldview based on and reconciled to these positions (Bourdieu, 1981, 1984).

#### D. Conversion

Different types of capital can be gathered from economic capital, but only after a process of transformation. Subsequently, according to Bourdieu (1985) economic capital is at the root of all other kinds of capital. The common denominator for all capital is time in order to accumulate it. Some forms of capital are difficult to transform in the sense of not being transmissible (such as with a title of nobility), or not negotiable (such as stocks or shares). Furthermore, as educational qualification becomes the condition for access to a growing number of positions, particularly ones that are dominant in society, the educational system tends to be able to dispossess groups of the monopoly of transferring power and privilege (Bourdieu, 1985).

There are different ways to convert capital: sport has provided a means to convert physical capital into economic capital via the entry into sporting careers. Here the power, speed and agility invested into the body becomes the object of exchange value, although only a very few can hope to earn a living through sport (Shilling, 1993). Furthermore, this form of conversation is usually partial and transient. It is partial because there is less opportunity to women, and transient for three reasons. Firstly because the capacity of the body is an important limiting fact even for those who become professional players, as it only takes one injury to end an athlete's sporting career. Secondly, the average length of many sporting lives is low, leaving most ex-professionals needing to find work for the rest of their lives and thirdly, the time that some children spend on sport may detrimentally affect their acquisition of academic qualifications at school (Shilling, 1993).

Physical capital, in the form of bodies, can be converted into social and cultural capital. The body signifies or is a sign of carrying a certain set of values. Friendships and informal contacts are made through sport, which can later be used to acquire the services of others. (Shilling, 1993) Subsequently, a key example of the conversion of physical capital to cultural (educational) capital is within the US sport and education structure, as the American

university sports scholarship system subsidizes elite athletes and forms a key component in the development of sporting talent in the United States (Shilling, 1993).

### E. Doxa

Doxa is synonymous, with what is taken for granted in any particular society. In the opinion of Bourdieu, doxa is where the “natural and social world appears as self-evident” (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). It incorporates what discourse is accepted within a certain social space.

Bourdieu’s application of doxa can be found in situations where doxa has tangible limitations on social mobility within the social space through limits imposed on each individual (Bourdieu, 1984). Certain things are recognized by doxa as being inappropriate to actual social position, therefore doxa helps to ensure individuals recognizing their place in society, as well as their sense of belonging, which is intertwined with the concept such as “this is not for us.” Doxa is ultimately the social space’s unquestioned truths.

## 3.2 Relevant Research: Soccer and Capital

Bourdieu has been used in the past as a framework for discussing the production of capital within the realm of soccer (Skogvang, 2007, McGhee, 2008, Christensen and Sorensen, 2009, McGillivray, Fearn, and McIntosh, 2005, Miller-Little, 2009).

In research by Skogvang (2007), fieldwork, utilizing Bourdieu as a framework was done with three teams in the Toppserien, who were ranked at different places in the standings. Practices, meetings and games were observed. This was followed up with in-depth interviews with eleven players and four coaches, while observances of the European Championships, World Championships, and the Olympics with many of these same players were included as part of the research as well (Skogvang, 2007).

The findings in this study included the reasons why players in the Toppserien chose to play. They included the love of the game, the competitive aspect, as well as the social aspect and networking with teammates. It was found that women felt empowered on the field, and that the women felt that if they were good, they acquired forms of social and symbolic capital in terms of status and recognition (Skogvang, 2007).

Furthermore, Bourdieu and his concept of habitus, is utilized as a possible explanation as to why players have status within society because of their on-field exploits (Skogvang, 2007). According to some interpretations of Bourdieu, habitus and field reveal the relationship between the actor (players/people within the soccer social field) and the structure (Skogvang, 2007). The concepts and theories cannot be defined in isolation, but most always be seen in the social and historical context (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, for example in examination of the field, it is important to take what is being researched in accordance to the era and environment, in which it is happening.

Additionally the work of Miller-Little (2009), uses Bourdieu as a framework for analyzing the experience of Danish, American and Icelandic soccer players. Bourdieu highlights in his research that capital does not exist and function except in relation to the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Previous research highlights that this can be interpreted that if there is not a field available that recognizes women's talents then their physical capital has little worth as it is not convertible to economic capital (Miller-Little, 2009).

### 3.3 Research Specific to Sport and Educational Capital

Research specific to educational capital discusses how young athletes are guided towards sporting careers that offer them the hope of transcending their objective conditions, but in some ways deceive them with optimism. Because of their enthusiasm and desire to follow their dreams of sporting excellence and the economic capital that is shown to come with it, they discard exchangeable skills that could potentially be converted into an alternative field of employment (McGillivray, Fearn and McIntosh, 2005). As they rely on this appreciating physical capital in the form of soccer skills and attributes, they face a precarious situation once their asset providing them with this convertible physical capital (their bodies) depreciates, and their bodies are seen as surplus assets by the soccer clubs that have employed them. Many of these men thus have shown to come out of their time as soccer players, lacking educational, cultural capital, revealed when they join the mainstream workforce and have little convertible capital in the form of skills outside of soccer (McGillivray, Fearn and McIntosh, 2005).

Subsequently, the elite football culture and the dream of a career as a professional footballer have an almost magnetic attraction for young Danish soccer players (Christensen and Sorensen, 2009). For many the value of educational capital is not seen as attractive, although

players are influenced by their habitus; parents, society (in the form of educational grants to elite sport) and the field of education, which influences young players' behaviors and self-perceptions. Because of this they face tension between two of the biggest fields in their lives, school and soccer, and the capital that is relevant to both and many perhaps because of this pressure, try and meet the requirements for both, instead of choosing one or the other. However, school is thought of as a field that matters in the future, and instead for these young athletes, their present is focused on the large soccer field before them.

The conclusion of the study found that it is possibly difficult for young soccer players to develop their full potential as a talent and enter into the professional soccer scene if they are supposed to fulfill their educational requirements at the same time, especially with the growing and globalized competition for contracts. If it is possible to prolong the acquisition of cultural capital, (educational qualifications), the athlete has a better chance of succeeding in all areas of his/her life (Christensen and Sorensen, 2009).

## 4. Methodology

The Life History Interview Method was the one that I chose as my interview method. It is described as a case study of people-what happened to them and how they felt as they experienced life and went through different stages (Ryan and Russell-Bernard, 2010). Life history focuses on the concept of the interviewee as an active participant in the research process. The conscious and willing participation of the interviewee means that the nature and conduct of the interview itself becomes a dominant feature of the research process (Bornat, 2001). Life histories can be constructed from either primary or secondary data; primary data, such as that I used in my research, can derive directly from the person and include interviews, as well as official reports, medical records and other similar documents (Ezzy, 2002). By concentrating on a single phenomenon, individual, community or institution, there is the possibility to uncover the interaction of characteristics that are pertinent in aiding the study. Additionally, through focusing on one person, the researcher is able to capture various nuances, patterns and other elements that other research approaches might overlook (Berg, 2006).

### 4.1 A Qualitative Approach: Life History Interviews

I chose the life history interview method for a number of reasons. The first was that it seemed the most appropriate to the information that I was hoping to garner, in terms of a method that looks at how perspective changed with age and times of life.

The life history interview method allowed the women to explore their ideas and experiences. Because of this thematic approach to my research, I felt it allowed for common themes to shine through for effective analysis.

In examining the impact that elite level soccer had on the paths these women took, and the manner in which the sport played such a crucial role in their development as people, on and off the field, qualitative research seemed to be the natural choice as “the qualitative researcher in sport studies focuses on the qualitative values and meanings in the context of a “whole way of life” - a concern about sport cultures, life-worlds and identities” (Andrews, Mason, and Silk, 2005: 5).



## 4.2 Sample

I chose Norway and Canada as locations to examine, as I knew both systems quite intimately; I grew up in Canada, while I have lived in Norway the last two and a half years, as I currently am playing my third year in the Toppserien, therefore am somewhat familiar with how the education and soccer system works here. Looking to fulfill the definition of “International and Comparative Education”, choosing Norway and Canada seemed to be a natural fit, and examining soccer, as it is my passion, seemed to be an obvious choice.

For my research, I chose 20 females between the ages of 24-32, all of whom were top-level players in high school. I defined top level as those girls that were on track for the National Team or professional level in high school, in Canada on the Provincial Team, and in Norway those attending either soccer schools at NTG or Wang, two schools in the Oslo area, that require an acceptance, based on athletic ability and promise. Female players, practiced at least three days a week as per their school curriculum, and many that are accepted are of the youth national team caliber. Of the twenty selected for this study, ten women were from Canada and ten were from Norway. Within the group of 10, five were selected that made it to the highest level of women’s soccer; the National Team in Canada, and the five selected from Norway play or played at either the National Team or the Toppserien.

I decided to use this criteria in selecting those that were interviewed for a number of reasons. First I felt that selecting women between the age of 24-32 allowed a significant time period from high school (a minimum of 5 years), that allowed for reflection of their experiences, as well as would allow for a significant of time that would most likely have them on some sort of educational track towards their career, or already embarked on their career path.

The twenty participants provided the data for the research. According to the majority of researchers, 10-12 participants within a homogeneous sample who engage in in-depth interviews such as the life history interview method, allow for general themes to emerge, to the point where this data saturation, will likely cause further interviews to unlikely offer new or differing data (Corbin and Strauss, 1998).

I chose those players who had committed themselves to the top level of soccer at a young age, as I knew from my own experience as this sort of player, that this would require a great deal

of juggling and time management, and perhaps some sacrifices on the educational/career front to be made and was interested in examining the similarities and difference in the Norwegian and Canadian systems, to allow elite female players to reach both their soccer and educational goals.

Because of my extensive playing career in both Norway and Canada, sixteen of the twenty players that I interviewed were teammates of mine at one time or another which made coordinating the interviews relatively easy as many I still consider good friends. The rest were friends of friends, which made coordinating the interviews a little harder, but because of a one degree connection with these women, I was able to make it happen, to a degree that I believe was less effort than if I had been a total stranger.

I also utilized snowball sampling for three of the Norwegians that had not played at a high level as some participants suggested that I speak with former classmates who they thought would add valuable insight to my research. Snowball sampling is a recruitment method that employs research into participants' social networks in order to access specific populations (Browne, 2005).

### 4.3 The Interviews

The interviews were conducted both in Vancouver, Canada and in Oslo, Norway. The interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of one in Norwegian. In both languages myself, and/or the interviewee would work through the translation of words if we could not remember the word in whichever language we were speaking. The majority of the interviews were conducted face to face, both at my area of living in both cities, as well as at coffee shops, which I believe led to a feel of a more informal setting. Four of the interviewees for one reason or another, asked if they would be able to write their responses back to me via email, because of their own time constraints, but the majority of the interviews were all in person and lasted anywhere from about twenty-five minutes to an hour and twenty minutes.

