Durham E-Theses

Women in a Man's World: An Examination of Women's Leadership Work in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football in England.

BRYAN, AMEE

How to cite:

BRYAN, AMEE (2022) *Women in a Man's World: An Examination of Women's Leadership Work in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football in England.*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/14922/

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the full Durham E-Theses policy for further details.

Academic Support Office, Durham University, University Office, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HP
e-mail: e-theses.admin@dur.ac.uk Tel: +44 0191 334 6107
http://etheses.dur.ac.uk

Women in a Man’s World: An Examination of Women’s Leadership Work in the ‘Extremely Gendered’ Organisation of Men’s Football in England.

Amée Bryan

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences

Durham University

2022

Women in a Man's World: An Examination of Women's Leadership Work in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football in England.

Amée Bryan

ABSTRACT

Framed by the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations, this thesis explores women's access to and experiences of leadership in men's professional club football and football governing bodies in England in the 'new' football era (late 1980s – present). Informed by feminist approaches to Constructivist Grounded Theory, I employed a qualitatively driven multimethod approach to data collection and analysis. First, I conducted archival research at the National Football Museum to gather data on the types of leadership roles women have held in football in the new era. I further collected data from the gender pay gap reports of football organisations to gain insight into current gender inequalities. Finally, I conducted biographic interviews with twenty-three women who have worked in football leadership.

My findings demonstrate that, despite occupying a significant number of leadership roles in football, women's access to the most powerful roles has been limited in the new football era. Specifically, women's leadership work has been largely *peripheral* to the *core* organisational function. Applying the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations, I argue that *core* roles – roles with direct influence over and access to male footballers and the field of play– are the most symbolically important to preserving football's masculine character. Thus, having women in core leadership roles threatens men's 'natural' claim to football. I further contend that women's acceptance in football leadership is conditional upon cultivating an ideal worker/ideal woman identity. Applying the concept of the ideal worker, I find that women are granted entry

if they have *insider status,* i.e., they share the same racial, class, and professional characteristics as men in football. Moreover, I find that motherhood is incompatible with the boundaryless work cultures of football. Thus, women must remain childfree or minimise the impact of motherhood on their careers to keep their senior positions. Women must also perform 'respectable business femininity' to ensure their seniority. Crucially, I argue that the pressure to perform under the glow of the *sportlight* harms women. However, I also find that women use their positions to defend and challenge football from within. By considering agency as a social practice, I argue that women perform agentive acts of 'tempered radicalism' to quietly resist and challenge the extremely gendered regime of football. However, I find that this is additional physical and emotional labour for women. Nonetheless, women's reasons for leaving football are not always linked to the pressures of being a woman in a man's world. Instead, women are compelled to leave football to pursue an authentic life, free from the corruption and greed that has come to characterise the football industry. In this regard, leaving football was the ultimate act of agency.

I conclude that gender equality efforts must move beyond numerical measures of equality to address the peripheral and conditional positioning of women in football leadership. I argue that this requires a reimaging of the football industry, a reimagining that fundamentally disrupts the masculine blueprint upon which football was designed and rids football of its unscrupulous reputation.

1. CONTENTS

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **6**

II. DECLARATION **9**

III. STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT **10**

IV. PREFACE **11**

V. LIST OF FIGURES **15**

VI. LIST OF TABLES **16**

1. INTRODUCTION **17**

1.1 Research Questions **22**

1.2 Context: Football as a Man's World? **24**

1.2.1 The English Football Industry: Structure and Governance 24

1.2.2 Social and Economic Impact 30

1.2.3 The 'Feminization' of football 34

1.2.4 The Hidden History of Women in Football: Challenging Assumptions of a 'Man's World' 38

1.2.5 Policy Landscape: A Tipping Point for Gender Equality? 40

1.3 Thesis Structure **45**

2. LITERATURE REVIEW **48**

2.1 Introduction **48**

2.2 Gender and Work **49**

2.2.1 Tokenism and Critical Mass 50

2.2.2 The Social Construction of Gender 54

2.2.3 Gendered Organisations 56

2.3 Explanations for gender inequalities in leadership roles **60**

2.3.1 Gender Stereotypes 63

2.3.2 Homologous Reproduction 68

2.3.3 Informal Recruitment and the "Old Boys' Network" 71

2.4 Above the 'Glass Ceiling' **74**

2.4.1 Challenges above the 'glass ceiling' 76

2.4.2 Strategies of Survival 78

2.4.3 Women Leaders: 'Cogs in the Machine' or 'Agents of Change'? 82
2.4.4 Why women leave leadership 84
2.5 Chapter Summary 89

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: 'EXTREMELY GENDERED' ORGANISATIONS 90
3.1 'Extremely gendered organisations and a case for including men's football 91
3.1.1 Defining an 'extremely gendered' organisation 91
3.1.2 Men's football: An 'extremely gendered' organisation? 95
3.1.3 Hegemonic Gender Relations and the Heterosexual Matrix 98
3.2 The Ideal Worker 101
3.2.1 Ideal Worker Norm 101
3.2.2 Changing families, unchanged gender roles 103
3.2.3 The Ideal Worker in the New Economy 105
3.2.4 The Ideal Worker for the Modern Football Workplace 108
3.3 Negotiating the middle-ground: Women, agency, and power? 111
3.3.1 Postfeminist Sensibilities 112
3.3.2 Tempered Radicalism 116
3.4 Chapter Summary 119

4. METHODOLOGY 121
4.1 Doing Feminist Research: Reflections on Constructivist Grounded Theory, Reflexivity, and Intersectionality. 122
4.2 Data Collection Methods and Procedure 128
4.2.1 Feminist Research: Navigating the Quantitative/Qualitative Divide. 129
4.2.2 Collecting Archive Data 131
4.2.3 Gender Pay Gap Reports 138
4.2.4 Qualitative Biographic Interview Approach 140
4.2.5 Ethical Considerations 143
4.2.6 Sampling Methods and Procedure 146
4.2.7 Interview Procedure 153
4.3 Data Analysis 158
4.3.1 Data Analysis Procedure 162
4.3.2 Theory Development 169
4.4 Chapter Summary 175

5. ON THE PERIPHERY: WOMEN LEADERS IN THE 'EXTREMELY GENDERED' ORGANISTION OF MEN'S FOOTBALL 177
5.1 Introduction 177
5.2 Limiting Women's Access to Power 178
5.2.1 Football Leadership: Still a 'Man's World' 179

5.2.2 Women Leaders as a 'Multi-Level' Threat 186

5.2.3 The 'Inner Table' 189

5.3 'Core' and 'Peripheral' Leadership Roles 192

5.3.1 Peripheral Inclusion 192

5.3.2 Naturalising male-dominance at the organisational core 195

5.3.3 Women leaders as a 'threat' to the masculine core 201

5.4 Protecting the heterosexual matrix 204

5.4.1 Heterosexuality as a central organising principle of men's football 204

5.4.2 Women's leadership work as symbolically hetero-feminine 210

5.5 An Illusion of Equality 214

5.5.1 Reconfiguring gender segregation in the new football era 215

5.5.2 Women and diversity work 218

5.5.3 Racial Inequalities: A Hidden Problem 220

5.6 Chapter Summary 225

6. CONDITIONAL ENTRY INTO FOOTBALL LEADERSHIP: CULTIVATING AN IDEAL WORKER/IDEAL WOMAN IDENTITY 227

6.1 Insider Status 228

6.1.1 Insider Networks 229

6.1.2 Professional Status 232

6.1.3 Intersectional Privileges 236

6.1.4 Outsiders on the Inside 240

6.2 The Incompatibility of Football Leadership and Motherhood 243

6.2.1 Boundaryless Commitment to Football 244

6.2.2 Domestic Arrangements 250

6.2.3 Minimising Motherhood 253

6.3 Being an ideal woman in the 'sportlight' 256

6.3.1 Emotional Restraint 257

6.3.2 Respectable Business Femininity 263

6.3.3 The Sportlight 269

6.4 Chapter Summary 279

7. TEMPERED RADICALISM: DEFENDING, CHALLENGING, AND LEAVING FOOTBALL 281

7.1 Defending Football: Reclaiming the Narrative 282

7.1.1 Downplaying Sexism 283

7.1.2 The Love of the Game 290

7.1.3 No Regrets 295

7.2 Challenging Football: Resisting an Extremely Gendered Organisational Regime 297

7.2.1 Strategies of Resistance 298

7.2.2 The burden of resistance 303
7.2.3 Motivations for Tempered Radicalism 305
7.3 Leaving Football: The Pursuit of Authenticity 309
7.3.1 Balance 310
7.3.2 Challenge 317
7.3.3 Authenticity 321
7.4 Chapter Summary 327

8. CONCLUSION 329
8.1 Introduction 329
8.2 On the Periphery: Women Leaders in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football 332
8.3 Conditional Entry into Football Leadership: Cultivating an Ideal Worker/Ideal Woman Identity 337
8.4 Tempered Radicalism: Defending, Challenging, and Leaving Football 341
8.5 Practical Implications & Recommendations 348
8.6 Future Directions 356
8.7 Concluding Thoughts 357

9. REFERENCES 360

10. APPENDIX 393
10.1 Gender Pay Gap (mandatory data) published April 2018 393
10.2 Gender Pay Gap (voluntary data) published April 2018 396
10.3 Ethical Approval 399
10.4 Participant Information Sheet 411
10.5 Consent forms 413
10.6 Invitation letter 415
10.7 Demographic survey 416
10.8 Number of women directors from 87/88 to 17/18 in men's club football (all clubs that have played in the top 4 leagues since 87/88) 419
10.9 Women Directors and CEOs in men's professional club football (2017/18 Season) 420

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been fortunate on my PhD journey to be blessed with not two but four supervisors who have supported and guided me over the past five years. First, I would like to thank Dr Stacey Pope for her unwavering support and belief in me throughout this process. Thank you for being my intellectual guide, a feminist ally, and for showing nothing but support and compassion when I took time out to have a baby. Moreover, without your imagination and determination, this research may never have materialised, so I am forever grateful to you and Dr Kevin Moore for creating the opportunity for me to pursue a PhD in a subject for which I feel so deeply passionate. Secondly, I thank Dr AJ Rankin-Wright for challenging me intellectually and encouraging an intersectional sensitivity. Although you didn't get the chance to see this PhD out to the end with me, this thesis is undoubtedly better for your guidance. I started this journey with Professor Martin Roderick, so it feels apt to be finishing with him back as my supervisor. Your brilliant sociological imagination has pushed me to be a better sociologist and critical thinker, so thank you. Finally, I thank Professor John Hughson for his support and encouragement throughout my PhD journey.

This research would not have been possible without funding and support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme, Sporting Heritage, and The National Football Museum. So, I thank everyone involved in delivering the CDP programme, particularly Dr Justine Reilly at Sporting Heritage. I also want to thank Dr Alex Jackson and Belinda Monkhouse at the National Football Museum for their continued enthusiasm for this project. I hope to one day see this project come to life at the museum.

I am also forever grateful to the extraordinary women leaders who gave so much of their precious time to share with me their stories of working in football. When I started this project, I was genuinely concerned that nobody would want to participate in this research, but I have been overwhelmed by the generosity and openness of all the women who participated in this project. I especially want to thank Annie Bassett for inviting me to your home and sharing with me your incredible, yet sadly forgotten, story. In challenging inequalities in football leadership, I hope this thesis also brings to light the amazing work women have always done in football.

Pursuing a PhD can be a lonely journey, but I have been fortunate to share my journey with so many wonderful fellow PGR students and staff at Durham University. I especially want to thank Dr Alex (Xander) Hodge for welcoming me to the PGR family with infectious enthusiasm and for always being a good friend. Thank you also to Dr Sophie Phillips for being a beautiful friend and consummate host during my many overnight stays in Durham. I also want to thank Dr Hester Hockin-Boyers for her friendship, feminist comradeship, and for sharing my love of Taylor Swift! Thank you also to Dr Ben Rigby for the many intellectual debates, but most of all for your friendship and compassion. A special thank you goes to the fantastic research team and postgraduate support staff in the Sport and Exercise Science and Sociology departments. I am especially grateful to Fiona Jackson for making me feel so welcome in the department and for always going the extra mile to support us as PGRs.

Last but certainly not least, I also want to thank my family for their support and encouragement over the years. I have been blessed with an amazing wife, without whom I would not be doing what I love today. You encouraged me to follow my dreams when I

stupidly thought I was too old to go back to university. You put up with me working late nights and weekends. You patiently listened while I read countless drafts and redrafts. You pushed me to continue when I wanted to give up. But most of all, you believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself, and for that, I will be eternally grateful. Finally, I want to thank my beautiful little boy for bringing joy to my life that I never thought possible. I hope mummy has done you proud.

II. DECLARATION

Parts of this thesis have been published as:

Bryan, A. (2022) A view from the top: An examination of postfeminist sensibilities in women leaders' constructions of success and responses to gender inequality in English football, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*; moac010, https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/ moac010

Bryan, A., Pope, S. and Rankin-Wright, A. J. (2021) On the Periphery: Examining Women's Exclusion from Core Leadership Roles in the "Extremely Gendered" Organization of Men's Club Football in England, *Gender & Society*, **35**(6): 940-970.

III. STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

IV. PREFACE

My connection to football formed long before I was born. My dad was a footballer, and although he stopped playing just before I was born in 1988, I told anyone who would listen that my dad used to be a footballer. My school friends were always impressed by this information considering their frame of reference at the time was the glamour of the Premier League. In contrast, my dad played semi-professionally[1] throughout the 1970s and 1980's, spending most of his football career at non-league club Frickley FC whilst also working down the pit at Frickley colliery. Although I never got to see him play, we had some old footage of one of his matches on a VHS that I would occasionally dig and out and watch with pride. I went to my first football match when I was 10 years old. My dad took me to Hillsborough to watch Sheffield Wednesday. I remember feeling a mixture of excitement and anxiety. It was loud, frenzied, and awash with men; I clung to my dad like a limpet. I only went a few more times after that.

It wasn't until my early twenties that I fell in love football. I met my wife in Manchester whilst completing my undergraduate degree. She was a huge football fan and had played for Hull City FC and North Ferriby United. If our relationship was going to last, I had to get into football, so I reached out to my dad. In an attempt to once again rouse my enthusiasm for football, he got us tickets to see Manchester City v Fulham, given that we lived just a stone's throw away from the Etihad stadium. It was an uneventful 0-0 draw, but I was captivated. It felt a million miles away from my experiences in the late 1990's. The crowd, while still mostly male, was noticeably punctuated with women, and families with

[1] My aggrieved dad asked me to include the fact that he also had a professional contract with Barnsley FC when he was 17.

young children. It felt altogether more civilised. We went again the following fortnight and the fortnight after that.

Come the following season, I was a fully signed up member of the club and if I wasn't at the match, I was in the pub trying to catch a glimpse of the TV through a sea of men who, given my modest height, often towered over me. In fact, the first time I experienced any form of sexism in the football world was during one of these outings to the pub. My wife and I were sitting at a table quietly watching the match when a man came up to us and started patronising us about our knowledge of football. He asked us if we knew that the ball had to go between the sticks, whilst drawing an imaginary goal with his hands. I would like to say that his comments didn't bother me, but they did. I instantly felt out of place – "Othered" as a woman in a male-dominated space (Sharon Bird, 1996). The incident was a reminder that this wasn't a place for women. I never set foot in that pub again. Instead, I sought out 'safer' places to watch my beloved team. My wife and I discovered a local lesbian bar where we could watch football without apprehension. It was there that I watched Manchester City beat their biggest rivals, Manchester United, 1-6 at Old Trafford. It was electrifying. It feels odd now, during a pandemic, to recall a time when I would excitedly hug complete strangers in a pub, but that's football. It brings people together. It also divides us. But when it was good, it was beyond anything else I had ever experienced.

When I saw this PhD opportunity advertised, I thought to myself that someone had crafted the perfect PhD for me. The opportunity to pursue doctoral research in gender and football seemed too good to be true. Yes, I am a football fan, but more than that, I am a feminist and a staunch advocate for gender equality. Prior to pursuing a career in research, I spent several years working on women's rights campaigns and promoting women's leadership in Universities and Students' Unions. At times, these two parts of my identity have been in

conflict, but I have always maintained the belief that feminism and football fandom do not have to be mutually exclusive. Little did I know that my thesis would come to challenge this belief and fundamentally change my ideas about feminism. Perhaps most surprising of all though, was that this thesis would bring to an end my love affair with football.

I started this thesis questioning the reasons for gender inequalities in sport leadership. I finished this thesis questioning the very concept of leadership, and more importantly, power. Age old questions about power versus agency haunt every page of this thesis, and while I provide answers to some of them, others are beyond the scope of a doctoral thesis. What I do offer is an account of how women in football leadership navigate power and agency in the football world. This account reveals the role of women in challenging and reinforcing inequalities in football, and exposes deeper questions about liberal feminist approaches to tackling gender inequalities in society. Like the pages of this thesis, I too am haunted by questions of power and agency. Mostly, I question my role, as a football fan, in the marginalisation and mistreatment of women. Does a desire to change the world of football for the better, a desire I shared with the women I interviewed, offset our support of an industry that treats women as second-class citizens? Moreover, does our involvement in the industry act a smokescreen for deep rooted and insidious sexism in the game?

Of course, these questions are not limited to football. We could ask ourselves the same questions about several organisations, including the academy. In fact, during this research, I was struck by how similar football was to academia in its treatment of women. In many ways, the "old boys" network in academia functions in much the same way as it does in football; privileging those on the inside and excluding those who do not fit the mould of the ideal academic. It is perhaps telling that I have faced far more resistance and sexism in academia than I ever have in football. As such, my aim with this research was not just shine

a light on football, but to make meaningful comparisons with other industries. Football, while unique in many ways, is a microcosm of a society that does not yet value women in the same ways it does men. So, while I challenge football's role in the maintenance of inequalities in society in this thesis, I also endeavour to situate football in a broader historical and cultural context.

V. LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Football governance structure p. 26

Figure 2: Leadership structure (club football) p. 28

Figure 3: Photograph of a page from the 1992/93 EFL Handbook taken March 2018. p. 133

Figure 4: Interview Participant Details p. 50

Figure 5: Data analysis in CGT process using Situational Analysis (adapted from Charmaz (2006) 'the grounded theory process') p. 60

Figure 6: Situational 'messy' map after 5 interviews p. 165

Figure 7: Situational 'Relationship' Map p. 166

Figure 8: Situational map of 'core' and 'peripheral' roles in football. p. 171

Figure 9: Social Worlds Map p. 173

Figure 10: Gender makeup of senior football roles in the 2017/18 season p. 180

Figure 11: Number of women board members and number of clubs without a woman on their board per season in men's club football 1987/88 - 2017/18 p. 182

Figure 12: Percentage of women Directors in 2017/18 (FTSE Women Leaders, 2018; WISE, 2018; Women in Sport, 2017) p. 183

Figure 13: Percentage of women at each level of the football hierarchy in the 2017/18 season p. 184

Figure 14: Number and cumulative percentage of leadership roles women have held in men's club football and football governing bodies 1988-2018 p. 193

Figure 15: Situational Map of women's entry into football p. 229

Figure 16: Newspaper article on Annie Bassett's Appointment as Managing Director of Birmingham City FC p. 274

VI. LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number and proportion of leadership roles held by women in football between 1987/88 and 2017/18Table 2: Focussed codes p. 137

Table 2: Focussed codes p. 175

Table 3: GPG data for men's professional football clubs and the FA (snapshot date -5th April 2017). Note: + denotes GPG in favour of men, n/a = not applicable p. 181

Table 4: Change in distribution of women's leadership work in men's football between 2007/08 and 2017/18 p. 216

Table 5: Women's attrition from football and reasons for leaving. p. 311

2. INTRODUCTION

Football is the most popular sport globally, with an estimated fan base of over four billion people (Shvili, 2020). At the epicentre of this global phenomenon is England, the birthplace of association football (Cleland, 2015) and the home of the most-watched sports league in the world – the English Premier League (Premier League, 2019b). Indeed, football is synonymous with English culture and national identity (Gibbons, 2016). Yet, despite its national significance and unrivalled global appeal, the game has long been considered the preserve of men (Dunning, 1986; Pope & Pfister, 2018). Although women have always participated in football (Pope & Williams, 2018; Williams, 2003; Williams & Hess, 2015), those charged with governing the game invariably prioritise men's participation – sometimes actively discouraging or preventing women's involvement (Williams, 2003). Despite this resistance, women's participation in football as players and fans has seen a resurgence in the 'new' era of football (Gear, 2020; Pope, 2017) – a period of rapid modernisation and commercialisation of English football that occurred after the Hillsborough stadium disaster in 1989 (Williams, 2006). More recently, women's football in England has enjoyed commercial success (Odeyemi, 2021), and the top tier of women's football – the Women's Super League – has fully professionalised (Garry, 2018) finally, offering a viable career option for women. Although far from playing on equal terms with men, women are – for now – sharing the spotlight with male football players.

However, women's relative gains on the pitch have not been replicated in the football boardroom. A recent report commissioned by Fair Game revealed that women held just 8% of all boardroom roles in men's professional football clubs in England (Philippou *et al.*, 2022). Of course, gender inequality in leadership roles is ubiquitous, transcending football and the wider sport industry. Leadership, like football, is also a longstanding male preserve

(Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). However, while many other historically male-dominated sectors have made significant strides towards gender equality in leadership roles in recent years (FTSE Women Leaders, 2022), men still dominate football leadership. Although the overrepresentation of men in sport leadership has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Burton, 2015; Leberman & Burton, 2017), we know very little about why football has remained so impervious to gender equality in leadership roles in an era marked by growing gender equality on the pitch and in the stands.

This thesis offers an original examination of the convergence between the masculine domains of leadership and football by exploring women's participation in and experiences of football leadership in the new football era to understand gender inequalities in football leadership. In doing so, this thesis opens avenues to explore the broader social phenomenon of organisational gender inequalities. Specifically, I situate this thesis in the context of football as an "extremely gendered" organisation (Sasson-Levy, 2011) – an organisation that actively constructs and maintains idealised notions of masculine superiority in society. My central thesis is that the "extremely gendered" regime of football, by design, prevents women from accessing positions of influence and power. Through an analysis of archival and interview data, I find that despite many women reaching senior roles, their participation is limited to peripheral roles and is conditional upon cultivating an ideal worker/ideal woman identity. Although I find evidence of women thriving in the cut-throat world of football leadership, most struggle to survive under the weight of constant scrutiny, unrelenting work hours, and a compromised moral conscience. I conclude by arguing that pursuing numerical equality in football leadership is not enough to achieve *true* gender equality. We must also seek opportunities to disrupt the masculine blueprint of football leadership.

In this introductory chapter, I define the research problem and situate this doctoral research within the existing literature. I then describe the socio-political and historical context of women in football and leadership. Finally, I present an overview of the thesis structure to follow.

Despite decades of advancement in women's labour market participation in male-dominated industries in Western societies (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Charles & Bradley, 2009; Teow, Goel, Carney & Cooper, 2019), men remain proportionally overrepresented in the highest-paid and most powerful roles within these industries (Blau & Kahn, 2017; FTSE Women Leaders, 2018; Vinnicombe, Atewologun & Battista, 2019; WISE, 2018). Consequently, the economic advantage of accessing male-dominated industries, which tend to pay higher wages than female-dominated industries (Levanon, England & Allison, 2009; Torre, 2017a), has not necessarily benefited women in the same ways that it has men. Indeed, one of the driving forces of the persistent gender pay gap, which stands at 15% in favour of men in the UK (ONS, 2021), is occupational gender segregation (Olsen, Gash, Sook & Zhang, 2018). Occupational segregation also drives stark racial and ethnic pay gaps. In the UK, Black British, African, Caribbean, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi women earn on average less per hour and are critically underrepresented in senior roles compared to white British women and men (ONS, 2019a; Vinnicombe *et al*., 2019). Moreover, the lack of gender and racial equality in leadership roles means that decisions that affect the lives of a diverse population are being made almost exclusively by white men.

Although the gender pay gap has been slowly declining in the UK (ONS, 2021), and male-dominated industries such as STEM, construction, and politics have made significant strides toward gender equality in leadership positions (WISE, 2018), the sport industry continues to lag behind. Despite a notable upsurge in women's sporting participation

globally (International Olympic Committee, 2020; Sherry & Rowe, 2020) and significant growth in the professionalisation and popularity of women's sports (Sherry & Rowe, 2020), women remain on the margins of coaching and administrative roles (Adriaanse, 2016; International Olympic Committee, 2018; Schoch & Clausen, 2019). Data from Europe shows that even in female-dominated and gender-balanced sports, men are over-represented in leadership roles in national sport federations (Elling, Knoppers & Hovden, 2019). In England, for example, in sports where women make up 60% or more of participants, men still hold over 50% of leadership roles at the national level. The situation in male-dominated sports is unsurprisingly much worse, with nearly 90% of leadership positions being held by men at the national level (ibid). Moreover, less than 20% of all board positions at the club level among the UK's most popular sports – men's football, men's cricket, and men's rugby union – are held by women (Farrer & Co., 2019). Although these are men's clubs, women are significant stakeholders as supporters (Pope, 2017). Moreover, as the 'parent' club, men's clubs often wield considerable power and influence over their equivalent women's teams in terms of investment and access to resources (Wrack, 2018). Thus, women's ability to participate in sport on equal terms often hinges on the goodwill of men (Wrack, 2021a).

A significant body of research also suggests that gender diversity in leadership roles leads to better business outcomes for organisations (Clarkson & Philippou, 2022; Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo & Michel, 2018; Terjesen, Sealy & Singh, 2009). However, I am critical of the 'business case' for gender diversity. A commitment to gender diversity should be a moral obligation, not a business strategy. Women make up over half of the world's population; therefore, it is incomprehensible that they occupy so few decision-making roles in society. That said, simply adding more women into leadership roles does not necessarily lead to better outcomes for women and girls. As hooks (2000, pp. 87-89)

argues, “women, although assigned different roles to play in society… do not conceptualize power differently” as such, “women are likely to exercise power in the same manner as men when they assume the same positions”. Indeed, as I write this, one of the most gender diverse governments we have ever had in the UK has reduced overseas development funding that supports gender equality initiatives (Ahmed, 2022) and, amid a cost of living crisis, has cut back universal credit payments to pre-pandemic levels (Butler, 2022) – disproportionately disadvantaging women, who make up 56% of recipients (Stat-Xplore, 2022).