For those that chose to write their answers to me over email, I feel that the quality of research was not as in depth and rich as the information that was garnished from in person interviews. This could be for a few reasons. For the life history interview portion, most of those that were interviewed, needed to be prompted at one point or another or were able to ask questions if they needed to in terms of how to continue, which resulted in very rich data. Those that sent in answers were very short and to the point, as perhaps they were busy, or did not understand

what was being asked of them, or felt uncomfortable sharing so much of themselves. Also, when things are done in the format similar to an open-ended questionnaire, people's first instinct seems to be to get through it as quickly as possible. On the other hand, when people met me in person, they seemed to be relaxed and had allotted a few hours to the meeting, which allowed for more information to be produced. Furthermore, people also seem more likely to feel accountable in person in terms of making sure that they have done, what they perceive to be a "good job" in giving a necessary amount of information when they are in person, as opposed to just clicking a button and sending something off, as in most cases of those that emailed, to a perfect stranger.

In the beginning of the interview, I explained the program that I am in, and what the research was about in general: looking at the combination of elite level soccer in high school and what was involved in combining education and soccer both in high school and post high school. I told them that they were chosen because they fit the criteria of an elite level player in high school, which because of my background knowledge or research knew this to be true.

I divided the interview into two parts. The first was the life history component. In this part, I explained to the interviewee, that I had hoped that they would divide their life into 4 chapters, based on significant developments in their lives, starting when they were choosing where to go to high school and ending in the present. I told them that for most, the easiest way to divide their chapters would be Chapter One: The High School Years, Chapter Two: The University Years, Chapter Three: The Transition Years/Beginning of Career Implementation or Focus, and Chapter Four: Where I am At Now. I told them that that was just an example of how to divide the chapters, but that they were free to mold the chapters into whatever way that they saw fit, obviously tailoring them around if they attended or did not attend university.

At first, many of those interviewed were a bit shy in discussing themselves in their life history chapters, and had a bit of trouble elaborating without any prompting. For those that at first did not have that much to say, after I prompted them with statements like "tell me about what your school day involved in high school" or "talk about the role that soccer played for you in university", they would get going and provide me with a rich amount of information. One of the Norwegians, who did not have that much to say in the beginning, by the end, exclaimed "I have never thought about this before, this is so much fun!" This reaction corresponds with other researcher's findings that the vast majority of people really want to share their life

stories, as it is not done often, and allows people to gain a clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings (Atkinson, 1998).

For the majority, it was the first time that they had examined the impact that soccer had on their education and/or career path, and given the chance to verbalize their experiences, they elaborated as they shared from their memory what they experienced as an elite level female player at such a formative age. As a researcher, I was able to step back and allow the women to lead the interviews, which I believe played a role in their degree of comfort, which subsequently allowed them to share more freely and richly. Because of the more un-structured nature of the interview, I felt that participants were afforded the opportunity and time to communicate and re-communicate her responses (Fontana and Frey, 2003).

After those interviewed finished with their life history chapters, I proceeded to ask them thirty-five questions, divided into sections from the four chapters that served to ensure that I covered all the areas that might have been left out from the initial life history section. This section proved to be somewhat repetitive, but it also allowed the interviewees to expand on specific areas that they saw fit, or felt that they didn't explain clearly enough, in the initial portion of the interview.

Subsequently, I learned quickly the importance of structuring the questions in order to garner as much relevant information as possible. For my initial interviews, one of the thirty-five questions asked if those interviewed had any regrets in what they had done. I learned quickly, that the stock answer was no, even if I was their friend and had the benefit of having had them tell me in the past that they would have done things differently. I believe this is because as people we are indoctrinated to believe that "things happen for a reason" and to "have no regrets". After changing the wording of the question to "If you were to give your sixteen year old self advice with the benefit of the hindsight that you now have, what would you say". Suddenly answers to the initial question that claimed no regrets, were transformed into detailed advice, telling her younger self, many different ways to do things, if they were theoretically able to do things again. I found this use of words quite telling, and prompted me to examine my other questions to see if there were other opportunities to word things differently to garner responses with answers that were richer in nature.

## 4.4 Interview Relationships

I would divide my relationship with those I interview on three different levels: those that were close friends that I had known well from my teenage years, those that I had met over the years on various teams, and knew to varying degrees and those that were friends of friends, and therefore complete strangers.

For those that were close friends, this allowed me the benefit, of a history with them, whereby I knew already the answers of their life history, as I had lived it with them. This was the case for four of the girls that I interviewed, that I had grown up with and knew from around the age of twelve. I found it to be interesting however, as even with this history between these women, I was still surprised by many of their observations and learned things that I did not know about them, despite considering myself to be a close friend of theirs. I made a point with these four of trying to say as little as possible and letting them speak, as I was very cognizant of not affecting their interviews in any way because of my history with them and making them as equal as possible to those that I knew casually or not at all. Of course with these close friends, because I knew their history, I was able to prompt them to speak about for instance, their struggles with academics in high school, because I witnessed it first hand, and or get them to expand on areas that I knew were relevant to the study.

For those that I knew as teammates, I too found these interviews to be extremely comfortable in that they knew me from before, and therefore from the beginning of the interview seemed to be comfortable going into great details in varying areas because they were relaxed as because of our friendship, the interview had more of an informal feel.

Finally for those that were strangers, the interviews seemed to have more of a formal quality, both as I was a little nervous about coming across as professional as possible, while also making a great effort to make these women as comfortable as possible to allow them to open up in the same manner that my friends and former teammates did. I found that these women opened up the same, once the interview got underway and they felt comfortable with me.

The fact that I am currently an elite level female player myself had both a positive and a negative effect on my interviews. From a positive standpoint, I felt that the interviewees felt comfortable with me, and felt that I was sympathetic to what they had experienced, because they knew that I had gone through similar things, and perhaps this perceived compassion allowed them to open up about experiences that they would not have with a perfect stranger.

From a negative point of view, because I am thirty years old and still playing soccer, and not having embarked on a traditional career to this path, I felt in some of the questions like “what is your perception of society’s acceptable age to stop playing soccer?” that perhaps some people were softer in their answers or perhaps were not entirely truthful because they did not want to offend me, or were hesitant to give a view, that as my friend, they knew perhaps differed from what they knew me to believe. Again I was as cognizant as possible in terms of tailoring questions to not make this an issue, but I would be perhaps naïve to believe that there was no influence on this in perhaps some of their answers.

Furthermore another negative from knowing the subjects perhaps could be that in talking about regrets, or things that they wished they had done differently, knowing me personally, may have played a role in people being more defensive about their choices, as often people do not wish to put their choices down in front of those that they know. I had everyone tell me that they had “no regrets” when I initially had the chapter about what they would have done differently. At first I generalized the common answer to the fact that people don’t like to admit failure, but in retrospect my relationship with many of them, on a personal level, could have played a role in terms of shaping the manner in which they answered this very personal question.

In the first four interviews, I taped them with a small tape recorder I had purchased, and then transcribed them later. In my fifth interview, after a malfunction with the tape recorder, and not wanting to take any risks in having the interview recorded, I typed out the answers as my interviewee was speaking, and because of my ability to type fast, realized that I had no problems keeping up with her, and thus was saving myself valuable time and effort by just typing the interviews as they went on. I also found that having something to do, seemed to put the interviewee more at ease, as I was involved doing something, and they didn’t feel that they were sitting there with “all eyes on them”, which seemed to make the tone of my subsequent interviewees seem more relaxed in their demeanor.

## 4.5 Anonymity

Emphasizing that comments would be made anonymous is obviously a very important component of allowing those interviewed to share their thoughts freely. Subsequently, I have gone to great lengths to make sure that that promised anonymity was granted, which was a little difficult as not only had names to be changed, but also details that could potentially

make the women identifiable. Although I would not be so worried that the general public could identify these women, I am guessing that it would be those within the soccer community that would be most interested in my findings, and therefore there is the potential that those readers would be able to identify players based on their knowledge of for instance, which Canadian province that they are from. Therefore, I have tried to be as pro-active as possible in terms of changing details, which in any way would make any of the women interviewed for my project easily identifiable.

## 4.6 Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

After three months with interviews on two different continents, conducted in both English and Norwegian, I began sifting through the data that I had gathered from interviews with twenty separate women. Subsequently, my interview sheets ended up being between three to seven pages in length, after I combined the life history with the follow up questions. There were four Norwegians that I was unable to interview in person, so I received their answers via email, and combined that into my pages of data to analyze for the purposes of this thesis. Further to my collected research, at times as I was going through my data, I found holes, or details of stories that I wished to clarify, so in these cases, I followed up with the individual women via email and combined their answers in with the original interviews.

A challenge I found in reading through my interviews again, and perhaps a weakness that one could find with the life history approach, was the ability to not get drawn into the specific stories but instead being able to pull out common themes. Subsequently another point in analyzing the data that I felt I had to be cognizant of, was not letting my own personal experience lead my interpretation of the material that I had gathered, and skewing any results or themes, based on what I felt needed to be focused on from my own experience.

In terms of presenting the results, I felt that showing them in an organized fashion was important, and therefore, I decided to stick to the basic presentation in outlining them in the chapters that were presented to the women, as almost all used the same format in how they divided their chapters. Chapter 1 was their high school years, Chapter 2 was their university, or post high school years, Chapter 3 was a transition time from the post high school/university time, and Chapter 4 was where they were currently. Organizing the paper in this manner allowed for themes relative to the period of life and themes that were relevant to be brought forth and analyzed in an organized fashion, both for myself, and for the reader.

## 4.7 Validity

Kvale (1997) presents validity as encompassing seven stages: Thematic, Planning, Interviewing, Transcription, Analysis, Validation and Reporting. Within all of these points, important items are brought to the forefront such as how solid the theoretical assumptions are, the ethics in planning the research method, as well as the quality and thoroughness of the interview, as well as the transfer of research from the oral to written form. Furthermore Kvale (1997) assesses validity through these seven points in if the interpretations of the interviews are logical, the appropriate forum for a dialogue of the validity of the results, and ultimately, whether or not the report of the findings place the reader in a position with the information necessary to make their own assessments of the results.

Although a fairly uniform research methodology can be applied and much important data can be garnered from a life history interview, there may be more subjectivity, even chance, involved (Atkinson, 1998). Life history interviews can be approached scientifically but Atkinson (1998) likens it to an art form. As with artists, there are good ones and bad ones, the same can be said for the skills of those that interview. What the interviewer brings to the table is an important variable. It is he/she who needs to be masterful in asking the right questions, in a manner that is flexible, and adaptable to specific circumstances (Atkinson, 1998). The manner in which the researcher conducts the interview therefore can vary from person to person, and therefore, it would be difficult to replicate exactly an interview from one researcher to another. A life history interview is essentially a template that will be applied differently, in different situations, circumstances and settings, leading to difficulties in exact replications (Atkinson, 1998).

Furthermore, specific to the life history approach, as Plummer (2001) reported, it is important to take note when talking about the life history approach that it is difficult to get one straightforward truth in telling about life through a life story. The telling of true stories is often rooted deeply in perception, so the concept of “truth” can be just as vague at times. This was obvious to me even when listening to my friends tell shared stories of our past in their interviews, and recognizing that their perception of different situations was different to how I recalled them.

Therefore, this study is more exploratory as opposed to explanatory. Its purpose was to compare and highlight possible trends and/or gather information to further understand



challenges or successes that elite female soccer players in Norway and Canada had in combining their soccer and education. As Johannessen, Tufte and Kristoffersen (2009) noted the concept of transferability or external validity is an attempt to answer the question of whether or not results from a research project can be transferred to similar phenomena. The researcher must take out the specifics of the findings in order to reconstruct a new, more simplified version, while keeping the big picture of what the original findings were. In doing this, theories, concepts and interpretations that highlight whatever we are studying, are able to come forth. Furthermore, with qualitative studies, we are searching for the transfer of knowledge, instead of the ability to generalize, which gives the incorrect connotation of qualities associated with statistical collection and quantitative studies (Johannessen, Tufte and Kristoffersen, 2009).

Therefore, the clear question to ask myself is if the results from my study be generalized? Would similar findings and themes emerge from doing further research on female players in Norway and Canada? Would the findings and recommendations from my research be able to be taken one step further and applied to female players not only in Norway and Canada, but from other places in the world? What are the critical factors at play that would allow for this external validity, and have they been identified? Using Bourdieu's concept of field, I would argue that the habitus, doxa, and cultural capital relative to the soccer field is relevant, not only to female players, but male players that are struggling in making a living from sport, and thus the findings of my research would be relevant to them as well. In essence the hope of the research is that recommendations could be made to not only specifically to female players from Norway and Canada, but on a wider level, to any athlete that is walking a fine line between playing their sport at a high level, but garnering little capital that they can use outside the field, once their sporting career has concluded.

## 5. Results

The following section centers around the results gleaned from the life history interviews conducted with twenty females from Norway and Canada that were top players in high school. The results centered on the overall question that the research aimed to explore:

*What is the experience of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players in combining soccer with education?*

All those interviewed for this thesis, had a significant amount of soccer in their high school years, and all were on the track of their respective national soccer associations to play at the international level in the years following their graduation from high school, with some who already were doing so before they were finished with secondary school.

Research data accrued from my study will be presented according to the chapters that the women divided their life histories into.

### 5.1 The High School Years

All of those interviewed chose Chapter One as high school, as it was the beginning point that they were given for their life history interviews. Firstly I was interested in learning if at the high school level soccer was already influencing academic decisions, such as where to attend school. Secondly, I wanted to investigate whether or not soccer played a positive role in the academics of the females interviewed in high school. Research indicates that participating in sport correlates with good grades (Hanson and Kraus, 1998) and I was interested if this correlated with the experience of those that were interviewed.

1. Was the high school that the women chose to attend, in any way selected because of their participation in soccer, and did this choice of high school affect her academic choices later?
2. How did participation in soccer at an elite level, affect their academic results in high school?

For the ten Canadians that were interviewed for the thesis, only one stated that she chose her high school because of her ability at soccer. Said Sarah, “I was on the national youth team for

basketball and soccer at the time when I was deciding where to go to high school. I decided to go to the high school where I ended up because it was known as being a school for top athletes, and I thought it would be a better option in terms of the time I knew I would be missing for National Team commitments. I did end up missing a significant amount of school because of soccer, but it ended up helping me in the end, because my teachers were used to having athletes who were away because of sports, and they were, you know, pretty understanding with me having to miss so much class time.”

Eight of the Canadians ended up selecting the high school that was based on the neighborhood where they lived. One Canadian, who has been a regular on the Canadian National Team for the last eight years, stated that she went to her high school because of academics, instead of the one that was suggested to her for soccer. Said Raine, “My parents and I, our first priority were my academics. At the time for those of us in NTC, it was suggested that we go to a sports school for soccer, but it was known to be of a lower quality academically. Actually right now if I made the same choice, I actually wouldn’t be eligible for NTC anymore. But at the time, I was able to go to an all-girls private school that I ended up graduating from. The curriculum was pretty hard, but school was the first priority for both me and my parents, and soccer was fit in around that”.

For the Norwegians, the answer to the question of if the choice of where to attend soccer was affected by soccer, was completely different, as all were students of Wang and NTG, two soccer specific private schools in the Oslo area. One of the players, Stine, spent a brief period on the full National Team, and has been a long time starter on one of the top teams in the Toppserien. She explained, “I grew up an eight hour car ride away from Oslo in a really small town. I loved soccer and when my Dad came home one day with information about NTG and Wang, I thought it would be a great idea, as I wanted to focus on football. We applied to both schools, and really quickly, I got in, was in Oslo touring the schools, and found a roommate for the school year. I ended up choosing NTG because I just liked how there was a really strong focus on the football. I absolutely loved my time there and would not have changed a thing. My days there were very full with soccer and school, but that was good for me because I was pretty homesick. I was a really good student and got really high grades, and also my football progressed really well, as I made both the U17 and U19 National Team while I was there.”

Almost all of the Norwegians interviewed were on the youth national team at the time, or playing at the top level for their age of club, and wanted to go to Wang or NTG to be able to combine serious soccer with high school. All claimed to enjoy their experience. Only one, Marlene, whose only experience with Toppserien football, was in high school, when asked if she would tell her sixteen year old self that was making the decision of whether or not to go to Wang to do the same that she did, said that she would give herself advice to not do as she had done or to reconsider something different because of the time commitment to soccer that was involved.

Marlene said, “to be honest, it was a lot for a sixteen year old to be playing so much soccer, even though I was able to graduate third in my class, so it didn’t really affect my grades. But I was always at soccer, travelling to practice or having to do my schoolwork, so I didn’t really have a ‘normal’ high school experience. I think if I were to give advice to my sixteen-year-old self, I would say maybe to not do so much soccer. That if I was good enough, I would make it eventually and be able to have a little more of a normal high school experience, without having to train so many times a week.”

For Stine, the player who moved eight hours from home in order to attend NTG, she was the only one who mentioned the decision to attend the school affected her academically later. “I made the decision to go to NTG because I thought it suited me best because of soccer. Don’t get me wrong, I absolutely loved NTG, but I was not able to take chemistry and physics at NTG, and I would have been able to at Wang. I ended up wanting to take medicine, but I had to have those classes, so after high school, I ended up having to take them by correspondence online, which made it take more time before I was able to apply to medical school. So I guess if I was giving advice to my sixteen year old self I would say to maybe look a little more into the school system and the classes that I could take before I decided to go to NTG. But I did love my time there, so I guess in the end it worked out fine, it just took a little bit longer to get into med school.”

In all of my interviews, for both the Norwegians and Canadians, those that went on to play at the highest level, and those that did not, all spoke very highly of how their large time commitment with soccer, played a positive role in their time management skills.

Subsequently, it could be argued, that this learning of positive skills via soccer contributed to a positive acquisition of social capital. A current Norwegian National Team member Line said, “I was already a strong student in high school. The time I had to spend with football,

which was probably about 25 hours a week in high school, definitely forced me to learn time management, and organizational skills and also forced me to prioritize my life. I had no social life outside of soccer, but with that being said, my social life were my soccer friends, and we always had a fantastic time at training and matches....I think overall, I was able to get better grades because of how focused that I had to be with my time.”

Angelina, a Canadian who stopped playing soccer after her second year of university, spoke of how soccer played somewhat of a “savior” role in her academic studies in high school. “I sort of hung out with a bad crowd in high school. I’m not sure why, but for whatever reason I was drawn towards those kids. I think if I didn’t have soccer, I would definitely have been into drugs and getting into lots of trouble. Soccer gave me a sense of structure and purpose that I didn’t really get much of at home. I would say the ways that soccer had the most positive influence on me in high school was through the friends that I had on my club team, as well as giving me a reason not to go out and get drunk on the weekends, because I wanted to be good in games.”

The answers by both the Canadians interviewed as well as the Norwegians for the most part were the same in terms of the positive influence that soccer had on their schoolwork in high school. Participants in the study from both Norway and Canada, said things such as “it helped me with my time management skills, ”, “I learned the importance of discipline and hard work which helps me in my life today,” and “I learned how good it feels to work hard and sacrifice towards achieving a goal”

However, the number of Norwegians attending specific sports schools would differ from Canadians, regardless, as the school systems in Norway are set up, for top players to attend soccer specific academies such as Wang and NTG. On the other hand, the prevalence of top female high school Canadian players attending these kinds of schools is still limited as for the most part they do not exist within the Canadian school system, as player development is focused on the clubs outside of school.

## 5.2 The University Years

All of those interviewed, chose to make chapter two focused on the time directly after high school graduation. Through the questioning in this section, I was interested in learning what, if any, effect did soccer play in choosing where the women chose to attend university. Subsequently, I was interested in learning and what effect if any, did their soccer

commitments have on the subjects that these women took or their post high school path in general. I will focus on the results from the following questions:

1. Did soccer play a role in the decision to attend university
2. Was the length of time that it took to complete university, or the subjects taken, affected by playing soccer?

All of the Canadians that were interviewed stated that their decision to attend university was based on soccer. Of the ten, three stayed in Canada, and seven played in the NCAA in the United States. Of the three that stayed in Canada, one received the equivalent of a full scholarship, because of academics and soccer, and the other two received some financial help towards their degrees because they played on the team.

For Angelina, “the only reason why I went to university was because the coach recruited me for the soccer team. I got a job after high school finished and didn’t really have an interest in continuing with school, but Henry, the coach at a local college, asked me if I would be interested in playing for the team, since I had had him as my Provincial Team coach, and said that they would pay for my tuition. After working for a year, I kind of missed soccer and decided to go. I ended up dropping out, after one semester because I just wasn’t interested in the school part, you know, but I would not have gone at all only that Henry got in touch with me.”

For all the Canadians that attended the US universities, they did so solely because they were recruited for the soccer team and received a scholarship to the university. Dalia, who became a member of the Canadian National Team, shortly after graduating from high school, spoke of making the decision to attend university in the US, as it was thought of being the higher caliber of soccer. “I got called into my first national team camp right in the last few months of my last year of high school. At the time I was just thinking that I would go to Queens, a top Canadian university a few hours from where I grew up. The National Team coach at the time, made it clear however that I needed to go to the US, so thankfully I got accepted into the Ivy League university that I ended up attending. If I hadn’t gotten picked up by the National Team though, I would have just stayed in Canada.”

For Genna another Canadian who was with the youth national team when she was making the choice to attend university, she made the decision where to go to university, with soccer being

the primary focus. “I went on a recruiting trip to the school. My Mom was the one doing the research on the academic side of things, but I went down to the school, really enjoyed it and decided to go after they offered me a full ride (school being fully paid for). The coach had seen me play at an NTC event and I guess he liked what he saw, so that was why I got recruited by them. He changed completely though once I got to the school and was a total jerk. I really liked the friends I made and the school, but I hated the soccer, and if I could do it again, I definitely would not have gone to that school.”