Moreover, the recent appointment of Amanda Staveley to the board of Newcastle United FC should have been a moment of celebration for those invested in gender equality in football leadership. However, Staveley’s appointment was met with widespread condemnation because of her role in negotiating the takeover of the club by a consortium backed by the Saudi state (Ingle, 2021) – a country notorious for human rights abuses and distinct lack of women’s rights (Human Rights Watch, 2021). These apparent contradictions highlight the need to look beyond numerical equality at the structure and culture of sport leadership to reveal how women access leadership roles in sport, what their experiences are when they get there, and whether they are able or willing to change the organisation from the inside. Crucially, these questions expose the possibilities and limitations of neoliberal feminist efforts to push gender equality agendas from within organisations.

To be clear, while I focus on women’s experiences in this thesis, the responsibility for gender equality also rests on men’s shoulders. Moreover, I firmly believe that gender-egalitarian workplaces benefit men. Be that through better access to flexible working and parental leave or because of diminished toxic masculine cultures that limit men’s ability to

speak openly about their physical and mental health needs. I am also aware that in highlighting the marginalisation of women in football, there is a risk of portraying football as a utopia for men. Yet, it is far from it. While the public perception of a male footballer is that of wealth, glamour, and hedonism, most male footballers, *if* they make it, have short-lived and precarious careers, marred by injury, hyper scrutiny, and authoritarian rule over their bodies and personal lives (Roderick, 2006). Unsurprisingly, in following the blueprint of men's professional football, professional women players are now reporting the same pressures as their male counterparts but under worse working conditions (Culvin, 2021). The football industry is further tarnished by racism (Hylton, 2019; King, 2004a), homophobia[2] (Wright, 2018), and rampant greed and corruption (Bason, Salisbury & Gérard, 2019; Cleland, 2015). Related to this latter point is the prolific role of gambling in the football industry and the associated problem of match-fixing (Huggins, 2019). Moreover, gambling problems are increasingly recognised as a risk factor for male footballers (Lim *et al.*, 2017). So, while this thesis focuses on gender inequalities in football leadership, it is vital to understand that these inequalities do not exist in a vacuum. They are symptomatic of a deeply flawed system that has far-reaching consequences for everyone in the football industry.

2.1 Research Questions

The persistent overrepresentation of men in leadership roles within sport organisations is well documented (Burton, 2015; Pape, 2020; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Women in Sport, 2017). However, relatively few studies examine how and why certain women reach

[2] In May 2022, Jake Daniels, a forward for Blackpool FC, became the first active male professional footballer to come out publicly as gay, ending "decades of silence" on homosexuality in men's professional football (MacInnes, 2022).

the top of sport administration and what their experiences are when they get there (for exceptions see: Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). Crucially, despite being the most popular sport in the world, no studies to date have examined women's access to or experiences of leadership in men's football. Furthermore, while women's historical contribution to English football as players and fans has received recent scholarly and media attention (Doble, 2015; Laverty, 2022; Pope, 2017; Pope & Williams, 2018; Williams, 2022), women's administrative leadership work remains hidden in the history of English football. In this thesis, I will address this silence on women's leadership work in football by employing a multimethod approach, which includes archival research, document analysis, and biographic interviews with women leaders in football, to centre women's leadership stories in men's football during the 'new' football era (Williams, 2006).

As the first study to analyse women's historic participation in football leadership, and one of the few studies to examine women's experiences 'above the glass ceiling' in sport, this research makes an original contribution to knowledge on the history and sociology of women's leadership by answering the following research questions:

1. What is the gender makeup of football leadership in men's professional football clubs and football governing bodies in England, and how has this changed in the new football era (from the late 1980's onwards)?

2. How has the gendering of football organisations influenced women's access to, and experiences of, leadership?

3. How do women construct and make sense of their journey into football leadership, and what has enabled or impeded their success?

4. How do women leaders exercise agency within an extremely gendered organisation, and what factors influence women's choice to stay in, challenge or leave football leadership?

2.2 Context: Football as a Man's World?

While the overrepresentation of men in sport leadership is a universal problem, the context of this thesis is men's professional football in England. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, English football is distinctive in terms of its cultural and economic importance, both nationally and internationally. And secondly, English football plays a meaningful role in the maintenance and reproduction of gender inequalities in society (Anderson, 2009; Welford, 2011). Thus, understanding women's positions and experiences in leadership in men's professional football in England offers avenues to understand and challenge wider societal inequalities. In this section, I will outline the social significance of men's football in England and discuss women's changing role within the industry. I will then discuss the historical silence on women's involvement in football. First, I begin with a description of men's professional football and football governance in England.

2.2.1 The English Football Industry: Structure and Governance

English club football is structured hierarchically across several professional, semi-professional, and amateur leagues, offering a pathway for clubs to move up and down the league structure through end-of-season promotion and relegation (Lawrence, 2018). The English Premier League (EPL), also known as the top tier of men's English football, sits at

the top of the men's football pyramid. The Championship, League One, and League Two form the English Football League (EFL). Together, the EPL and the EFL make up the four men's professional leagues in England, also known as 'league football.' Below the EFL, there are seven tiers of men's non-league football, stretching from the National League to county level football. Women's football follows a similar structure, albeit with fewer leagues than men's football. The FA Women's Super League – the only fully professional women's league in England – is the highest league in women's English football. Below the WSL is the FA Women's Championship, followed by The Women's National Leagues, sixteen divisional leagues, and county leagues.

Both women's and men's clubs are governed by the English Football Association (The FA). The FA is the national governing body of English football and has responsibility for the England national teams and fifty-one county FAs. Men's clubs in the EPL and the EFL are also governed by the Premier League and the EFL, respectively. These are private organisations, made up of their member clubs, responsible for organising their respective competitions. English football governance is also nested within European and international governing bodies. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is the governing body of European football and is responsible for several European football tournaments, including club competitions such as the Champion's League and the Europa League, and the national Euros tournament. Sitting at the very top of football governance is Federation Internationale de Football (FIFA) - the international governing body of football. With 211 affiliated associations – more than the United Nations – FIFA is one the most powerful organisations in the world. In sum, football governance touches every corner of the world. Given its magnitude, I have limited the scope of this research to men's league football and English football governing bodies in England (highlighted in green in Figure 1).

<table>
<tr><td colspan="10">FIFA</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10">UEFA</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10">The FA</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Women's English Football</td><td colspan="6">Men's English Football</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">FA Women's Super League</td><td colspan="6">Premier League</td><td>Premier League</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4" rowspan="3">FA Women's Championship</td><td colspan="6">Championship</td><td rowspan="3">EFL</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">League 1</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">League 2</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">FA Women's National League North</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">FA Women's National League South</td><td colspan="6">National League</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">National League North</td><td colspan="3">National League South</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>FA WNL Division One North</td><td>FA WNL Division One Midlands</td><td>FA WNL Division One South East</td><td>FA WNL Division One South West</td><td colspan="2">Northern Premier League Premier Division</td><td colspan="2">Southern League Premier Division</td><td colspan="2">Isthmian League</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">16 Divisional Leagues</td><td>Northern Premier League Division 1 North</td><td>Northern Premier League Division One South</td><td>Southern League Division One East</td><td>Southern League Division One West</td><td>Isthmian League Division One North</td><td>Isthmian League Division One South</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">County Football</td><td colspan="6">County Football</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1: Football governance structure

Football clubs and governing bodies are also structured hierarchically across several levels of management. Figure 2 shows a typical football club organisational chart. At the top of the hierarchy is the board of directors. Collectively, directors are responsible for the strategic oversight of the football club. Some are executive directors, meaning they are salaried members of the executive team who also sit on the board. Other directors hold voluntary non-executive roles. These external directors are appointed as 'critical friends' (Lawrence, 2018), offering an objective view of strategy. However, because executive board members or the chairperson often selects non-executive directors (NEDs), their impartiality is questionable (Lawrence, 2018). The most senior role on the board is that of the chairperson – invariably referred to in football as the 'chairman.' In football, the chairperson is often the club owner and has considerable sway within the organisation. The club secretary also plays a prominent role in club football. As well being a link between the directors and the salaried workforce, the club secretary manages the administration of the club.

At the executive level, roles vary from club to club, but every football organisation has a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Managing Director (MD) who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation. Alongside the CEO often sits a Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer – also known as C-Suite roles. Other executive roles include Commercial Director, Communications/Marketing Director, HR Director, and Legal Director. This executive structure largely resembles that of any other business. However, there are two notable leadership positions within sport organisations that are not found in non-sporting businesses. The first is the First Team manager or Head Coach – the most valued role in a football organisation. The First Team manager is not only responsible for coaching, tactics, team selection, and recruitment of players; they can often have significant influence over the running of the club. As Lawrence (2018) explains, directors within football clubs have

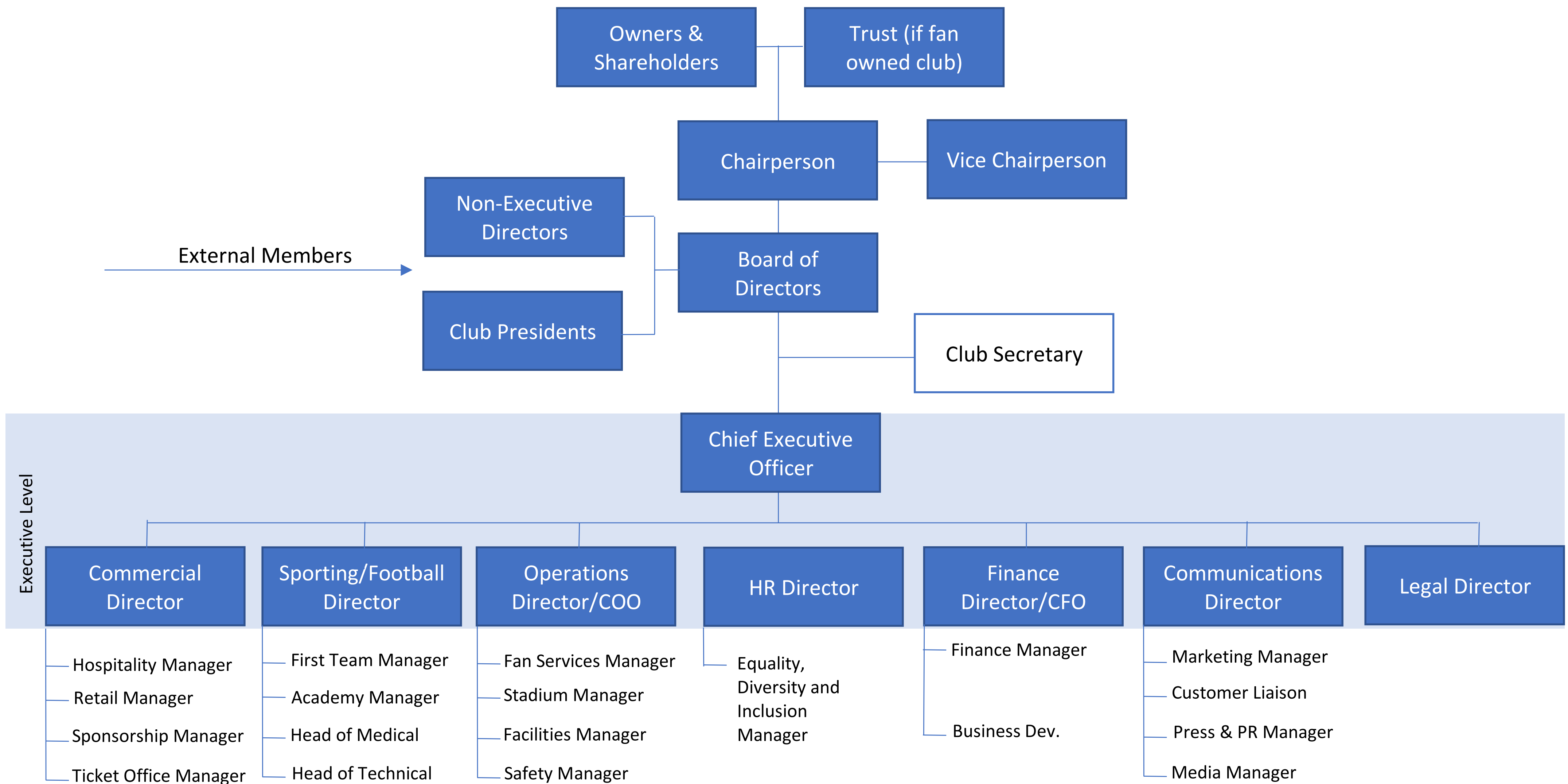


Figure 2: Leadership structure (club football)

conceded power and status to the ‘cult’ figure of the football manager. However, a relative newcomer to English football is the role of the Director of Football, also referred to as the Sporting Director or Head of Football Operations. It is not entirely clear what this role entails, and it differs from club to club; however, broadly speaking, the director of football has strategic oversight of the core football business, which often includes the recruitment of coaching staff and players (Parnell, Widdop, Groom & Bond, 2018). Although not fully established within English football yet, this role is starting to shift the balance of power away from the First Team manager into the hands of the executive team.

Finally, it must be noted that while the core function of a football club is the administration of football, professional football clubs are diverse businesses. Indeed, most football clubs rely on funding sources peripheral to the core football product to survive (Kolyperas & Sparks, 2019). Many stadiums double up as community hubs, conferencing centres, music venues, and even wedding venues. During my fieldwork, I visited many football stadiums on a non-match day and saw, first-hand, the dynamism of football clubs beyond the 90-minute football match. Most football clubs also have a charitable arm, working with their local communities to support everything from grassroots football to food banks. Clubs also make significant profits through sponsorship and broadcasting deals and the selling of club merchandise, such as replica kits (Kolyperas & Sparks, 2019). Notably, these sales are not limited to English fans. Professional football clubs, especially those in the Premier League, are global brands (Beek, Ernest & Verschueren, 2019). Manchester City, for example, now has affiliated clubs in New York, Mumbai, Melbourne, and Montevideo, to name just a few (City Football Group, 2019). In short, football clubs have multiple business strands and respective departments. As such, leadership roles within football clubs are similarly diverse.