For the Norwegians that were interviewed, only those that attended university in the United States spoke of soccer playing a role in their choice to go to university.

Subsequently, Line, the current Norwegian National Team member mentioned previously, was one of 4 Norwegians interviewed who decided to go to school in the US. Although she was just getting her foot in the door with the full national team and was told she would be jeopardizing her chance with the Norwegian National Team, if she were to attend school in the US, she decided to take the chance. According to Line, she recognized that she was young, and figured that the experience that she would get as a person and a player by going out of her comfort zone and experiencing something new was worth the risk of upsetting the National Team coaches. She attended two different universities in two years, in different parts of the US in order to get a well rounded experience, in both cases receiving a full scholarship that covered everything allowed by the rules in the American university system; tuition, housing, books and food.

Her reasoning in picking the schools in the US were in the case of the first school, because of a player that she knew and respected, was already there. “I decided to go to the first school, because my former club-mate, who played with the National Team, was already there, so I knew that the quality would be good with the soccer program. She spoke highly of the school and program, so I decided to go there since I did not know very much about the quality of the other schools.” She continued that she felt that the school was a continuation of her experience at NTG, where she was able to focus on soccer, without feeling like her schooling would suffer. Also Line cited getting to experience the top of the line facilities at US schools, as a big factor that lured her to get the American college experience.

Marthe and Michelle were players involved in the youth national teams in Norway, while attending Wang. Marthe described their interest in going to the US being sparked at age 14 while playing at one of the biggest youth soccer tournaments in the US, the USA Cup in

Minneapolis. They were approached by coaches of US universities who had seen them play and were interested in having them come and play soccer at their school. They were too young at the time, but their curiosity was piqued. Subsequently a few years later, they spoke to a friend that had gone over to the US and he had loved his experience and recommended that the girls do the same. So they sent off videos to a few schools, and took some recruiting trips, and decided on a top school in Florida, because of a full scholarship and warm weather.

In describing her university experience, in which both girls stayed all four years and graduated with bachelor degrees, says Marthe, “Our experience in going to the USA was amazing! I am so glad I made the decision, it’s one of the best things I have done. The soccer was great and everything around us. It was definitely very good for us to get to know another culture, language, system, and be independent from everything. We had to learn to cope with other types of environments as well. I loved being there and I never regret anything about going. I think it is a great experience for all young people to have, to go out in the world and open their eyes a bit more.”

For the rest of the Norwegians that did not attend university in the US, there was not any kind of a correlation between where they went to university and soccer. For two of the Norwegians that ended up moving outside of Oslo, both were led by their soccer, as opposed to a university program. Both Anne and Marlene moved strictly because of soccer concerns, Anne because she wanted to get more playing time in the Toppserien and Marlene also because she was not getting much time on her top ranked Norwegian team, and was set up in Denmark with the hopes of returning to Norway with top league experience. Marlene mentioned that looking back, going to Denmark had somewhat of a negative impact on her acquisition of educational capital, as she ended up taking a program that was of little interest to her, but was the only option remotely close to what she was interested in studying. On the other hand Anne, felt that she had little idea what she wanted to do coming out of high school and was in no rush to complete a bachelor program. Both girls only had as a plan to leave Oslo for a year or two maximum, and both ended up staying for four years or longer, as they found boyfriends and built a life in the cities that they moved to, and soccer became less of a priority for both of them as time went on.

The decision to attend university and the school chosen was led primarily by soccer for those that attended university in North America. Subsequently, extra time needed to finish



university because of participation in soccer, was found in both Norwegians and Canadians. For the two Canadians that were on the National Team, who took extra time to complete their university degree, both were because of time away from school, due to National Team commitments. All the Norwegians who stayed in Norway for university (4 of the 10 attending US universities on scholarship), did not finish their bachelor degree in time, and all cited reasons surrounding soccer as a main reason for the extra time it took in order to finish their university education.

Sarah from Canada was most extreme Canadian case as to the length of time that it took her to finish her university program, as she was juggling school with National Team, throughout her time in university. Because of the time commitments with soccer, it took her eight years to finish a four-year program, something that she regrets. “I regret the things that I had to give up of a normal university experience because of soccer. I feel like I was so brainwashed, I was willing to do whatever the National Team coaches told me to do. I had to change universities half way through because the National Team coach at the time didn’t think the program that I was at was good enough”.

Sarah continued, “I also ended up missing a semester of school, because I was called into National Team camp before the 2007 World Cup, and he ended up making me the last cut, a couple of weeks after school started, so I wasn’t able to go to school that semester. I was lucky though, because I had done well in my classes to that point, so I was granted a scholarship through the NCAA degree completion program, to have an extra two years of school fully paid, otherwise I am not sure I would have been able to finish my degree. I ended up graduating in the end with three majors, but it took a lot of work. In the end I enjoyed my last year of college the most when I was cut from the National Team. I was finally able to do normal college things like have the time and be around to join a sorority, have a boyfriend and just enjoy being a student for once.”

For Raine, a Canadian who got her first opportunity with the National Team in her junior year of university, bad advice by her academic counselor coupled with National Team commitments, caused her to have to take an extra year to graduate. “I got my first chance with the Canadian team in my second semester junior year. There were a couple of cancellations with the National Team and they saw that I was close so I took the bus to South Carolina for my first game against the US, and things progressed from there. My timing ended up being

really good with everything and in 2003 I played in the World Cup, which was a great experience. I was flying back and forth because of the National Team, so I didn't really get my big senior season which was disappointing and in retrospect I should have red-shirted as I was back and forth with the National Team for the World Cup." "Red-shirting" is a term specific to NCAA soccer, and is when a player takes five years instead of four to use their four-year playing eligibility.

"I ended up taking off my second semester senior year in 2004 because we were in training for the Olympics and I wanted to focus on that," Raine continued. "Unfortunately we didn't end up making it. It worked out well though, because I had gotten bad advice from my academic advisor about taking enough credits for my international student visa to be valid. That being said, I would have had to take the semester off regardless, because of it. It ended up working out in the end, as I stayed an extra half year at school, and worked as the manager for the team at that time, so I was still covered under scholarship."

For the Norwegians, there did not seem to be the same urgency to finish university as there was with the Canadians and in the case of all of the Norwegians who stayed in Norway for school, none finished their university in the prescribed amount of time for their program.

Anne, a Norwegian that was a National Youth Team player, attended Wang in Oslo. She decided to move to a northern Norwegian city after high school, in order to get more playing time in the Toppserien, as the club in the northern city, had just reached the top league, and did not have as many established players as the top club she had been with in Oslo. She was loaned to this club for the year, with the idea that she would return to Oslo when the season was finished. Subsequently, she got a job her first season, and after getting a boyfriend in the North, decided that she would stay, abandoning her original plan.

Says Anne (translated from Norwegian), "I started studying sociology in my second year, but decided after year one that it was not what I wanted to do. So I switched to studying sports, and did a year of that, before switching to a bachelor of sports and science which I finished in 2004, which was seven years after finishing high school, but I was juggling playing soccer and working too, so not attending school full time for the most part. After graduating with the bachelors, I took a year of Norwegian language, and teacher training, and also took organizational leadership. Through this time I lived off of money from my student loan, work

and also a little bit of money through soccer that varied throughout the years. I wasn't in any real hurry to finish with school, as I was enjoying the balance that I had with studying, work and soccer.”

For Stine, who moved to Oslo in high school to attend NTG, she is now in her second year of medical school: She had to make six years worth of attempts at acceptance, specifically because of her classes from NTG not corresponding with the classes she needed for med school, coupled with very difficult acceptance requirements. However, after finally gaining acceptance last year, she was disappointed to learn that the program that she gained admittance to was in Stavanger, an hour plane ride from Oslo. She did not want to move to Stavanger, and leave her team in Oslo, which currently is top of the table in the Toppserien and one she has played with for years, so she spent her first year of med school, commuting between Stavanger and Oslo for matches, a feat that left her exhausted.

“Things differed week to week,” said Stine. “Once the league started, usually I had mandatory classes on Mondays and Tuesdays. I would have friends take notes for me the rest of the week, and then fly to Oslo for training and matches with my Toppserien team for the rest of the week. I was just really lucky to have such good friends that would do that for me.” She continued, “I am hoping to switch into med school in Oslo for second year, since that is the only chance we have to switch, and I really want to continue to play for my team. If that doesn't happen, I will most likely take the year off med school and go to a private school so I can try and improve my grades so I am able to apply again. I don't know what I am going to do if I don't get in, in Oslo after I take the time off. I just know that there is a good chance that we will win the league and finally get the chance to play in the Champions League, so I am just hoping it all works out. I don't want to leave Oslo and my team. I guess I am just the kind of person that gets attached, and I have all my friends there, love the style of soccer we play, and I just think its nice to build a connection to one place, so fingers crossed it works out.”

A clear difference between Norway and Canada becomes apparent when comparing Stine's story with Stacey, a Canadian National Team player. Stacey recently had to give up her soccer career, in order to pursue her dream of attending medical school and becoming a doctor. “The day I got into medical school was like a dream come true. But once I started to think about what it meant for me with soccer, the tears started flowing, because you know, I knew I was

going to have to make the choice to do one or the other. My first plan was to take the year off and defer my acceptance, since World Cup was coming up and I thought I had a pretty good shot. But I found out that I wouldn't be able to do that, I would have to re-apply, and then I kind of just knew that I would have to give up playing soccer on the National Team because obviously medical school is a huge commitment, and it would just be too much. I definitely cried and cried for a few days, but I feel good that I made the right decision. You know, I knew it would always be tough to stop soccer because I just love everything about it so much, but sooner or later it was going to have to happen, and it was my dream to go to medical school as well, so it was time.”

The difference between Stacey and Stine and their ability and opportunity to combine professional studies/career, makes it quite clear the difference between the Norwegian and Canadian educational and soccer systems. In Canada, once one is finished with university a choice must be made. On the other hand in Norway based on the results of the research, this decision to choose soccer or a career/graduate school pathway, seems to be one that can be pushed back, or not made at all.

### 5.3 The Post University Transition

Most people decided to break the third chapter up to discuss their transition after they had completed their university experience, and or, once they were a few years out of high school. In this phase of life for those interviewed, for those who stopped their pursuit of elite soccer, I was interested in learning what was the trigger in deciding not to pursue soccer any farther if they stopped, and/or if they hit a point where they felt forced to choose education/career and soccer. I was also interested in learning for those that continued with soccer, if they felt that it had a negative effect, on their ability to pursue training or education outside of soccer.

1. If you chose to stop playing after university was it a voluntary decision (you were eager to move on?) Or was it for other reasons, such as because of injury?)
2. Did you feel that you had to make a choice between your soccer and your educational goals?