In this doctoral research, I define leadership roles as those with management responsibilities within football organisations. I also include the club secretary, given their prominent role in football administration. However, as I have described here, there are various levels of leadership within football organisations and different types of responsibilities between leadership roles at the same level. Thus, it is vital to acknowledge the difference between these leadership roles in terms of organisational power. The owner/chairperson is the most influential person in a football club. While some owners have a historical connection to their club, increasingly, club owners are super-wealthy foreign businesspeople looking to profit from the commercial potential of English football. Thus, despite having ultimate responsibility for the club, owners do not always have the club or its fans' and workers' best interests at heart (Lawrence, 2018). Beyond the ownership, executive directors hold the most power within football organisations. However, only a handful of these executive roles have direct influence over the core football business. All other leadership roles within the football organisation can be considered 'peripheral' to the core football business. This is not to say that these roles are not important – they are vitally important to the running of an organisation as dynamic as football. However, in terms of influencing football as a 'sport,' the power lies with the Chairperson, CEO, Director of Football, and the First Team manager.

2.2.2 Social and Economic Impact

The social and economic impact of men's professional club football in England is vast. In the 2018/19 season, a cumulative 3.2 billion people globally watched a Premier League match on TV – making it the most-watched sports league in the world (Premier League, 2019a). Men's professional football clubs in England also have combined annual revenues of £5.5 billion (Deliotte, 2018), and the Premier League alone employs over 100,000 staff (The Premier League, 2018). So momentous is English football's international popularity that Chinese

broadcaster PPLive paid an estimated $700m for the rights to broadcast the Premier League in China for three years (Munjal, 2022). In the age of social media, it is also significant that the most followed person on Instagram, with over 400 million followers, is Cristiano Ronaldo (Garcia, 2022) – a Portuguese international footballer who currently plays for Manchester United. Indeed, the combined social media following of all Premier League clubs is over 680 million (Buck, 2022). Thus, it is far from an understatement to say that the eyes of the world are fixed on men's English football.

At the national level, football is woven into the fabric of – particularly working-class – English society. As King (2002, p. 16) notes, "the significance of football lies primarily not in its financial value but rather in the fact that many individuals…in English society have regarded it as critical to their lives." In fact, football is often described as a religion, amassing a congregation of devout supporters who follow their club through thick and thin. Hughson (2019) further argues that football is a cultural practice – an art form – that holds an important place in English heritage and culture. Indeed, the fact that this very PhD has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council goes some way to supporting Hughson's view. Football certainly is a cultural phenomenon that has, in recent decades, transcended its association with the working classes. Arguably, football can now only be enjoyed by those who can afford rocketing ticket prices and paid subscriptions to Sky television. Nonetheless, football's appeal has endured. Over 30 million people – half the population of the UK – tuned in to watch the men's England team play Italy in the final of the Euros in 2021. For now, it seems that football is as popular as ever in England, among both men and women.

However, women have been historically excluded from participating in football on equal terms with men. Perhaps the most notable example of this was in 1921, when the FA banned women from playing football on FA affiliated pitches, ruling that football was "quite unsuitable for

females" (Williams, 2022, p. 27). The ban, which was finally lifted in 1971, can be viewed as an attempt by the FA to recoup and preserve the masculine image of football after women's football gained popularity during World War One (Williams, 2003a). That is, football – especially men's club football – is considered an important site for the maintenance and reproduction of idealised masculinity due to its association with physical strength, skill, and power (Connell, 2005; Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011; Magrath, 2018). Thus, women's participation was seen as an intrusion into a 'man's world' (Pope & Pfister, 2018). Even after the ban, women struggled to gain acceptance as players and fans. Moreover, football spectatorship in the 1970s and 1980s was a dangerous activity. Hooliganism blighted football at that time, and stadiums were perilously unsafe. In 1985, fifty-six fans perished at the Bradford City FC stadium when an ageing wooden stand caught fire. Weeks later, just before the European Cup final between Liverpool FC and Juventus kicked off, thirty-nine fans were killed when a wall collapsed at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels after a group of Liverpool fans charged at the Juventus supporters (Mullen, 2015). Many supporters, especially women and families, were deterred from attending football matches (King, 2002). Consequently, match attendances dwindled in the 1980s, and clubs struggled to survive (Brooks, 2019).

The turning point for English football occurred on April 15th, 1989 – the darkest day in English football history. During an FA cup match between Liverpool FC and Nottingham Forest FC at Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield, a fatal crush claimed the lives of ninety-six Liverpool fans. Countless others suffered life-changing injuries, including Andrew Devine, who died as a result of his injuries in July 2021, becoming recognised as the ninety-seventh victim of the tragedy (Kay, 2021). Crowd mismanagement, standing only stalls, and the presence of metal pens designed to control fans contributed to the devasting crush. However, the treatment of fans by the police, the media, and the government in the aftermath of the disaster was equally devastating. Notably, the police falsified statements to blame Liverpool fans for the disaster,

branding them thieves and drunken hooligans. After a three-decades-long battle for justice, a coroner's inquest in 2016 finally concluded that the fans were unlawfully killed as a result of negligence (Dearden, 2021). The disaster brought several subjects to the fore. Firstly, football stadiums were unsafe, not just materially but also because of the authorities' widespread contempt for football fans. Secondly, it became clear that football fans were not just men or "football hooligans." Fourteen victims were children, the youngest of whom was just ten years old. Several women also lost their lives that day. Consequently, the stereotypical image of fans as hooligans was replaced by the image of 'ordinary' people who were 'victims' of a cruel injustice (Williams, 1994). As Pope (2017, p. 63) notes, Hillsborough changed "the prevailing national public discourse about football fans" and symbolised the shift from the 'hooligan years' to a new modern, safer, and more welcoming football environment.

In 1990, Lord Justice Taylor published the results of an inquiry into the Hillsborough stadium disaster (Taylor, 1990). The so-called Taylor Report brought sweeping changes to how football stadiums and football matches were organised. The most notable change was the introduction of all-seater stadiums in the top two divisions of English football. Along with the modernisation of stadiums and increased fan surveillance, these changes brought an end to the hooliganism and stadium disaster years that had blighted football. The launch of the Premier League in 1992 – a breakaway league of men's top-flight clubs – further changed the face of modern English football, bringing with it a renewed interest in the men's game (Brooks, 2019). The Premier League was a highly commercialised product aimed primarily at television audiences. BskyB saw the commercial potential of the modern football product and paid a staggering £304 million for the rights to show Premier League matches on Sky. In fact, Sky was instrumental in turning the humble football match into a spectacle and making household names of Premier League stars. These changes heralded what Williams (2006) calls the 'new' era of football, an era that persists to this day.

It is perhaps notable that some 'new' era football stars, such as David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo, redefined hegemonic ideals of masculinity in 1990s and 2000s. Underpinned by lucrative sponsorship deals with global fashion brands, Beckham and Ronaldo embraced alternative masculine performances through their ultra-groomed, 'metrosexual', and hyper-sexualised appearances (Gee, 2014; Hall & Gough, 2011). However, it is possible that these football celebrities were afforded space to subvert traditional masculine forms through their appearance because they did so "on a pedestal of staunch explicit masculinity" as global football stars and through their "confirmed heterosexuality" as fathers (Gee, 2014: p. 928). Moreover, alternative masculinities are routinely criticised by those in the football industry. For example, Sir Alex Ferguson, the first team manager of Manchester United (1986-2003), was famously critical of Beckham's appearance, once forcing him to shave his hair off before a match (Dutton, 2019). In short, progressive deviations from the hyper-masculine ideal are carefully moderated and policed within the football industry. Nonetheless, the new era of football scarcely resembles its pre-Hillsborough days and has opened football up to a whole new audience.

2.2.3 The 'Feminization' of football

The changes that occurred in football following the Hillsborough disaster unlocked new opportunities for women and girls to participate in football, leading to a 'feminization' of football fandom (Pope, 2017). With the introduction of safer all-seater stadiums, football crowds began to diversify, attracting more women, families, and the middle-classes (King, 2002). The televising of league football matches in the early 1990's also opened more opportunities for women to watch men's football as a leisure activity; thus, bringing football into the lives of people who had not previously followed it. Of course, not all supporters welcomed these changes. Many supporters, to this day, feel that modern football is a sterile,

lifeless version of its pre-Hillsborough days (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). The disdain that some fans feel towards a safer, friendlier football culture speaks to a sense of loss for the traditional masculine working-class football experience. As Brooks (2019) argues, "this sense of loss operates to preserve the assumption that football's traditional and 'authentic' fan is the working-class man, who attends matches to bond with others of a similar demographic." Thus, 'new' football fans, which includes a growing number of women, are seen by some as inauthentic (Pope, 2017). This label of inauthenticity serves to deprive women of the right to participate in football on equal terms with men, who are seen as 'real' fans.

Yet, the feminization of football did not happen by chance. It was a deliberate strategy by football organisations, and the media, to attract women as 'consumers' (Brooks, 2019; Pope, 2017). In a recent BBC documentary, Dave Hill, the founder of Sky Sports, revealed that the introduction of televised Monday Night Football in 1992 – a radical change from the traditional 3pm Saturday afternoon kick off – was created to capture a female audience (Nath & Beard, 2021). The introduction of club merchandise was also a tactic to get families – especially women – to spend money at the club. As Pope (2017, p. 65) notes, "the desire to attract more females as 'consumers' is linked to women's influence on consumer spending… thus, it is women who are most likely to influence decisions around family spending on match tickets and club merchandise, making them an attractive target for sports clubs." Moreover, women were thought to have a 'civilising' effect on football crowds; thus, women's attendance was welcomed by those who were desperate to rid English football of its violent image (Lashmar, 1990; Pope, 2017). However, this strategy had a perhaps unforeseen and unwelcome consequence; women were not content with passive consumption. As had always been the case (Pope & Williams, 2018), women loved football as much as men and they wanted a slice of the pie.

Women now make up over a quarter of attendees at Premier League games (EY, 2015). Not content with sitting on the side-lines, women's football has also seen a resurgence in the 'new' football era. In 2020, 3.4 million women and girls were registered players in England (Wrack, 2020). In recent years, there has also been a concerted effort to diversify football punditry. The likes of Alex Scott, Sue Smith, and Lucy Ward, former football players, now regularly appear as pundits and commentators on men's games. However, experiences of exclusion, stereotyping, and sexism are often a normalised part of women's involvement in football (Caudwell, 2011; Women in Football, 2016). A 2016 survey found that 62 percent of women who work in English football had experienced sexist jokes, 38 percent had experienced derogatory comments about their gender, and 15 percent had experienced sexual harassment at work (Women in Football, 2016). A recent survey also found that 49% of women had witnessed sexist behaviors at football matches and 20% had experienced unwanted physical attention at a men's football match (Football Supporters' Association, 2021). These experiences function to maintain masculine dominance as the norm and prevent women from participating in football on equal terms with men. Indeed, one in 20 women still say that sexism in football deters them from attending matches (ibid).

Moreover, the pervasive stereotype that women cannot understand football sustains practices and beliefs that exclude women from leadership roles, including coaching and officiating (Jones & Edwards, 2013). In 2011, Sky Sports presenters Andy Grey and Richard Keys were recorded off-air criticising female linesperson, Sian Massey. During their conversation, the pair commented that "women don't know the offside rule" and that "somebody better get down there and explain offside to her" (BBC Sport, 2011). Their comments came just a few years after Luton Town manager, Mike Newell, criticised the FA for allowing a woman to referee a men's match calling it "tokenism for the politically-correct idiots" (Bandini, 2006). In short, women have always faced resistance from men in football. Even in the 'new' football era,

women must navigate complex gender relations, identities and barriers to be able to participate within this traditional male preserve (Forbes, Edwards & Fleming, 2015). This is not to say that women do not enjoy being involved in football; on the contrary, studies that have examined women's experiences in football note how important football is to the lives of these women (Pope, 2017; Women in Football, 2016). However, football still has a long way to go before we can say that women are equal participants.

A major factor in women's continued marginalisation in football is the fact that most decision makers in football are men. Although women's participation in football as fans and players has seen a resurgence in the 'new' football era, the football boardroom has remained the preserve of men (Philippou *et al.,* 2022). In fact, at least one professional football club in England is said to still operate a 'men only' policy in the boardroom (Houghton, 2019). The most famous exception to football's male dominated leadership is Baroness Karren Brady. Brady sent shock waves across the football world when, at the age 23, she became the Managing Director of second division side Birmingham City FC in 1993. Now the vice chairperson of Premier League side West Ham United FC, Brady's distinguished career in football business earned her the title of the "first lady in football." However, it is important to note that Brady's privileged upbringing and subsequent business connections (Burrell, 2010) undoubtedly helped her achieve success at such a young age in a male dominated industry. Nonetheless, Brady herself has recounted several experiences of sexism and exclusion in her role as a football leader. In her autobiography, Brady recalled a time in the early 1990s when she was directed to the ladies' room instead of the boardroom because the steward assumed she was the wife of a director rather than a director herself (Brady, 2012). In a recent podcast, Brady notes that the boardroom door "was the first door [she] kicked down", and that she was determined to "keep that door as wide open for as long as possible to get as many other women through"

(Bartlett, 2022). Yet, recent figures (Philippou *et al.,* 2022) show that boardroom door has not been opened quite as wide as Brady had hoped.

Thirty years after her appointment and many assume that Karren Brady remains the only women in a leadership position in football. I have personally lost count of the times people have struck up a conversation with me about Karren Brady when I tell them about my doctoral research. The assumption being that Brady was the first and still one of the only women in men's football leadership – an assumption that Brady herself upholds (Prevett, 2022). In fact, when I started this research process, I was under the very same impression. However, I would come to learn through the course of this research that Karren Brady was not the first nor was she the last woman to lead a men's football club. Now when people ask me about my research on women leaders in football, I say to them, 'there are more women than you think but still not enough.' The truth is that women's leadership work in football has been hidden or forgotten. Therefore, I think it is important that a distinction be made between the fact that men are overrepresented in football leadership and the fact that women do – and always have – held prominent roles in football leadership.

2.2.4 The Hidden History of Women in Football: Challenging Assumptions of a 'Man's World'

It is widely accepted in football sociology and history scholarship that football is, and always has been, a man's world. While it is clear that the football industry privileges men and masculinity, some scholars question the assumption of football as a man's world (Cervin & Nicolas, 2019; Pope & Williams, 2018; Williams, 2003). These scholars argue that women have always been an integral part of football but that their involvement has been ignored. The consequence of this ignorance is that women's current participation in football is presented as

a recent phenomenon. Indeed, women's current involvement as football players and spectators, and the interest in women's football in England, is frequently asserted as emergent (see for example: Forbes *et al.*, 2015; Harris, 2007; Jones & Edwards, 2013; Welford, 2011). The problem with considering women's involvement in football as relatively new is that it serves to promote a view of women's involvement as naïve and amateur, or that women lack a historical entitlement to equal participation. As Pope and Williams (2018, p. 161) argue, "women often emerge here as incomplete ciphers, as decidedly nouveau consumers of sport, with no identifiable or authentic sporting histories." These beliefs can serve to reinforce and legitimise gender inequalities within sport; the very inequalities that these studies are seeking to understand and address.

There is evidence that women have long participated in football as players (Williams, 2003) and fans (Pope & Williams, 2018). Even during the 50-year ban on women playing football on FA affiliated pitches in England, women continued to play football on recreational grounds and participated in football as spectators (Williams, 2003). Therefore, it would be more accurate to describe women's current participation in football as players and fans, and the present interest in women's football, as a *resurgence*. This view acknowledges women's historical connection and contribution to English football, whilst accounting for their historic marginalisation and exclusion.

Although there is now growing evidence of women's historical participation in sport as athletes and fans, we still know extraordinarily little about women's historical involvement in and experiences of sport administration and leadership. So sparse is the literature on this topic that there is an assumption that women have not, until relatively recently, been involved in the running of sport organisations, especially men's football. However, Williams and Hess (2015, p. 2117) argue that women have "pioneered important aspects of football as far back as 1881

and…sought to administer the sport in high profile leagues since at least 1895”. As such, to paraphrase the authors, we must ask ‘what kind of first is Karren Brady’ when women’s involvement in football administration has been historically negated? Therefore, I am conscious that a sole focus on women’s ‘underrepresentation’ in football leadership risks ignoring the work that women do and have been doing in the football industry for years. As such, highlighting inequalities must go hand in hand with uncovering the hidden history of women’s leadership work in football. Crucially, the more hidden histories of women’s involvement in football we uncover, such as the remarkable success of Dick, Kerr Ladies in the early 1900s (Newsham, 2014) or the extraordinary life and career of Lily Parr – one of the first women to play professional football in England (Lofthouse, 2022) – the less defensible men’s historic claim to football becomes.

2.2.5 Policy Landscape: A Tipping Point for Gender Equality?

This doctoral research comes at a time of significant change in English sport governance. In 2015, the UK government launched the Sporting Futures strategy, setting out a vision for improving sport provision and levels of physical activity in the UK (Cabinet Office, 2015). Part of the strategy focussed on overhauling the leadership and administration of sport. This included a directive for Sport England and UK Sport to agree a new UK Sports Governance Code by 2016 and for that code to tackle the lack of diversity in leadership roles within sport’s governing bodies. In 2016, Sport England and UK Sport launched ‘A Code for Sport Governance’, which set out mandatory requirements for sport organisations that received public funding. Notably, Tier 3 organisations – those in receipt of the most public funds – were required to “adopt a target of, and take all appropriate actions to encourage, a minimum of 30% of each gender on its Board” (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016, p. 26). Organisations that failed to meet the mandatory requirements risked losing their public funding. One such Tier 3

organisation is the FA, which receives £30m to £40m of public funding each year (BBC Sport, 2016).

In direct response to the Code for Sport Governance, the FA and its shareholders agreed to reduce its Board from 12 to 10 members and for three of those positions to be reserved for women (The FA, 2017a). Women now make up 40% of the FA board (The FA, 2022) – a momentous improvement on the board's gender composition prior to the introduction of the code. In fact, before the new governance reforms were introduced, only one woman, Dame Heather Rabbatts, had ever held a director role at the FA. However, like Rabbatts, most women on the FA Board hold non-executive director roles. These roles have less power and influence over the day-to-day running of the organisation. Although six out of fourteen executives at the FA are women, two of these women are solely responsible for women's football (The FA, 2021a). In sum, men still dominate executive positions with direct influence over men's football. Moreover, the Code for Sport Governance does not apply at the club level where gender inequalities in leadership positions in men's club football are stark (Philippou *et al.*, 2022).

As private businesses, football clubs are largely free to operate as they wish, uninhibited by external interference from governing bodies. That said, they must still comply with UK equality laws. The Equality Act (2010) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society on the grounds of nine protected characteristics, including sex. The act brings together decades of UK equality legislation, including the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. These acts prevent persons from being treated less favourably because of their sex. This includes being paid less than a person of the other sex for the same work. Yet, despite these longstanding laws, gender inequalities in the workplace persist. To highlight and tackle persistent gender inequalities in the workplace, the government

introduced mandatory Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reporting for organisations with 250 or more employees in 2017 (Government Equalities Office, 2020). When organisations published their GPG reports in 2018, it brought to light shocking disparities between men and women in terms of pay and organisational power. Crucially, these reports made public, for the first time, stark gender inequalities in men's club football administration (BBC Sport, 2018), revealing an average gender pay gap of 66 percent in favour of men (see Chapter 5). However, notwithstanding public naming and shaming, GPG reporting stops short of forcing organisations to address these gender inequalities.

In recent years, football governing bodies have attempted to address the overrepresentation of men in leadership positions in football through targeted leadership development courses for women, such as the 'FIFA Leadership Development Programme' (FIFA, 2016) and the FA's 'Women in Leadership Programme' (The FA in Association with The Institute of Directors, 2017). While these programmes may offer skills and strategies for individual women, they do little to challenge and dismantle embedded structural and cultural power relations that reinforce patriarchal hierarchies and they often fail to deliver tangible results (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Styhre, 2008; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Indeed, (neo)liberal feminist strategies to increase women's access to leadership, strategies that focus on enhancing opportunities for women to join existing structures without fundamentally disrupting those structures, have been criticised for placing the responsibility for gender equality on the shoulders of women and for failing to challenge the gendered cultures of organisations (de Haan & Dumbell, 2019; Nash & Moore, 2018). I too am extremely critical of strategies that aim to 'fix' women (Shaw & Frisby, 2006), rather than fixing inequality producing organisational structures and cultures. That said, I used to be an advocate for women's leadership courses. In fact, I used to organise them when I worked in students' unions. Spending four years researching gender inequalities in sport has fundamentally changed my

views on liberal feminist approaches. It has become clear to me that the issue is not women's lack of ambition, confidence, or skill; the issue is that most organisations are designed by and for men and no amount of 'upskilling' women is going to change the masculine blueprint of organisational leadership.

My views on affirmative action are somewhat more complex. Clearly, the introduction of mandatory gender targets for national governing bodies of sport has led to meaningful change at the board level in terms of the proportion of women in leadership positions. However, numbers only tell a partial story. Moreover, increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles should not be an end goal for organisations or proponents of gender equality. Research suggests that women continue to face barriers to participation above the glass ceiling (Glass & Cook, 2016; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015) and that women leaders are more likely than their male counterparts to leave senior leadership roles (Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021; Torre, 2014, 2017b). Therefore, there is need to understand at a deeper level how women experience leadership roles when they get there. Moreover, leadership is not always synonymous with organisational power. The movement of women into non-executive roles to fulfil gender targets at the FA is evidence that a narrow focus on numbers can actually distort the truth and restrict women's access to positions of power. As such, my goal in this thesis is to move beyond the numbers, to examine the types of roles women hold in football leadership and what their experiences are when they get there.

Since completing my fieldwork in 2019, there have been some noteworthy additions to the policy landscape. The first was the introduction of the FA's Football Leadership Diversity Code (FLDC) in 2020 (The FA, 2020). The FLDC is a voluntary code that football clubs can sign up to. In signing up to the code, clubs pledge to meet gender and ethnicity targets for new hires in leadership, team operations, and coaching roles. For example, clubs can pledge to

ensure that 30% of their new hires for senior leadership roles are women. While the code is a step in the right direction, it is entirely voluntary. Moreover, the code provides limited guidance for clubs on how to improve their recruitment practices. In fact, the whole code is only three pages long. Although more than fifty clubs, including both men's and women's clubs, have signed up to the pledge, as of November 2021 only two of the eight targets had been met and these related solely to ethnic diversity (The FA, 2021d). In contrast, the average percentage of women hired for senior leadership roles between September 2020 and August 2021 was 20% - less than the 30% target. Moreover, the code has missed a vital opportunity to address the critical underrepresentation of disabled people and LGBTQ people in football leadership and coaching.

Of final note, was the publication in November 2021, of the Fan Led Review of Football Governance (Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport, 2021). The review, led by MP Tracey Crouch CBE was based on consultation with football fans, and concluded that an Independent Regulator for English Football (IREF) is needed to combat financial mismanagement, reckless ownership, and the lack of diversity in English football. Specifically, the review recommended that IREF should mandate football organisations to have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which should be assessed as part of the annual licensing process, a process that ensures that football grounds are safe and accessible. However, the FA and Premier League vehemently oppose the idea of an independent football regulator (Evans, 2021). Although the EFL are in favour of an IREF, at the time of writing it remains to be seen whether they will have enough sway to convince the rest of English football.

2.3 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I present a review of literature on the reasons for gender inequalities in leadership roles. I contend that individual-level explanations for gender inequalities are limited in their ability to explain the persistent overrepresentation of men in leadership positions. In response, I introduce Acker's concept of gendered organisations and review scholarship on structural gender inequalities within male-dominated organisations. I move on to review the literature on women's experiences above the glass ceiling and argue that women continue to face challenges even when they reach leadership roles. However, I argue in this chapter that the role of agency has been overlooked in women's navigation of the structural inequalities and that research must move beyond a 'barriers to leadership' narrative to explore how women enact agency to access, stay in, and leave leadership roles.

In Chapter 3, *Theoretical Framework: 'Extremely Gendered' Organisations*, I introduce Sasson-Levy's (2011) theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations to argue that football, like the military, exists *because* it is masculinised and that this has consequences for understanding and explaining gender inequalities. However, I also draw on the concepts of *Gender Hegemony* (Schippers, 2007) and the *Heterosexual Matrix* (Butler, 1999) to fully consider the moderating role of women and femininity in extremely gendered organisational regimes. In this chapter, I also elaborate on Acker's (1990) concept of the ideal worker and consider what this means in the context of the extremely gendered organisation of men's football. Finally, in considering the role of agency within women's navigation of extreme structural inequalities, I discuss the role of postfeminist sensibilities and introduce Meyerson and Scully's (1995) concept of *Tempered Radicalism* to understand how women enact agency to challenge gender inequalities from within neoliberalised and male-dominated organisations.

In Chapter 4, *Methodology,* I argue that Constructivist Grounded Theory alongside Situational Analysis, with its focus on reflexivity, heterogeneity, and constructed knowledge, is a valuable methodology for conducting feminist research and building new theoretical concepts. Specifically, I discuss how I used this approach to develop the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations and construct the concept of the *sportlight*. I further discuss the use of qualitatively driven mixed methods in feminist research and detail how I used multiple methods of data collection, including archival research, document analysis, and biographic interviewing, to research women's underrepresentation in and experiences of football leadership. In this chapter, I also reflect on the philosophical, theoretical, ethical, and practical dilemmas of conducting feminist research with women leaders in football. Specifically, I challenge the assumption of women's collective oppression in feminist research and discuss the power dynamics inherent in researching privileged groups. I further reflect on my own position within the research and how this influenced my choice of theory, method, and analytical interpretation of data.

In Chapter 5, *On the Periphery: Women Leaders in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football,* I present my findings on the types and proportion of leadership roles women have held in men's professional club football and football governing bodies in the new football era. In this chapter, I demonstrate that women's access to power and influence in football has been limited. Specifically, I find that women have been limited to roles that are *peripheral* to the *core* football product. Through analysis of gender pay gap reports, I find that male dominance in core roles is underpinned by a gendered organisational logic that naturalises men's privileged access to core football roles. In developing the theory of extremely gender organisations, I argue that heterosexuality is a central organising principle of extremely gendered organisations like football, and that this plays a role in the peripheral positioning of women, especially in symbolically hetero-feminine roles. Finally, I present evidence that the

redistribution of women's leadership work across newly created peripheral roles in the new football era, and the continued lack of racial diversity in football leadership, presents an illusion of gender equality in football.