Of the players that were interviewed, both in Norway and Canada, approximately half were or are current National Team or Toppserien players. Of that group of players, all but two are still

playing at the top level. The two that have finished, Anne from Norway, and Stacey from Canada, both made the choice voluntarily to stop with football, after playing for a few years at the top level. For Anne, it was because she recently became pregnant, and for Stacey it was because of her acceptance to medical school. The rest of those who are currently playing on the National Team, and/or in the top league, have obviously not made the decision to stop, and are continuing on the soccer path that they were put on in high school, in their respective countries.

For those Norwegians that did not reach the top level, the reasons for not reaching the top level differed. For Marlene, “I felt that it was time to come back to Norway after I had been away in Denmark for many years. It was kind of ironic, because the initial plan for me in going to Denmark was to come back shortly after, for football. But at the end of last year, the timing just seemed right to come home. I had been away for six years, and I had a great job offer in Oslo. I called the coach of the club that I had left because I was interested in coming full circle and going back to the club that I had come from. He offered the opportunity for me to come out to train with the team, and I was excited to, even though it was a completely different team, I actually don’t think there was anyone there that had been there when I had left.”

She continued, “At first with the training, I felt a little behind. The level was higher than what I had left in Denmark, but I felt like I was doing ok, and keeping up. But then we started playing training matches, and it became pretty apparent to me, that I wasn’t really in his plans. This became confirmed when he told me that if he had the choice to put in junior players, or me, that he would be putting in junior players. I didn’t think that was fair because I thought I did well when I got the opportunity. The job that I had was a really good one, and I would be giving up a lot to be training every day, and it just didn’t seem worth it under those circumstances. He told me that I would be welcome to come and train with the team, and that there was a chance that I would get an opportunity, but at that point, after the conversation when he said I would be playing behind the junior players sometimes, I just kind of lost all motivation. I felt kind of weird as well because I wouldn’t officially be on the team. So I just decided to stop, and I actually haven’t touched a ball in months, which is the longest time for me since I started playing. Its kind of weird to not have soccer, but my job has been going so well, so I feel pretty good that I made the right decision.”

Irene, a former youth national team player, who attended university and received her bachelor degree in the US, her decision to stop was because of an undiagnosed injury. “I had an incredible pain in my back for the last two years of my college career that was painful and took the fun out of playing. I tried playing in the North American league after I graduated, and that was kind of the last straw, as the pain was just too much for me. I lost motivation because of it. I decided to come home to Norway and I started working with the hope of going to school for my Masters Degree. I ended up working, and I am planning on starting school soon. Finally, this year I got the diagnosis that I had a tear in the muscle in my back. It’s a shame that it took so long to find out what the problem was, but I feel like I am so far removed from top level football now, and involved doing other things in my life, so I don’t think I will start playing again at any kind of a high level.”

For Gemma, the Canadian who did not have a positive experience with her college coach, once she was finished with university, she was unmotivated to continue with soccer at the highest level. “When I was done, I just was so unmotivated with it all, I just wanted to find my love for it again, I was also having big time problems with my back, so that didn’t really help things either. Once my back got better, and I started getting into the swing of things again, I think I would have wanted to continue playing at the highest level, but because I was “older” and there was a lot of politics at the time, I just didn’t see myself getting an opportunity. I thought it would just be better to focus on school and getting a job to get some money, which I did, so I am happy with my decision. I started playing for fun again on a team in my area, and we are actually pretty decent, so I feel like I have a good balance and am enjoying playing again.”

Said Melanie, a Canadian who received many accolades at the Canadian university that she attended, as well as winning a National Championship, her lack of desire to continue playing after university she attributed to her coach in university, who she never felt she got along with. According to Melanie, “We just did not get along from pretty soon after I got to campus. We just clashed, and I had never really had that with a coach before. I could tell that she didn’t want to play me because of it, but she had to, because not to sound full of myself, but I was one of the top players.”

Melanie continued. “After university, I just had such a sour taste in my mouth from her, that I just stopped playing. Shortly after that, I developed an eating disorder. Soccer had sort of

always been my lifeline, and my sense of order in my life, and once I didn't have it any more, food kind of became the thing that I was focused on. Things spiraled downhill pretty quickly, and soon I was in the middle of a huge battle with food and eating, that led me into the hospital. I was dealing with that for a good two years, and also had to go to a home for about a year to really get myself over it, so when I was done with that, I just didn't have it in me to continue with soccer. It was like I had closed a chapter of my life, and it was just time to move on. I sometimes think, you know, that it would be fun to play again, and I think about it, but I just think too much time has passed, and I've moved on and am enjoying doing what I am doing now, and don't have the time to put into it.”

In terms of having to make a choice between soccer and career/educational goals, four of the Canadian players that did not make the highest level, cited wanting to move on and do other things, as the main reason for stopping when they did. In addition to Marlene and Irene, Camille, stated that she didn't really have the desire to continue, while both Michelle and Marthe stated that they came back and played for one of the top teams in the Toppserien but quit after a couple of years. They felt playing in the Toppserien, after they had had the experience of top football in the US to be somewhat of a letdown, especially as the school that they had attended had had a great deal of funding that allowed the female players the best of everything. Michelle stated that she just felt like she had gotten all the experience that she could get in football and was motivated to start trying other things.

## 5.4 The Present and Future

In the final chapter presented by those interviewed, they focused on where they are at now, and where they see themselves going in the future. I was interested to learn the influence that soccer had on where they were today, and the effect, if any that soccer had on their present and their future.

1. Looking back at your educational path, do you feel your career/educational path has been affected by soccer, either positively or negatively?
2. In what way do you feel your elite level soccer background has influenced your career today?

The purpose of asking the first question was to see whether or not people had made sacrifices to their education because of soccer, and if this had negative ramifications in their career abilities or educational opportunities today. For those that were from Canada and who did not pursue soccer after high school, three of those interviewed, two of which stayed in Canada for university and one who went to the United States on scholarship, said that they would not have changed anything, with all three of them eluding to the fact that they might not have been influenced to go to university, as they were not very academically oriented, had they not have had the opportunity to play soccer on a team. For the other two, both said that they somewhat regretted the choices that they made to attend the universities that they did, as they had chosen them primarily for their soccer programs. However, the primary reasons that both gave for their disillusionment were rooted more in their dislike for their soccer experience, as opposed to having any negative affect on their soccer careers or academic careers.

For those Canadians that did go on to play at the highest levels, only one spoke about her disillusionment with her educational choices being affected by soccer. For this woman, however, her unhappiness lay more with how she felt her choices, were dictated by her national team coach as opposed to a negative effect on her career opportunities. Again with soccer being extremely tied in with university for Canadian players, they tended to rate their university experiences based on how much they enjoyed their soccer programs, as all spoke of coming out of school with a four year degree because of soccer, and none spoke about giving up anything from a career standpoint because of the schools that they chose to attend.

For the Norwegians, those that did not pursue soccer to the highest level, three of those interviewed, Michelle, Marthe and Irene chose to attend school in the US and all spoke of how it enhanced their soccer and life experience to get out of Norway and have the opportunity to experience another culture. All spoke with admiration of how the United States tied in soccer with university and the high level of professionalism with which they were treated, with opportunities for strength and conditioning and daily physiotherapy if needed, free clothing and shoes and the opportunity to combine their soccer and school. For one of the Norwegians that stayed in Norway for university, Carine, she spoke of how she had decided right after high school not to take soccer any further after enjoying her stay at Wang and therefore her university choices were in no way affected by soccer. On the other hand, rounding out the group of Norwegians who did not pursue soccer to the highest level, Marlene who moved to Denmark in pursuit of her high level soccer aspirations, said that overall there was not a large negative effect on her career opportunities because of soccer, although she felt



that perhaps if she was not as focused on soccer, that she would have figured out what she wanted to “be” when she was done with soccer sooner.

For the Canadians that played or are currently playing at the highest levels, those that are playing at the highest levels felt that their career opportunities have been affected by playing at the highest levels, but it is a choice that they have made, as they have enjoyed the opportunity to pursue soccer to the highest levels. One of the Canadians, currently on the National Team articulated, “Of course with the travelling that we do, there is no way to hold a regular job. But we do get some funding from the government (\$1500 per month), and I get some money from the club that I play for. I have been able to buy a house, which I rent out while I am away, so financially I don’t feel like I am really struggling because of the choice I have made to play soccer. The way that I look at it you know, is that a lot of people my age still have student loans to pay off, which I don’t because of my scholarship, and I only get one chance to play at this level, to experience World Cups and Olympics, so I feel like I will worry about a job and a career when this phase of my life is over.”

For Stacey, she felt that there was a clear choice that she had to make between continuing to play on the National Team and going to medical school. “There was no way that I was going to be able to do both, so I guess you could say yeah, that my educational path was affected by soccer, or at least I had to make the choice for it not to be affected. I think it probably helped on my medical school application to say that I had played on the National Team, and of course the university that I attended for my bachelor degree, a big part of that decision had to do with soccer.”

On the question of whether or not soccer has had an effect on the career that they women have today, or the one that they intend on having when their soccer career is over, all spoke on the influence that soccer had in terms of either shaping their personality and work ethic, as well as creating time management skills that they feel are an asset in a busy workplace.

Said one of those interviewed, echoing the sentiments of many of the others, both Canadian and Norwegian, “I think people hiring for a job, love the background that elite athletes have. I mean we learn so many things by playing at the highest levels. I know for me, I learned about the importance of competing for something and what goes into trying to be the best, that I don’t think my friends who weren’t athletes maybe experienced in the same way. I learned the importance of teamwork, I learned how to work with people that I maybe did not like, I learned how to work hard, I learned how to juggle my time and prioritize. I have gotten so

much out of being an elite player, and learning about how much it takes, I mean, I don't think at the end of the day, if you give so much of yourself to something, that you ever look back and have regrets. No matter what happens you always get something positive from it, and I think I can say that that is true for me."

In terms of the player's current career paths, there is a wide variety in the influence that their backgrounds as elite players play in their current jobs. Jalissa, a Canadian who played at university in the US on scholarship and stopped playing soccer once she received her university degree, her job as a speech therapist has little to do directly with her background in elite soccer. However, her current location in the US, she attributes to having played university soccer in America. She says, "Being a speech therapist really has little to do with my background directly in soccer, but I guess you could say the fact that I went to school down south has something to do with my life now. When I went to school down here, I didn't know what I wanted to be. Once I was finished I wanted to move back to Canada, but I found out that to do my Masters degree in Vancouver, I would have to take another two years of undergrad study, because the Canadian school had different requirements for speech therapy than my US school."

She continued, "I decided to go to grad school in the US because although it was a lot more expensive than going to school in Canada, I just did not want to take two more years of similar classes before I could start grad school. So I ended up borrowing money from my Dad and going to school. It took me a while to pay him back, but I love my job and my life down there, even though it wasn't what I had planned, so in a weird way, I would say yes, that my life was influenced through playing soccer, although I am really happy with the way that things turned out for me."

For the other Canadians that did not go on to play at the highest levels, two of the others say that their background in elite soccer plays no role in their lives currently today. Dina is a nurse, and Angelina works in retail sales. The other two Canadians, Melanie and Gemma both say that their background in soccer plays a large role in their jobs today, as Melanie is a personal trainer, and Gemma is doing a program on becoming an MRI technician, because of her extensive injury history in soccer, and her desire to help people with similar injury struggles. Of the Canadians that are still playing soccer at the top levels, all five say that they think their career in the future will be shaped by soccer.

Stacey says that she can imagine her future in medicine having to do something with her background in soccer. Sarah sees her future in coaching or as a personal trainer, while Raine is interested in getting involved in a healing profession, either physiotherapy or massage therapy, once she is done with the National Team. Anna has currently launched her own business providing physical and soccer training, lauding her past as a national team and college athlete as giving her an edge over her competition. Finally Dalia, an Ivy League graduate saw her involvement in soccer being natural when she is finished playing as “I don’t see myself with a lot of other options, connections or skill-set. Although I don’t want to coach, I see myself involved in some capacity, most likely something to do in administration. To be honest, I don’t know what else I would do and can’t see it in any way being outside of the soccer realm.”

For the Norwegians, there is a variance in terms of whose careers are influenced by their elite level soccer background, or those that feel their future career will be influenced, once they are finished playing. Stine is the only current national team/elite level player that isn’t sure if her playing career will influence her future career, “To be honest, I am not sure what kind of medicine I will practice or if it will have anything to do with soccer.” The rest of the elite level players all see a future in personal training, coaching, or sport administration in one capacity or another. All cite first hand knowledge garnered about health, fitness and soccer, from playing at the national team or top level, as being a huge determining factor for their desire to utilize soccer in their career once they are finished. “I love soccer”, said Line. “Of course it only makes sense to me to use that once I am finished. I can definitely see myself doing something involving coaching, and I have already used some time to start taking my coaching levels although I don’t see myself going down that road for another few years.”

## 6. Discussion

*What is the experience of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players in combining soccer with education?*

Comparing the experience of Norwegian and Canadian players, the results showed that there was a clear difference in how female players from Canada and Norway were able to combine soccer with education, but also significant similarities.

At the high school level, in Canada, it was clear that for elite female players, who came from all parts of Canada that their choice of high school was in no way affected by their participation in elite level soccer. This could be explained by the Canadian school system, and historical soccer structure, whereby there is no connection between academics and soccer; soccer is done away from school, within community clubs and organizations. Most of the Canadians interviewed went to their neighborhood public school.

In Norway, because I wanted to interview players that had attended the private sports high schools, I knew before I began the interview, that their choice of high school had been directly influenced by their prowess as elite female players. Many of the players had been recruited for the high school, or given scholarships to attend, and some had moved cities in order to be in Oslo, where these schools existed. In this way, the high school experience of elite female players in Norway seemed to be more congruent with the university experience of those in North America.

With a strong connection between the coaches in the Toppserien and these private high schools, it is logical that they would encourage their charges to enroll in order to have more influence on their training and development. Currently this trend continues, as Kolbotn, has over half of its roster as students or alumni of Wang, where coach Dan Eggen has worked, and two other top Oslo teams, LSK and Stabaek, have their head coach and captain respectively, employed at NTG, and many young players in both clubs are subsequently drawn from NTG.

Some of the Norwegians interviewed felt that the time commitments involved with soccer in high school was too much, and/or affected their academics in some way. On the other hand the majority of the Canadians, perhaps because there was no obvious connection between their academics and soccer, did not feel any negative affect on their academics because of

their high school choice. Canadians that were juggling time commitments with the youth national teams however, did speak about how missing so much classroom time for national team camps, required understanding teachers, who sometimes gave them grades based on sympathy. This struggle between balancing academic and athletic commitments, while performing at the highest levels has been linked in past research (Hickey and Kelly, 2008 and Christensen and Sorensen, 2009). Subsequently my findings match with recent research that talented young players are nowadays expected to balance contradictory demands coming from the fields of education and elite sport, and subsequent demands on their time (Bourke, 2003, McGillvray and McIntosh 2005, Roderick, 2006).

While there was an obvious difference between Norway and Canada for female players, in terms of the influence that elite soccer had on their educational choices for high school, the majority of players from both countries cited soccer as having a large and positive affect on their high school studies in many different facets. The majority of those interviewed in addition to being top athletes, also were top students. This seems to support the assertion in studies that have suggested that there is a strong correlation between females involved in sport and good grades (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1978, Birrell, 1978, Blinde, Han and Taub, 1994). Both those Norwegian and Canadian women cited their busy schedules with sport in high school as a positive development in their lives, as they were forced to learn early qualities such as time management, prioritizing, and focus. Both Canadians and Norwegians alike spoke about how the demands of soccer forced a certain lifestyle that had a positive affect on them, providing both an athletic peer group, and positive lifestyle choices that centered on being prepared for games and practices.

For the time period that was immediately following high school graduation, again there was a stark difference between the routes that players from Norway and Canada followed. Whereas in high school, the Canadians had no influence from soccer in choosing their educational route, and Norway was the opposite, when choosing where to attend university, all the Canadians chose to take a university education, and for the most part where to attend school, based on factors that had to do with soccer. A majority of those interviewed attended university in the US because of soccer, supporting research that there is a “brain-drain” for elite female players who leave Canada for the US and NCAA (Hall, 2003). The research showed that this “brain-drain” was also applicable to Norwegians, as the draw of scholarships in the US lured some of those interviewed away from Norway. My findings confirmed that

there was little correlation between where to go to university and soccer, for those that stayed in Norway to pursue soccer after high school graduation.

My research also showed that some of the Norwegians, made the decision to move cities based purely on soccer, with no regard for university programs in that area. Because of this they took courses that were not applicable to what they ultimately were interested in doing. My findings are similar to research by Gammelsaeter, Herskedal and Solenes (2008), in a study examining top league female handball players in Norway. Their research found that the biggest problem for female handball players that wanted to take higher education and didn't, was because there were classes that were not appropriate to what they wanted to study in the area where their team was.

The majority of the Canadians attended university in the US and played NCAA soccer. Many spoke of how soccer felt like a job, and that their coaches changed in a negative manner once they were successful recruited, enrolled in school and on the team. This confirms reports by journalists, former athletes and social scientists note that the commercialization of big-time college athletics, can at times have coaches turn their programs into business enterprises, that emphasize winning at all costs, often neglecting the educational goals of their institutions, and the enjoyment of the sport by the athlete (Adler and Adler, 1987).

For the chapter that followed receiving a university education, a common theme emerged from the Canadians. A chance to play on the National Team was the proverbial carrot for many in continuing to play at the elite level, despite the financial uncertainties, concurring with past research (McGhee, 2008). Some felt that they had or were close to that opportunity, due to already being on the team, or having attended youth national team events. Others felt that they did not have a chance and that the sacrifice would be too great, which affected their motivation to continue.

Both Canadians and Norwegians were hampered by injuries which played a role in deciding not to pursue elite soccer past receiving their university degree. These findings confirm past research that the possibility of injury is ever-present, as it has been found to be common both for Canadian and Norwegian elite soccer players (Campbell, Rabeneck and Gittens, 2004, and Bahr, Engebretsen, Moholdt, Oslén, and Tegnander, 2008). This choice to pursue combining an education with soccer at a US university for both the Norwegians and Canadians alike was one that all of these players were thankful for, and confirms past research that there are clear

dangers in young players rejecting pursuing an education, in favor of investing everything in their sport (Bourdieu, 1985, Wacquant, 1995a, McGillvray, Fearn and McIntosh, 2005).

For the vast majority of Canadians and Norwegians that were still playing at the top level, all felt that they were still enjoying playing at a competitive level and felt rewards from the experience. The prevailing attitude in terms of the lack of a career or a finished education for others was the chance they had to play soccer was a “once in a lifetime experience” and therefore the positives outweighed any negatives. This concept that women can overlook an unsteady economic situation citing the inherent and intrinsic joy they receive from playing the sport, supports past research on the topic (McGhee, 2008, Miller-Little, 2009). These concepts of “it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity” and “there are so many positive things I get from playing” were significant with those interviewed.

The majority of those Norwegians that were still playing at the elite level were not depending solely on income from their sporting careers. They were students, had a part time job, or were supplemented by income from sharing resources with either a significant other or their parents. This is in light with the research from Bøe and Eide (2009), in which 84% of the Toppserien players they interviewed received less than 100,000 kroner for playing soccer and thus needed additional forms of income.

For the women that looked back on their educational/career path, a common theme emerged for both the Norwegians and the Canadians in terms of the positive or negative light that they looked back on the choices and inevitable sacrifices that they made to play their sport at the highest levels. For those Canadians and Norwegians that had either given up soccer a significant time before for various reasons and were happily engaged in other pursuits, they were able to look back on their careers with no regrets, and had only positive things to say. This positive attitude was the same for those that were still playing at the top level for either Norway or Canada.

For those that had felt a recent disappointment with their soccer, both Norwegian and Canadian, they did not see the sacrifice that they had made for their soccer in such a positive light. These players spoke about having regrets for letting soccer take so much of their lives and were having a hard time not thinking of themselves as soccer players anymore. These findings show that there is a deeper connection with players than just playing a sport, and in time they take on a feeling of identity through their time spent on the field. These findings are congruent with past research that discusses that soccer players are often unable to detach

themselves from the game once their careers come to an end (Holt, 1989, Gearing, 1999, and Jones and Armour, 2000).

Many Norwegians that were interviewed, that have not embarked on a career path yet and are still engaged in their soccer plan on using their soccer experience and the capital acquired in their time on the field in their careers. Additionally, the same can be said of the Canadians, as many spoke of finding jobs or pursuing education to allow them to be employed as personal trainers, physiotherapists or soccer administrators. Some of the Canadians spoke of not having any other skills that would make them competitive in the job force which perhaps plays a role in their plans to stay involved in a soccer related career. Yet based on research from Norway and Canada, the opportunities for females to enter both coaching and administration, once they are done with soccer, are very limited (Hall, 2003, Skogvang, 2007). Perhaps signifying this lack of opportunity, on the other hand, for almost all the Canadians and Norwegians that finished their elite career during or shortly after university are currently pursuing careers not related to their background in soccer.

## 6.1 Reflecting Results Through the Lens of Bourdieu

Using Bourdieu's social theory as the lens to decipher and discuss the results, the logical first step is to identify the field and habitus, which according to Bourdieu is a two-way relationship, and which are inherently connected (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu describes habitus as being formed in the context of people's social locations and inculcates in them a set of tastes and worldview based on and reconciled to these positions (Bourdieu, 1981, 1984). Habitus and field also determine the values that are associated as positive within the context of their domain, as well as the value of the capital within it. Doxa is also relevant to the presentation of the social space or field, as doxa it is the unquestioned truths within it.