In chapter 6, *Conditional Entry into Football Leadership– Cultivating an ideal worker/ideal woman identity,* I apply the concept of the 'ideal worker' to examine how women make sense of their success in the football industry. In this chapter, I argue that women's entry into, and success within, football leadership is conditional upon their ability to cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman identity. Specifically, I demonstrate how existing privileges grant certain women entry to football via insider networks. Moreover, I argue that football leadership is incompatible with motherhood, and so women must forgo children or minimise the impact of motherhood on their careers to be seen as ideal workers. Finally, I show how women must perform an idealised 'respectable' femininity to be considered the ideal woman to work in football. Here, I introduce the term *sportlight* to explain the intense and gendered pressures women face working in a high-profile industry.

In Chapter 7, *Tempered Radicalism: Defending, Challenging, and Leaving Football*, I examine the factors that influence women's choices to stay in, challenge, and leave the extremely gendered organisation of football leadership. I frame this examination within the concept of agency as a social practice in which opportunities arise within structural limitations for people to enact agency. I find that women use their positions of power to defend the football industry. In contrast to feminist criticism of postfeminist sensibilities, I argue that this is a strategy to encourage more women to work in football by showing football in a positive light. I further apply the concept of tempered radicalism to reveal subtle strategies of resistance within football organisations. However, I argue that tempered radicalism is extra burdensome work for women and is limited in its ability to change extremely gendered cultures. Finally, I apply the concept

of the Kaleidoscope Career Model to explore women's reasons for leaving football leadership that moves beyond deterministic push/pull factors. The findings in this chapter provide a critical counter-narrative to that of women as mere victims of gendered organisations.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 8, I discuss this doctoral research's key empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions. I argue that to change the extremely gendered regime of men's football, we must reimagine the governance of football in a way that fundamentally disrupts its masculine blueprint. I argue that this reimagining should start on the field of play to challenge the assumption of male-athletic superiority. I further argue that efforts to increase the number of women in leadership roles that are based on numerical equality will fail without a closer examination of the types of roles women hold and the cultural constraints that limit opportunities for action. Finally, I offer some practical recommendations for football organisations that I believe offer opportunities to challenge football's exclusionary culture.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Despite women's growing participation in corporate and political leadership roles in Western Societies, and the notable resurgence of women's sporting participation in recent years, sport leadership remains characterised by stark gender inequalities. For decades, scholars have theorised women's relative absence in leadership roles compared to men. More recently, women's underrepresentation in sport leadership has also received growing scholarly attention. Yet, this literature is diverse and often contradictory. Notably, there is a divide between literature on structural gender inequalities and individual level explanations for women's underrepresentation in leadership roles. In this chapter, I review these diverse bodies of literature to argue that structural explanations for gender inequality

in sport leadership offer the most fruitful avenues for understanding this persistent phenomenon. However, I argue that despite a proliferation of literature on gender inequalities in the sport workplace, little is known about women's experiences above the glass ceiling or how women enact agency to navigate their leadership careers in sport. Thus, by centring women's leadership experiences in football, this thesis begins to bridge several gaps in existing literature.

In the opening section of this chapter, I trace the trajectory of scholarship on gender and work from a focus on gender as an individual possession that workers bring into an organisation to a focus on gender as a central organising principle of work and organisations. Next, I review literature on explanations for gender inequalities in leadership roles, especially in male-dominated industries such as sport. In the final section of this chapter, I review literature on women's experiences above the glass ceiling and argue that there is a critical dearth of scholarship on women leaders in sport, especially football. I further argue that existing literature has overlooked the role of agency in women's navigation of sport leadership.

3.2 Gender and Work

Scholarship on gender, work, and organisations is vast, stretching across multiple disciplines including gender studies, sociology, psychology, and management studies. However, for decades, gender was viewed as inconsequential to the workings of institutions such as the state and the workplace (Connell, 1987). Instead, early gender research largely focussed on the family as the only site where gender was influential (Whelehan, 1995). When studies did explore women's entry into male-dominated professions, the focus was often on women's ability to reconcile family and work commitments (Witz, 1992). Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) ground-breaking study, *Men and Women of the*

Corporation, which examined women's experiences of discrimination in male-dominated professions, signalled a departure from this trend. Kanter's work continues to influence scholarship on gender, work, and organisations, as well as equality and inclusion policies. However, scholarship in this area has also branched out into multiple strands with different theoretical bases. Notably, one strand of literature is based on the idea that gender belongs only to individuals and that women and men bring gender into organisations. A contrasting strand of literature argues that organisations themselves *have* gender. That is, organisations are socially constructed as masculine or feminine before workers enter the organisation.

In this section, I trace the origins of scholarship on gender, work, and organisations starting with Kanter's work on *Tokenism and Critical Mass.* I then move on to consider scholarship on *Gender as a Social Construction* before reviewing literature on *Gendered Organisations.* I argue that scholarship on gendered organisations offers the most valuable avenue for understanding persistent gender inequalities in the workplace. That is, viewing gender as a fundamental organising principle of the workplace moves us beyond numerical inequality to understand how the structure of organisations themselves create and maintain gender inequalities.

3.2.1 Tokenism and Critical Mass

The concept of tokenism, which refers to the negative consequences of being in a minority group in the workplace, has provided a popular explanation of women's differential treatment and experiences in male-dominated occupations over the past 40 years. Kanter's (1977a) research on 'token' women suggested that dominant (male) groups control and maintain their group culture through systems of bias, discrimination, and exclusion towards token (women) groups. Through group observations and interviews with women and men in US corporations, Kanter found that men – the dominant group – used the presence of

token women to underline gender differences despite their common positions in the workplace. In the presence of female co-workers, men: exaggerated their displays of aggression; made sexual innuendos; and emphasised their supremacy over women. Rather than subverting the masculine culture, the presence of token women in the male-dominated field functioned to emphasise it. Kanter argued that this boundary creating behaviour preserves the dominant culture by reminding tokens that they are outsiders. Although Kanter presented a useful, first-hand account, of men's behaviour towards token women, she stopped short of suggesting that this behaviour was the preserve of men. Rather, Kanter's work suggests that all dominant groups would act in the same way towards a token member.

Contrastingly, studies on men's experiences of working in female-dominated workplaces reveals that tokenism is experienced very differently for men (Evans, 1997; Ott, 1989; Simpson, 2004; Williams, 1992). This research suggests that men, rather than experiencing negative consequences of tokenism as women do, face structural advantages in female-dominated occupations. As Williams (1992, p. 254) notes, "the effects of sexism can outweigh the effects of tokenism". Notably, Oakley (2000) contends that men's negative behaviours towards token women are a reaction to the fear that they will be forced to give up their power and higher wages if women enter their world. Therefore, women's negative experiences of tokenism in male-dominated occupations are both a cause and consequence of societal inequalities, where the workplace becomes a site for men to reinforce, exaggerate, and reproduce gender inequalities.

However, Kanter (1977a) and other proponents of token theory (Karsten, 1994; Konrad, Kramer & Erkut, 2008; Torchia, Calabrò & Huse, 2011) argue that a 'critical mass' of women in the workforce would eventually overcome the negative consequences of

tokenism. Kanter identified four types of groups in the workplace, as defined by their proportional representation of two different social groups. A *uniform group* has a membership that consists entirely of one social group. A *skewed group* has a predominance – >=85% – of one social group, i.e., the dominants. In this group, members of the underrepresented social category are considered 'tokens.' In a *tilted group,* the proportions are less extreme, but the dominants still hold a majority membership in the region of 65%. In a titled group, members of the underrepresented social category are no longer considered tokens, they are a 'minority.' Finally, a *balanced group* has an equal or near equal – 40:60 – proportion of either social group.

The introduction of gender targets and quotas[3] for boards of directors are based on Kanter's beliefs about group proportions and their influence on organisational cultures. Claringbould and Knoppers' (2008) study of sports governance boards would seem to support this idea. They found that members of gender-balanced boards were less likely to create gender hierarchies or assign gender stereotypes than members of skewed boards. However, Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) argue that a critical mass of women in board roles is just the first step to gender equality, not the end goal. The authors argue that equal participation included having women in influential board positions, i.e., chairperson, and adopting gender equality as an organisational value.

Critics of tokenism and critical mass argue that an emphasis on increasing women's numbers in male-dominated occupations risks overlooking the complexities of gender discrimination in the workplace (Childs & Krook, 2006; Yoder, 1991). Although Kanter discusses power differentiations between men as the dominant group and women as the

[3] Gender targets are different to quotas in that targets are aspirational while quotas are mandatory.

token group, she does not consider gender as an axis of power. By simply adding gender into a study as a comparative category, researchers are in danger of assuming that men and women occupy a level playing field in which to study their differential experiences in the workplace. This approach neglects to consider the influence of wider societal and domestic gender inequalities that exist outside of the workplace. For example, in a study of women engineers, Watts (2009) found that the dominant masculine culture of inflexible and long working hours added an extra burden on women, who were responsible for the largest share of domestic responsibilities in the home. Using a post-structural feminist framework, Watt's study usefully considers wider influences on women's experiences in a male-dominated field.

Moreover, Kanter's work assumes that women and men occupy fixed and oppositional 'sex' categories; thus 'adding women in' will inevitably lead to a culture shift. However, this view essentialises gender differences and neglects to consider shifting historical, social, and cultural definitions of gender. Moreover, women are not a homogenous group, gender intersects with class, race, and sexuality to create power differences between women and between men (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Yet, gender targets and quotas have largely benefitted white, middle-class women and have done little to disrupt hegemonically white middle-class governance structures (Celis, Erzeel, Mügge & Damstra, 2014; Hughes, 2011). Thus, there is now a significant body of work that considers the effect of gender as an organising principle of work and organisations (Acker, 1990, 2012; Balmer *et al*., 2020; Pape, 2020; Risman, 2004). Moreover, gender is increasingly considered as a dynamic and shifting process that intersects with multiple bases of inequality (Acker, 2006, 2012; Bhopal, 2020; Celis *et al*., 2014; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Hughes, 2011). Before I turn to a review of this literature, I will first discuss scholarship on the concept that underpins this literature – the social construction of gender.

3.2.2 The Social Construction of Gender

Feminist scholarship widely considers gender to be a social construction (Connell, 2002; Lorber, 1994; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Walby, 1997). That is, the gender categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are made distinct not by nature, but through historical, social, and cultural configurations of gender difference[4]. Lorber (1994) argues that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction and social life. As such, gender is not something that we have but something we do; it is what bodies do rather than social practice that is reduced to the body (Connell, 2005). Despite significant similarities, the social production of gender difference sorts men and women into two socially distinct binary categories[5] (Budgeon, 2014). That is, the categories woman and man are constructed as necessarily different, regardless of whether what women and men actually do is different. As Lorber suggests, “the social institution of gender insists only that what they [men and women] do is *perceived* as different” (1994, p. 26, empasis in original). Crucially, these perceptions of gender difference are so pervasive that they order the organisation of daily life (Connell, 2005; Lorber, 1994).

However, gender is so deeply engrained in society that we often do not recognise it as constructed. As Lorber (1994, pp. 13-14) notes, “gender is such a familiar part of our life

---

[4] While some gender scholars view sex and gender as analytically distinct, others view sex and gender as similarly constructed (Butler, 1999; West & Zimmerman, 1987). A discussion of the complex debates about sex and gender is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I am of the view that sex and gender are socially constructed concepts and are inextricably linked. Thus, when I speak of gender, I am referring the mutually reinforcing categories of sex and gender.

5 I do not want to suggest that people’s experience of gender is necessarily binary. However, I acknowledge, along with Channon & Phipps (2017), that the construction of gender in society and institutions such as sport, is often divided along distinct binary demarcations.

that it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how men and women are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced". Indeed, many studies of women in male-dominated professions have failed to adequately interrogate the perception of organisations as gender-neutral. Instead, these studies have focussed on numerical disadvantage (Kanter, 1977b), biological gender differences (Wozniak, Harbaugh & Mayr, 2014), personality differences (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2013), and occupational choice (Flory, Leibbrandt & List, 2014) as reasons for gender inequality in the workplace. In contrast, many feminist scholars acknowledge the gendered construction of the workplace as fundamental to understanding women's underrepresentation in male-dominated occupations (Acker, 1990; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Game & Pringle, 1984; Witz, 1992).

One of the first studies to consider the social construction of gender and its influence on organisations was Game and Pringle's (1984) book, *Gender at Work*. By examining the segregation of women and men within business organisations and social institutions, the authors argued that "gender is fundamental to the way work is organised" (Game & Pringle, 1984, p. 14). Crucially, they took this analysis one step further to suggest that work was also "central in the construction of gender" (ibid). That is, the authors recognised that work was a critical site for the production of gender relations and gender difference. Since the publication of *Gender at Work,* the construction of gender has taken a firm place in sociological understandings of gender, work, and organisations (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 2003; Billing, 2011; Lorber, 1994; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Nkomo & Rodriguez, 2018). Perhaps the most influential work in this field is Joan Acker's concept of 'Gendered Organisations'. Before I review literature on gendered organisations, I must first note the influence of postmodernism thinking on the concept of gender as constructed.

The idea that gender, and other identity categories such as race and sexuality, are social constructions is fundamental to anti-essentialist postmodern thinking. However, with its focus on deconstruction, postmodernism has been associated with the end of identity politics or the 'death of the subject' (McCann, 2016). Hence, some feminist thinkers have argued that postmodernism is politically "paralyzing" (Hoff, 1994, p. 149), that rendering identity questionable silences women. While feminist scholars such as hooks and Butler have been described as postmodern thinkers, they too have been critical of postmodern tendencies to erase subject positions. Yet, both scholars have argued that postmodern critiques of essentialism and the deconstruction of the subject are useful feminist tools (Butler, 1992; hooks, 2014). As Butler (1992, p. 15) argues, "to take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is the not the same as doing away with the subject…to deconstruct is not to negate, but to call into question, and perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject…". In short, I agree with both hooks and Butler that identity labels such as 'Black', 'woman', and 'lesbian' are politically necessary; nonetheless, we must continue to interrogate the construction of identity to "open up new possibilities for the construction of the self and assertion of agency" (hooks, 2014, p. 28).

3.2.3 Gendered Organisations

Joan Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations changed the way sociologists theorise gender, work, and organisations. Acker argued that, rather than being gender-neutral, organisations and jobs *have* gender. That is, "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker 1990, p. 146). 'Gendered' is now an invaluable concept for understanding persistent gender inequalities in the workplace (Nkomo & Rodriguez, 2018) including sports organisations

(Hedenborg & Norberg, 2019; Shaw, 2006). In response to criticism, the theory has also been adapted since its inception to better account for intersectional inequalities (Acker, 2006, 2012), globalisation (Acker, 2004, 2006, 2012; Williams, Muller & Kilanski, 2012), and organisational context (Britton, 2003; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Tyler, Carson & Reynolds, 2019).

Acker's (1990) central argument was that inequalities persist within ostensibly gender-neutral organisations because of an often-invisible *gendered substructure* that determines the structural position of and beliefs about women and men. Gendered substructure refers to the organising processes, organisational culture, and workplace interactions that construct gender difference and reinforce gender inequalities within organisations. The gendered substructure of an organisation is created through organising processes, such as job design and wage setting, that build inequalities into the structure of the organisation (Acker, 2012). For example, one of the most visible inequality producing organising processes is the segregation of women and men within jobs and organisational hierarchies (Acker, 1990, 2006). That is, despite the significant movement of women into professional occupations, they still tend to occupy lower status and lower paid jobs than men (Blau & Kahn 2017; FTSE Women Leaders 2018; WISE 2018). Workplace interactions also reinforce the gendered substructure of an organisation. For example, networking is a gendered process that involves negotiation between gendered practice and professional identity (Benschop, 2009). The gendered substructure is also created through organisational cultures that shape beliefs about gender difference (Acker, 2012). For example, within each organisation there is a culturally accepted definition of femininity and masculinity that maintains hierarchical beliefs about gender.

In Acker's later work on 'Inequality Regimes', she also argued that the concept of a gendered substructure can be expanded to include processes that create racial and class inequalities (Acker, 2006, 2012). However, this work was criticised for failing to acknowledge that inequalities based on sexuality are *equally* embedded within organisations (Britton & Logan, 2008). Indeed, Acker herself had previously argued that an "organizational theory that is blind to sexuality does not immediately offer avenues into the comprehension of gender domination" (1990, p. 142) and argues in her original theory of gendered organisations that sexuality, along with gender, is part of the process of control within organisations. For example, until 2016, women were excluded from close combat roles in the military because their presence was considered distracting for men (Berkshire Consultancy, 2009). Thus, gender segregation at work may be justified by the need to control sexuality in the workplace (Acker, 1990), which leads to women being excluded from certain types of work because of their supposedly disruptive bodies.

The gendered substructure is also underpinned by an *organisational logic:* "the underlying assumptions and practices that construct most contemporary organisations" (Acker, 1990, p. 147). Central to the concept of organisational logic is the idea of the abstract worker. Although organisational logic assumes a gender-neutral abstract worker, Acker (1990) argued that the very definition of a job is implicitly gendered. That is, men are less likely than women to have unpaid primary caring responsibilities, meaning jobs that require a commitment to full-time, continuous hours of paid work, with no career breaks, implicitly favour men (Acker, 2012; Davies & Frink, 2014; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack & Moen, 2010; Williams *et al*., 2012). Therefore, Acker reasoned that the 'ideal abstract worker' for most jobs is a man (Acker, 1990, 2006, 2012). However, Acker (1990) also notes that the ideal abstract worker for some jobs might be woman. For example, the sexualisation of women means that some employers prefer women's bodies for certain work, such as sales

work (Caven, Lawley & Baker, 2013). However, jobs where the ideal abstract worker is a woman, such as service work, are often characterised by low-pay and low-status (Acker, 1990, 2006).

Crucially, the abstract worker is also racialised, classed, and assumes a non-disabled worker. That is, white and middle-class workers are often preferred for professional occupations (Acker, 2006; Tobias Neely, 2018), while Black workers and working-class workers are more often routed into low paid service work (Karjanen, 2008). For example, in a study of immigrant workers in Canada, Guo (2015) found that racialised minorities are more likely to be assigned to low-skilled, low value work, than white workers, regardless of their education and professional experience. Certainly, in an era of globalisation, the ideal worker for low paid, domestic work, or exploitative work is often an immigrant (Shih, 2002); someone that employers believe will accept poor working conditions and low pay. Furthermore, despite 21 percent of working-age adults in the UK reporting a disability (Department for Work and Pensions, 2022), most if not all jobs are designed around an 'ideal' non-disabled worker (Foster & Wass, 2013; Scholz & Ingold, 2021). It should also be noted that that the movement of mostly white middle-class women into better paid jobs has created a "care chain" whereby privileged women outsource care work to migrant women for low wages, who in turn rely on women in their home country to care for their children for even lower wages (Parreñas, 2012, p. 269). Therefore, many feminist scholars are critical of outsourcing care and domestic work so that women, usually white middle-class women, can achieve equal professional status with white men (Ahmed, 2017; hooks, 2000). As Ahmed (2017, p. 86) argues "when being freed from labor requires others to labor, others are paying for the price of your freedom. That is not freedom."

While the ideal abstract worker changes across occupational contexts, leadership roles implicitly (or sometimes explicitly) favour men, especially, white middle-class and non-disabled men. Professional and managerial jobs, which often require long working hours, extensive travel, and a willingness to relocate, are suited to unencumbered workers who can give primacy to paid work (Acker, 2012; Billing, 2011; Williams, 2001). As such, it is men who are more likely than women to meet the ideal of the abstract worker for professional and managerial jobs. Gendered assumptions also define the ideal abstract manager. For example, traditional leadership traits such as assertiveness, decisiveness, ambition, and rationality are commonly associated with men (Heilman, 2001; Kelly *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, women, especially those deemed traditionally feminine, are associated with passivity, kindness, and emotion, meaning women are unlikely to meet the ideal requirements of the abstract leader (Dashper, 2019). As such, the concept of the ideal abstract worker, which has come to be known simply as the ideal worker, provides a useful lens through which to understand different women's access to leadership roles. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on Acker's concept of gendered organisations and the ideal worker to present a theoretical framework for considering football as an 'extremely gendered' organisation. First, I will examine literature on explanations for gender inequalities in leadership roles.

3.3 Explanations for gender inequalities in leadership roles

Literature on the reasons for gender inequality in leadership roles falls into two vastly distinct categories of reasoning (Nkomo & Rodriguez, 2018). The first locates the problem of inequality with individuals, suggesting that men make naturally better leaders and that women lack the requisite skills to be effective leaders. Individual level explanations tend to present women as deficit, citing lack of self-confidence (Babcock & Laschever, 2009),

lack of human capital (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004), self-limiting behaviours (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), or an unwillingness to put themselves forward (Babcock & Laschever, 2009; Sandberg, 2013) as reasons for women's relative absence in leadership roles compared to men. These explanations have heavily influenced liberal feminist strategies to improve gender equality in leadership, such as targeted leadership and assertiveness courses for women and *Lean In* Circles (Williams, 2014). These strategies teach women to "emulate men's perceived toughness" (Shaw & Frisby, 2006, p. 487) and encourage women to 'lean in' to leadership opportunities (Sandberg, 2013). The problem with these strategies is that they focus on fixing women (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006) rather than fixing inequality producing practices and processes. Moreover, individual explanations and strategies place the burden of responsibility for challenging inequalities on individual women rather than organisations (Nash & Moore, 2018). Countless career self-help books for women, that often encourage women to be more like men (for examples see: Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2019; Frankel, 2014; Babcock & Laschever, 2009), are evidence of the pressures women face to change and contort themselves to fit the masculine mould of leadership.

The second category of literature, supported by sociologists and radical feminists, claims that organisational structures and practices maintain men's dominance in leadership roles and prevent women from moving into positions of power (Acker, 2006; Brown & Kelan, 2020; Foster, 2015; Gill, Kelan & Scharff, 2017; Nash & Moore, 2018; Williams, 2014). This literature demonstrates that individual level explanations are limited in their ability to challenge inequalities and ignore the structural impediments that hinder most women's progression and thrust (white) men, and some white women, into positions of power (Acker, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Indeed, the proliferation of metaphors such as the *glass ceiling* (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986), *glass elevator* (Williams, 1992), *labyrinths*

(Eagly & Carli, 2007), and the *concrete ceiling* (Catalyst, 1999) to describe women and men's journeys into leadership are testament to the ongoing structural processes, such as inflexible working practices (Holmgren, 2018; Ishizuka & Musick, 2021), discrimination (Bradbury, 2013; Powell & Sang, 2015), and stereotyping (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Heilman, 2001), that differentially benefit and impede certain groups of women and men. Moreover, existing literature suggests that these structural impediments to women's progression are more severe and uncompromising within highly masculinised and male-dominated industries (Powell & Sang, 2015; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Torre, 2014), including sport industries (Anderson, 2009; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Piggott & Pike, 2019; Shaw, 2006).

In this section, I will review literature on structural impediments to women's progression in male-dominated professions and sport industries. Specifically, I will examine literature that focuses on common structural explanations for women's underrepresentation in sport leadership (Burton, 2015), including *gender stereotypes*, *homologous reproduction*, and *informal recruitment and the "old boys' network"*. I will argue that while this literature offers compelling evidence of structural barriers to leadership for women, there is a pressing need to understand the journeys and experiences of women who, against the odds, achieve leadership positions in male dominated industries such as football. Thereby, this thesis will advance our understanding of gender inequalities in leadership roles in sport by moving beyond a barriers-based approach to examine the persistent phenomenon of gender inequalities from the perspective of women above the glass ceiling.

3.3.1 Gender Stereotypes

Stereotypical beliefs held about women and men in society are found to permeate, and be created within, the workplace (Gorman, 2005; Heilman, 2001, 2012; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Gender stereotypes refer to cultural constructs, widely shared in society, about how men and women are and how they should be (Gorman, 2005). Commonly held stereotypes that present women as communal, nurturing, emotional, and passive are incompatible with the expectations of roles in business, technology, and leadership (Burton, Barr, Fink & Bruening, 2009; Heilman, 2001). In contrast, men are stereotyped as being assertive, objective, and independent (Burton *et al*., 2009; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). These stereotypes represent a hierarchical power dynamic, where men are stereotyped as being better placed to take on higher-paid and higher-value jobs, such as senior leadership roles (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). For example, in a study of US law firms, Gorman (2005) found that leadership was viewed in stereotypically masculine ways, and this resulted in biased recruitment decisions that favoured men for senior roles. Therefore, gender stereotypes are particularly significant in male-dominated workplaces and sport industries, where gender stereotypes are reinforced by the lack of women in high-value and high-paid jobs (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Gender stereotypes can also lead to sex discrimination in the workplace, where women are segregated or sex-typed into lesser value jobs based on cultural beliefs about gender rather than ability or skill (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Wendy Faulkner’s (2000, 2007, 2011) ethnographic work on practices of gender in engineering professions shows how technical jobs and social jobs are constructed and reproduced as men’s work and women’s work, retrospectively, through gender stereotyping. Women in her studies were stereotyped as being better with people than men, who were assumed to be better at technical work. As a

result, Faulkner observed that men would pursue more high-value solitary technical jobs while women moved into lesser-valued social jobs. Similarly, Tutchell & Edmonds (2015) note how women are expected to behave communally at work, while men in the same organisations are afforded distance. Interestingly, Faulkner (2007) found that gender stereotypes were more often produced discursively than they were in practice. Women, in practice, showed no less desire to work in purely technical jobs than men, but men's desire to work in technical jobs was discursively constructed as more authentic. Faulkner's work reveals how progression for women is impaired not just by structural barriers but through routine discourse around gender stereotypes. Crucially, this work exposes the depth and pervasiveness of stereotyping in male-dominated fields.

Although the classification of jobs along gendered lines is often the result of pervasive gender stereotypes that view men as better placed for manual or technical jobs and women as better placed for people centred jobs (Grugulis & Vincent, 2009), crucial to the difference in renumeration between these types of jobs is the devaluation of work associated with women and femininity. This work includes care work and work that requires 'soft skills', such as good communication and emotional competence (England, Budig & Folbre, 2002; Williams, 2001). Although these soft skills are no less important or challenging than technical skills, for decades they have been successfully constructed as less valuable (England, 1982, 2010; England & Folbre, 1999). While emotion and communication skills are now recognised as important in modern workplaces (Hillage, Dickson & Regan, 2002), especially in leadership (Haskins, Thomas & Johri, 2018; Villiers, 2019), men can receive greater rewards for displaying these competencies than women, who are assumed to possess these traits by nature rather than skill (Grugulis & Vincent, 2009; Kelan, 2007). As Skegg's (2014, p. 12) reminds us, labour associated with women, such as emotional labour or care work, "is not valued as work, for it is seen as

work that women provide because ethically they cannot but care." Consequently, women are thrust into lesser valued people centred roles, rather than strategic roles that can lead to upward progression.