In the case of this research I would argue that society acts as the social space and soccer is a field within that space, with elite soccer as a sub field. The social spaces of Canada and Norway are different, and thus have different values and norms. There is value placed in both the social spaces of Norway and Canada in getting a good education which leads to a stable, well-paying job, allowing one to contribute to society, have the economic capital to acquire a nice car and apartment and thus plays a large role in fitting the description of success. The majority of those interviewed from Canada in particular, had parents who valued a job and a steady income as symbols of success, and saw soccer as a means to achieve this end, through



a university education. The doxa therefore would be concepts of “normalcy” within the social space, and whereby societal expectations of what someone should be doing at particular age landmarks (such as getting a job, finding a spouse, having children etc), that seemed in Canada to be quite pronounced, based on the research results.

In Norway, the social space that the women existed on, did not seem to have societal values or pressure to “get a job” and “move on from soccer” and thus being able to balance their lives economically with financial help from their clubs, national team, student loans/grants and/or part time jobs, seemed to suit them fine within the Norwegian social space. Parents, friends, and overall societal messages would play the authoritative voice in the values and habitus that were concocted within each country’s social space. The doxa for Norway therefore would have been unquestioned truths embedded in Norwegian culture that those interviewed spoke of. Differences between the doxa of the Norwegian and Canadian social space, were obvious and included the value in Norway placed on acquiring experiences as opposed to pressures in North America whereby the women interviewed spoke of feeling like they needed to have their university degree finished as soon as possible.

Although the social space in which the women came from were different, in terms of the societal values, norms and pressures, that exist in Norway and Canada, I would argue in terms of the soccer “field” that the Norwegians and Canadians existed on, they had very similar values and norms, in terms of values found in sport worldwide; an importance placed on sacrifice and hard work to be the best, the pursuit of excellence and soccer as a priority in their lives. The value of capital in the field of soccer was the same for the Norwegians and Canadians alike.

All of these players were identified as top players in high school, and thus the primary habitus and measurement for success, was the physical capital that players acquired that allowed them to be better on the field than those around them. Social capital was acquired as most of those interviewed spoke of having a certain status within their peer group being seen as an athlete, especially after getting their name in local media for their accomplishments. Coaches and those affiliated with their soccer teams were the voices of authority lending guidance in terms of where was best for their growth as players and reaffirming their success as they continued to accrue technical, tactical and physical skills, all aiming to reach the top of their sport.

After high school, players were able to move freely with capital within the field of the soccer world, exemplified by the Canadians and Norwegians who were able to take their physical

capital accrued in their homeland and convert it into educational/cultural capital in the United States, and similarly the Canadians that were able to travel overseas and convert their physical capital into economic capital with professional contracts at European clubs, and cultural capital in terms of language acquisition.

For those Norwegians that stayed within the Norwegian field and continued to play soccer, they were able to start converting their physical capital into economic capital, signing contracts with their clubs that provided them with some funding, or being deemed potential talents for the Norwegian National Team, thus allowing for additional economic capital. For the Norwegians that decided at this point to leave the soccer field and focus on other things, there were no ramifications on the societal fields for leaving the “game” at this point, as they were in line with their peers in terms of post high school educational opportunities as well as job prospects.

Although there seemed to be a clear point for the Canadians whereby they were forced to choose to either continue to accrue physical capital in the form of playing soccer or move on to other things, with the Norwegian case, the dilemma did not seem as marked, based on the related experience of those interviewed. Overall there seemed to be a point however, where there was no longer a clear opportunity to convert physical capital into educational/cultural capital. At this point, clearly for those that decided to leave the soccer field and pursue a career, they quite quickly began overtaking those that continued to play soccer. These players who “got ahead” were able to focus on acquiring skills that were easy to convert capital such as education or skills and receive economic capital.

For those players that chose to stay in the field of the “soccer world,” Bourdieu’s concept of capital accrued in one social arena, not necessarily conferring value in another (Bourdieu, 1990), is relevant. For example the cultural capital that one of those interviewed accrued by spending long hours through her teens and 20s, acquiring soccer knowledge, was not helpful to her in becoming a speech therapist. Not only is it not helpful to her in terms of the practical knowledge that speech therapy calls for, but also in terms of educational capital, there are no transferable qualifications from the cultural capital acquired on the soccer field and what she is doing as a speech therapist.

Subsequently the results research demonstrates that physical capital is not easily transferable, and that while professional football players utilize valued physical capital to attain positions within the field of the “soccer world,” they always face the possibility of losing this position,

once their capital is exhausted. This assertion matches previous research that soccer players and the capital that they accrue is so specific to one domain, and difficult to convert to other fields, thus leaving players with limited options, often once their physical capital is exhausted (McGillvray, Fearn and McIntosh, 2005). These sentiments were shared by both Norwegian and Canadian National Teamers alike, who both wondered what they would do when they were finished with soccer and felt that their skill set had been somewhat pigeonholed because of the focus they had placed on soccer.

For those that continue with soccer, especially the Canadian players who have to go against values of the Canadian social space and make a clear choice to continue with their soccer at the expense of being able to accrue other forms of capital, it can often leave these players in a precarious position. As noted in previous research (McGhee, 2008), Canadian women's national team players in the lead up to the 2007 and 2008 World Cup and Olympics had to abandon their regular jobs and lives and move to Vancouver to train full time with the National Team.

Although the players were compensated in the form of approximately \$36,000 year to just play soccer, and did not have expenses when they were away with the National Team, the coach had full control over the economic capital and its distribution. Subsequently, he held all the power, which is congruent with Bourdieu's belief on the relationship between capital and power being synonymous (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Subsequently, if at any point a player stepped out of line, the contracts that were signed stipulated that the national team only had to give a month's notice before the payments were stopped.

This obviously placed a great deal of control and power in the hands of the coaching staff, and gave them full control over the field, a precarious power imbalance for any one. For the National Team players that were interviewed for this paper, they all spoke about having to give up a great deal in order to reach the National Team, but felt that they had little choice if they wanted to continue to play at the highest level. Again the habitus from the field of women's soccer was cited, as players utilized taglines such as "once in a lifetime experience," "getting to do what I love," as well as citing social capital accrued from being in the newspaper and on TV. However for these women, unlike male players of a similar capability, they will not be able to retire on their earnings from soccer, therefore the US system of at least a bachelor degree being tied into elite soccer, seems in this case to be even more valuable.

Additionally in Canada, for these National Team players, if they are not happy with something that happened in the sub-field of elite soccer in Canada, because, the coach holds all the capital and thus control, they would have to leave. As there is no professional league in Canada, they do not have anywhere to take their physical “soccer” capital. Their only option would be to pack up and go over to Europe, which is currently the only place where there are professional leagues, and therefore the only place that their physical capital as soccer players has any value.

In Norway, the reality for players seems to be the doxa of the social space does not seem to be in great disaccord with the values of the field of soccer, as with the Canadians. For those that are finished with university or in their early to mid twenties, there seems to be less of a clear cut division in values and opportunities within the fields that forces players to choose either a elite level soccer career, or a regular career. Players interviewed in the study were clear that although the commitment for playing in the Toppserien was demanding, it was not impossible to juggle a career around it, it just required an extreme amount of love for the soccer as well as a job that was somewhat flexible with the demands of an elite soccer player.

All those interviewed seemed to not feel a lot of pressure from society on getting a job and quitting soccer, with many interviewed, saying that they felt that playing elite soccer into one’s thirties was a completely acceptable thing to do. In terms of the role of the National Team as compared with the Canadians, because there were other options for players to play at the highest level, if Norwegians were not happy in the Canadian environment, they could walk away, without feeling that they were leaving their careers behind. This was evident in recent years, as Norwegian national team star Lise Klaveness in addition to five players from Oslo top club, Roa, walked out on the National Team in 2007 and 2008 because of disagreements with the head coach, Bjarne Berntsen. All six continued to gather physical capital and play well in the Toppserien, and thus were prepared physically to play soccer at the international level, when the opportunity presented itself with a new national team coach in 2009.

Although women do not at this time have the luxury of men to play sport at the highest level, live lavishly and then retire with millions in the bank, prospects for women to make a living out of the sport are improving slowly. However, it became apparent to me as I interviewed those involved in my research, that the opportunities to take the capital, both physical and cultural capital, accumulated in the soccer world, and apply it to the working world are very

limited. Therefore, my research pointed to a clear recommendation that it is pertinent that female soccer players in both Norway and Canada find a way to not only follow their sporting dreams, but also take active steps to have convertible capital in the form of education and/or practical experience ready to go, once they are finished their sporting careers.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

This thesis has examined the question of what is the experience of Norwegian and Canadian elite female soccer players in combining soccer with education and career.

As with most qualitative research it is difficult to assert that there is a confirmed answer to this very complex question. However the research has elucidated relevant findings.

There is no doubt that in the last decade especially, the opportunities for elite female soccer have become more prevalent. In the last ten years, there has been the start of the first underage world championship, in the U19 World Cup in 2002, which later became a U20 World Cup. Subsequently in 2008, New Zealand hosted the first Women's Under 17 World Cup, which further ameliorated opportunity for younger players who wished to have the opportunity to pursue their soccer to the highest levels, and allowed exposure at the world level like never before. Leagues for women have arisen around the world, some offering a select handful of women the opportunity to support themselves off of the game that they love, in countries such as Norway, Sweden, Germany and the United States, which with little coincidence, are also the leading powers in the women's game.

Governments have also recognized the importance of supporting elite female athletes, and while it is difficult to have a full time living, solely off of government benefits in Canada and Norway, nevertheless funding is provided that allows the top players in both countries to focus more on their training and less hours in a traditional job. Progress forward for women is undeniable in terms of opportunity. With this opportunity in sport, also comes a form of empowerment for young girls, as they see that there is perhaps the chance, that they too, could live their dreams within the boundaries of a soccer field. Subsequently, many parents give girls in both countries the time, financial support, and encouragement, to build the physical capital necessary, in the forms of tactical, technical and physical acumen, to pursue their goals to the highest levels.

For all the players that were interviewed, all actively pursued an education, as they recognized that they would not be able to make a long term living off the their soccer, and it was important to have a back up plan. For those that were in Norway, although their time commitment in high school was for the most part higher than the Canadians, in terms of the professional leagues that they were able to play in and training at school that they engaged in, it did not, for the most part have any negative effects on their academic standing. Only one

Norwegian spoke of how choosing her high school based on soccer instead of school, ended up having an adverse effect later on her post high school schooling as she did not have the necessary credits to immediately begin the pre-med program she was interested in. For the Canadians, there was a clear separation between academics and athletics.