Racialisation also determines the attribution of leadership skills (Grugulis & Vincent, 2009; Guo, 2015). Moreover, racial stereotypes intersect with gender stereotypes to create a near impenetrable 'concrete ceiling' for Black women (Catalyst, 1999; Davidson & Davidson, 1997). For example, Black people are often typecast as aggressive or 'angry' (Collins, 1990a; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). While aggression is viewed as a valuable leadership trait in white men, Black men who are deemed aggressive are viewed as threatening or militant (Wingfield, 2007), and Black women as bossy (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). Black women must also navigate the opposing 'Mammy' and 'superwoman' stereotypes (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas & Harrison, 2008). That is, Black women are simultaneously stereotyped as contentedly exploited and superhumanly strong (hooks, 2000). Both stereotypes present Black women as invulnerable to structural inequalities and so underserving of support in their pursuit of leadership. Thus, white women are often the main, if not sole, beneficiaries of initiatives to tackle gender inequalities in the workplace (Acker, 2006; hooks, 2000).

Stereotypes based on social class also determine people's access to leadership roles. Not only are working-class women and men socially constructed as uneducated (Brine, 1999), but the middle-classes are contrastingly stereotyped as more competent than those from lower social class backgrounds, regardless of education (Durante & Friske, 2017). A recent investigation by the Guardian found that some students at Russell Group universities were bullied, harassed, and had their academic abilities questioned by their peers and tutors because of their working-class backgrounds and accents (Parveen, 2020). This is especially

notable given that Russell Group universities are breeding grounds for elite leaders (The Sutton Trust & The Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Pejorative depictions of poor and working-class women in popular culture, such as *Little Britain*'s Vicky Pollard – a sneering portrayal of a single teenage mother by a white middle-class man – have further fuelled the vilification of the working-class woman in contemporary British culture (Lockyer, 2010). Given the pervasiveness of class stereotypes in British culture, it is unsurprising that at the intersection gender and race working-class women, especially Black working-class women, encounter an almost impenetrable 'class ceiling' in the workplace (Friedman & Laurison, 2019).

Studies on women's experiences of working in sport organisations also suggest that gender and racial stereotypes hold significant value in the distribution of jobs (Cunningham, 2008; Grappendorf & Burton, 2017; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), and perception of ability (Burton *et al.*, 2009; Forbes *et al.*, 2015). For example, researchers have found that hypermasculine and heroic leadership traits are expressly desired when hiring sport leaders (Burton *et al.*, 2009; Hovden, 2010), especially when hiring leaders with direct responsibility for sport strategy and operations. Moreover, women are often believed to lack sporting ability or knowledge of sports, and this can hinder their ability to progress into certain leadership roles (Forbes *et al.*, 2015). When women, especially Black women, do reach leadership roles in sport, they must also overcome the pervasive view that they have only been hired to fill a diversity quota rather than based on their ability (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). However, the influence of social class stereotypes on women's access to leadership roles in sport, especially football, is less clear. Football has long been associated with the working classes and evidence suggests that professional Football (men and women's) has the lowest independent school and Oxbridge attendance than any other

profession (The Sutton Trust & Social Mobility Commission, 2019). However, these findings only relate football players. It is not known how social class shapes women's access to leadership roles in football.

Having a lack of footballing knowledge is a pervasive stereotype that women in football, particularly officials, must work hard to overcome (Jones & Edwards, 2013). In a study exploring the experiences of female football officials, Forbes *et al.* (2015) suggested that the presence of female officials in the male domain of football creates a site of significant gender conflict. The female referees in their study were subjected to constant scrutiny by male fans, players, and coaches based on their gender and perceived lack of knowledge. Experiences of scrutiny put the officials under increased pressure to perform and their mistakes were consistently attributed to their gender. Similarly, in a recent post-match interview, Kenny Shiels, the first team manager of Northern Ireland's women's team, attributed his team's loss to the gender of his players (Wrack, 2022). When explaining why his team conceded so many goals, he stated "because girls and women are more emotional than men…they take a goal going in not very well." This type of hyper-scrutiny placed on women because of their gender creates a hostile environment that serves to reinforce and legitimise the stereotype that women do not belong in historically 'masculine' roles in football.

Contrastingly, women's presence in stereotypically feminine roles in football is rarely contested. A study by Welford (2011), which looked at women's experiences in non-playing roles in football, found that gender stereotypes influenced the types of non-player roles women commonly occupied within football organisations. The study found that women were given the largest share of 'domestic' duties or secretarial roles within football organisations. Welford also found that women were more likely than men to hold dual roles

in the club because their ‘domestic’ roles were so undervalued that it was felt that they had the time to take on more responsibilities. This resulted in women working longer hours than their male counterparts for less reward. However, when asked about their jobs, the women in Welford’s study often devalued the importance of their role, believing that the men had the most important work to do. Although this view was not held by all women in the study, there existed a culture of masculine superiority that positioned women in lesser valued roles than men.

While these studies show that gender stereotypes clearly influence women’s experiences of working in football, they do not specifically examine women’s experiences of working in leadership roles, especially ‘masculine’ leadership roles. By exploring women’s experiences of leadership in football, this thesis will offer an original contribution to knowledge on how gender stereotypes shape women’s access to and experiences of football leadership.

3.3.2 Homologous Reproduction

Another commonly cited barrier to leadership positions for women in male-dominated professions is homologous or homosocial reproduction (Holgersson, 2013; Kanter, 1977a; Sang, Dainty & Ison, 2014; Sayce, 2012) – the practice of hiring people in the same image as the dominant group. In her study on women and men in the workplace, Kanter (1977a) noticed that managers tended to hire people like themselves. Because men dominated positions of power, homologous reproduction resulted in the almost exclusive hiring of men for leadership positions. Crucially, she argued that “[k]eeping management positions in the hands of one’s kind provides reinforcement for the belief that people like oneself actually deserve to have such authority” (Kanter, 1977a, p. 63). Thus, in male dominated organisations such as sport organisations, homologous reproduction is a vicious circle that

reifies the connection between men and leadership. As Burton (2015) argues, organisational demographics influence people's attitudes towards women as leaders. Thus, when men hold the most power, they are consequently assumed to be the best people for job.

Evidence of homologous reproduction has been found in several sport organisations (Aicher & Sagas, 2009; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Walker & Bopp, 2011). Regan and Cunningham (2012) found that athletic directors in US college sport departments, regardless of gender, were more likely to hire coaches who matched their gender. Similarly, Cunningham and Sagas (2005) found that homologous reproduction maintained racial inequalities in sport coaching. However, Claringbould and Knoppers (2007) argue that homologous reproduction does not explain why some minority groups, specifically women, make it to the top of male dominated sport organisations. Instead, they argue that perceptions of organisational fit, which are based on masculine ideals and prior experiences of sport leadership, function to include *some* women, while excluding most others.

A common recruitment strategy in sport is to look for a candidate who has a historic commitment to, and knowledge of, sport (Pfister & Radtke, 2009). However, given that men occupy the majority of roles within sport, they are more likely to meet these prerequisites than women. In a study with German sports executives, Pfister & Radtke (2009) found that women with no lifelong commitment to sport found it difficult to obtain a leadership role in sport federations. Moreover, Joseph and Anderson (2016) argue that the gender segregated nature of team sports prevents women from accessing the highly valued experience of having played in a male-team sport. Even if women have experience of playing in women's team sports, lacking experience of male team sports makes it hard

for women to secure a management position because men's sport is held in higher regard than women's sport (Joseph & Anderson, 2016). Moreover, given that women have been historically excluded from sport spaces, especially in football (Williams, 2003), they are less likely than men to be able to demonstrate organisational fit.

Nonetheless, selection criteria for football leadership favours those who have already played and managed in football (Lawrence, 2018). For example, key selection criteria for the role of independent non-executive director at the FA included "a deep interest in and knowledge of football" (The FA, 2017b). Not only would it be difficult to evidence this criterion but having a great love or knowledge of football does not necessarily translate into having good business knowledge. In her 2012 autobiography, Baroness Karren Brady admits that she is "no great fan of the game" and suggests that being a fan of the club can be dangerous for business (Brady, 2012, p. 116). Arguably, it was her outsider knowledge in business and marketing that helped to improve the success of Birmingham City FC and not her knowledge of football. That said, Karren Brady has also benefitted from private schooling, elite social and business connections, and financial security (Burrell, 2010; Adamson & Johansson, 2021). For those from less privileged backgrounds, football fandom or having played professional football may be the only viable route into football leadership.

It follows that we need to know more about how women have successfully accessed football leadership; their sporting biographies; and their career paths to understand how and why certain women have gained access to a domain that is structured to exclude them. This thesis makes a notable contribution to this understanding by examining women's access to leadership roles in football.

3.3.3 Informal Recruitment and the "Old Boys' Network"

Although existing literature demonstrates the exclusionary nature of formal recruitment practices, private sector organisations, especially sport organisations, tend to hire managers through informal recruitment processes (McGuire, 2002; Parnell, Bond, Widdop, Groom & Cockayne, 2021; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). Thus, leadership roles become inaccessible to those without close personal or business connections to those already in charge. Because men already dominate these sectors, and those in charge tend to recruit in their own image, it is no surprise that informal recruitment practices often result in men getting the top jobs. As Tutchell and Edmonds (2015, p. 42) noted in their study of women leaders in the UK, this practice "is the old boys' network operating without restraint." To navigate these informal recruitment practices, several scholars argue that women need to build social capital through networking (Gamba & Kleiner, 2001; Linehan, 2001; Singh, 2007; Wells & Hancock, 2017). However, this solution overlooks the moderating role of gender, as well as race, sexuality, and class, in accessing and exploiting social capital.

In the Bourdieusian tradition, social capital refers to the accrual of acquaintances and connections within the dominant group – in Bourdieu's case, the 'bourgeoisie' – that builds respect and honourability needed to advance one's social and economic position (Bourdieu, 1984). Integrationist theories of social capital define it as a stock of trust, norms, and networks that foster collaboration and reciprocity vital to the success of any society (Putnam, 1994). In sum, social capital is a cumulative currency of human connections – favours for favours – that one can cash in for personal and civic gain. However, social capital theory has been criticised by some feminist scholars for assuming that anyone can accumulate and benefit from social capital (Adkins, 2005). Indeed, several studies have shown that women and Black people not only find it harder than white men to access

opportunities to build social capital, such as informal networking, but they also receive less support from their social connections than white men (Ibarra, 1993; James, 2000; Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2010; McGuire, 2002; Tang, 1997).

Furthermore, the pressure to network outside of office hours has practical implications for women who are more likely than men to have unpaid caring responsibilities. In a study of workers in academia, Sang *et al.* (2015) found that the networking required to secure promotion often involved extensive travel and time away from home, i.e., to attend academic conferences. The authors argue that "the assumptions of total availability" is highly gendered because it disadvantages those who are unable to spend time away from home (Sang *et al.*, 2015, p. 43). Women may also find it difficult to access informal networking opportunities because of exclusionary practices, such as organising events at the golf club or the strip club (Morgan & Martin, 2006; Williams *et al.*, 2012). For example, in a study of sales professionals in the United States, Morgan and Martin (2006) found that women sales workers were prevented from networking with male clients and colleagues at the golf club because of different course times for women and men. When women were allowed to play golf with their male colleagues, they were often 'Othered' by jokes about their perceived lack of golfing ability and the fact that they had to tee off in a different place to men. Even when women played golf well, they had to be careful not to upset their male clients by playing better them. In a UK based study, Tutchell and Edmonds (2015, pp. 64-65) also found that men in corporate business often organised their informal networks around "male-orientated activities" such as male-only sports and used these spaces to bond and "help each other get on." These studies show how men use sport spaces to protect and preserve the old boys' club through informal networks that exclude women.

Despite their ostensible inclusion in men's sport, media reports also suggest that women who work in football face formal and informal exclusion from the old boys' club. In 2011, Vicky Kloss, the Communications Director at Manchester City FC, was prevented from accessing the players' tunnel by a steward during an away game at Notts County FC because she was a woman (Moxley, 2011). Similarly, Carolyn Radford, the then Chief Executive of Mansfield Town FC, commented in an interview for *The Guardian* that board members of away teams tended to speak directly to her husband instead of her because they assumed he was in charge (Kelner, 2017). Although seemingly harmless, these "uncomfortable mistakes" are representative of deeply engrained attitudes that view women as powerless (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015, p. 74). Thus, infiltrating the old boys' club is not enough, in of itself, for women to reap its rewards. Indeed, in a study exploring social capital investments as a determinant of success in athletic administrations in the United States, Sagas and Cunningham (2004) found that while men benefitted from social capital investments, social capital made no significant difference to women's career progression.

Nonetheless, social capital is necessary for survival in the modern workplace (Neely, 2020; Williams *et al*., 2012) where workers are expected to be well-connected and leverage the support of their social networks to find new job opportunities and promotions (Neely, 2020; Williams *et al*., 2012). Football recruitment also relies heavily on social networks (Gerke & Wäsche, 2019; Parnell, Bond, Widdop & Cockayne, 2020). Parnell *et al.* (2018, p. 256) conceptualise the *Football World* as an "interconnected system of relationships structured by networks, resources and conventions, with a clear division of labour and complexity in relation to power and trust." However, rather than critiquing the inherently social networked character of Football Worlds