Once high school was finished, in Canada, players were immediately shepherded into a university program. In some cases choosing universities based on soccer programs, which almost all did, had an adverse affect on course selection and overall enjoyment of the university experience. That being said, nine of the ten Canadians received a university degree while playing soccer at their respective universities, with one dropping out, and another taking eight years to finish because of National Team commitments. Once Canadians were finished with university, at that point there was a clear juncture where if they chose to continue with the National team, their career options and further schooling were severely limited. Furthermore, with no national league, or other elite level options in Canada outside of the National Team, a great deal of power was placed in the hands of the coaching staff.

On the other hand, for those who stayed in Norway, they actively dragged out their schooling process, both because of being unable to commit to a full course load while juggling the requirements of elite level soccer, and also because they were able to receive a student grant that they could put towards their financial needs while training. Norwegians felt little pressure to choose one world or the other, and although many commented on their soccer affecting their length and quality of schooling, there seemed to be a more carefree attitude about getting ones schooling finished and no imaginary timelines to adhere to.

I asked some form of the following question to every person I interviewed, “if you were able to be 16 years old again, would you have taken the same path that you took with education and soccer?” I would like to take that question myself and answer it as I am now inherently familiar with both the Canadian and Norwegian school and soccer systems. Furthermore, in answering that question, I would also like to give myself the opportunity to choose to place myself in Norway or Canada throughout my teens and 20’s based on what I now know about each system.

For high school, I would choose to be in Norway. This is because the system best allows a serious athlete to obtain top level coaching, as well as high level training, with and against top female players, ingrained into their education, with little interruption. I would then choose to go the United States in order to obtain a university degree. As one of those interviewed, who

was from Norway, but attended university in the United States, university in America, felt like an extension of her Norwegian high school experience. Because of Title IX, facilities and set up around the teams are of a professional caliber. Although in North America, the level of coaching at universities is varied, the opportunity to receive a university degree, and the professionalism that the NCAA allows, give it the edge. For post-university, I would return to Norway, simply because in Canada, unless one is with the National Team, there is extremely limited opportunity to continue at the top level. Furthermore, once back in Norway, armed with educational capital, the opportunity to get a fulfilling job that can allow for financial gain, while continuing to pursue soccer is possible.

Currently there is very little research specific to the experience of female soccer players. With tens of millions girls playing the game, and increasing opportunities, there seems to be a great deal of pertinent information to be gleaned. It is an exciting time for those that have an interest in pursuing women's soccer to the highest level. Although it is frustrating that women's soccer is nowhere near men's soccer in terms of the opportunity to gain economic capital, at the same time, perhaps one can be thankful that female soccer players know that they must actively engage in pursuits off the field in order to survive. Because of this necessity for post-soccer planning, well-rounded individuals will continue to emerge from women's soccer, prepared to live fulfilling lives for the many years that lie after they have hung up their cleats for good.

Because the history of women's soccer is the same around the world, it could be argued that the findings from my research could be generalized to female soccer players in general. As elite women's soccer is very young from a historical perspective, worldwide, and the barriers to make a living from the sport are the same, it could be said that the findings are relevant to elite female soccer players outside Norway and Canada as well as anyone pursuing a sport that still falls on the line of amateur and professional, as the "fields" hold similar characteristics.

Despite being separated by thousands of miles, the struggles and experiences of women in Norway and Canada are the same, as we truly are all playing on the same field one that we can all hope continues to expand, for years to come.



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[www.hio.no](http://www.hio.no)  
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[www.westerncanadasoccershowcase.com](http://www.westerncanadasoccershowcase.com)  
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[www.nrksport.no/1.6423944](http://www.nrksport.no/1.6423944)  
[www.womensprosoccer.com](http://www.womensprosoccer.com)  
[www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)  
[www.ccaa.ca](http://www.ccaa.ca)

## 9. Appendices

### Appendix A: Information Letter

Ciara McCormack: University of Oslo

#### Background

I am doing my Masters in International and Comparative Education at the University of Oslo. The research conducted will be used towards my thesis. As someone who grew up in Canada balancing education and high level soccer, first in high school in Vancouver, and then at university in the United States, and now in Norway, it is something that I am interested in researching to investigate the experiences of others, both those from the Canadian system, as well as the Norwegian.

#### Research Sample

I will be interviewing 4 different groups of females, 5 in each category, both current and former elite level soccer players from Norway and Canada. In Canada, I will be speaking with females who played elite level soccer and attended high school and university but who stopped playing at an elite level shortly after and those who still play at the highest level, whether professionally and/or for the National Team. In Norway I will be interviewing 5 players in 2 different groups again; those that attended a sports school such as NTG or Wang as top level high school players, and those who are still playing in either the Toppserien or National Team, and those who no longer play at that level.

#### Relevance

This study is relevant as I hope to elucidate the affect that playing elite level sport has on the pursuit of education and subsequent career for female soccer players.

#### Primary Research Question

*How has it been to combine football/soccer at a high level with education, and what challenges have you faced in the pursuit of both?*

#### Length of Interview

The interview will last approximately one hour, with perhaps a short follow up for any relevant questions/concerns that arise after the interview. Ideally the interviews will occur in person, but will occur on Skype, or email as a last resort otherwise.

#### Primary Method of Interview

The life history technique will be used for the interview. You will be asked to share your experiences of education and soccer from age fifteen to the present, utilizing dividing your education and soccer experiences into different chapters where relevant.

*All those interviewed will have their names changed in the research to protect privacy. If you are interested in participating please contact me via phone or email.*

Sincerely,

Ciara McCormack (91 31 74 31, or ciaramccormack@yahoo.com)

## Appendix B: Informed Consent

Head Researcher: Ciara McCormack. Masters Student in Comparative and International Education  
(ciaramccormack@yahoo.com)

Title: An Examination of the Female Experience in Norway and Canada Combining Education and Elite Soccer.

Institution: University of Oslo, Norway

Supervisor: Kristin Walseth, Høgskolen i Oslo  
(Kristin.walseth@lui.hio.no)

**Research:** I am doing my Masters in International and Comparative Education at the University of Oslo. The research conducted will be used towards my thesis. As someone who grew up in Canada balancing education and high level soccer, first in high school in Vancouver, and then at university in the United States, and now in Norway, it is something that I am interested in researching to investigate the experiences of others, both those from the Canadian system, as well as the Norwegian. This study is relevant as I hope to elucidate the affect that playing elite level sport has on the pursuit of education and subsequent career for female soccer players.

**Participation/ procedures:** The interview will last approximately one hour, with perhaps a short follow up for any relevant questions/concerns that arise after the interview. Ideally the interviews will occur in person, but will occur on Skype or email as a last resort, otherwise.

**The participants understanding:**

- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable at any point in the interview I can stop it and/or leave.
- I understand that some of the material garnered will be used in Ciara McCormack's final masters thesis in order for her to fulfill the requirements of the program.
- I understand that I will not be identified in the final product of the thesis and every effort will be made to hide identifying facts to conceal my identity.
- I understand that all findings will be confidential in the secure possession of the researcher and deleted/shredded at the conclusion of my Masters Thesis.

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Signature Interviewer/ Date

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Signature Interviewee/ Date



## Appendix C: Interview Guide

Just give a little biography here of which teams you played for, and the highest levels you reached with soccer, and what you have done with university courses and your career since the age of 16.

1. *Did playing elite level high school affect your subject choices from a time perspective in high school (for example did you take easier classes etc)?*
2. *Did the dream to play at the highest level play a role in determining where to go to high school?*
3. *Were your high school studies/grades affected by playing elite level soccer?*
4. *If you were giving advice to your 16 year old self would you have done the same, chosen the same high school as you did? Why or why not?*
5. *Did your parents play a role in determining where you went to school?*
6. *What was your goal with soccer in high school?*
7. *Were your subject choices in high school if they were because of soccer, adversely affect your career/university path afterwards? (for example, you didn't take science classes because they took up too much time with soccer, but then later you decided you wanted to go to medical school and it was affected)*
8. *Did you miss school in high school because of playing elite level soccer? Yes. We sometimes had soccer practice early in the afternoon and sometimes early in the morning.*
9. *If yes, did this affect your grades do you believe? No.*
10. *Did being an elite level soccer player and the skills you learned as an elite level player affect in any way your studies? (positive or negative) Yes, positive. You learn to manage several things at the same time, and you need to have a plan so that it is possible to achieve what you want.*
11. *Did you attend post secondary studies?*
12. *Was where you went to school affected by being an elite level soccer player?*
13. *Did it help you in any way being an elite level player from a financial perspective? (Scholarships)*
14. *Was where you went to school influenced in any way by elite level soccer? (in for example choosing a school perhaps lesser in academics because of a better scholarship, or you liked the coach so you chosen a certain school etc)*

15. *Because you were an athlete did you get any additional support (whether with the National Team or through your university)*
16. *Were your university grades affected by playing elite level sports?*
17. *Was your career path affected by your sport (aka taking a different set of classes because of it interfering with practice times etc)*
18. *When you were graduating high school, was continuing elite level soccer an influencing factor on whether or not to go to college?*
19. *Were there challenges in combining education and soccer in university that adversely affected one or the other?*
20. *Was the time it took you to finish your degree affected by your college soccer participation?*
21. *Did you feel any societal pressures to stop playing elite level university soccer after university (elite level being defined as training soccer 4 or more days a week)? For example, parents saying “its time to grow up and get a job now etc.”*
22. *What do you feel overall in society is the acceptable age to finish with soccer and begin focusing on a career?*
23. *If you chose to stop playing after university was it a voluntary decision (you were eager to move on? Injury related etc)*
24. *If no, how come not?*
25. *Did your career path have anything to do with your background in elite level soccer?*
26. *Did you have the opportunity to continue playing elite level soccer once you were done with college?*
27. *Financially how were you after university?*
28. *Did you feel that you had the opportunity to continue your career path and elite level soccer after post secondary education?*
29. *Did you ever feel at any point that you had to either choose elite level soccer or pursuing your career goals?*
30. *Looking back at high school now, and knowing what you know about where soccer led you, would you have chosen the same educational path in terms of high school and university if applicable?*
31. *Did you reach the highest level of soccer that you set out to achieve, or had as a goal at any point?*

32. *Do you think that your education was in any way affected by your soccer either positively or negatively?*
33. *If you were giving advice to your 16 year old self today knowing what you know now, what would you say?*
34. *Does your elite level soccer background still play a role in your career today?*
35. *Is there anything else you would wish to add?*

## Appendix D: The message to those who I interviewed via email

The idea of this is to divide your life into four chapters and just write every detail that you think is relevant to soccer and education. Anything and everything to do with what your life was like, how much time you put into soccer, what an average day and week was like, how soccer played a role in your social life, anything. When I meet in person with people, they just speak without any interruption, telling me everything that they can about their life at the time in both soccer and in school as well, sacrifices they had to make for both etc. Just send me an email if you have any questions.

In dividing your life into chapters, just look at your life from age 16 and find 3 significant milestones that can give you a divide (for example, high school, university, the years after university trying to figure out career path, where you are at right now) Whatever you feel best represents major milestones in your life from when you were in senior high school until now.

Again just write any and everything to do with school and soccer.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:



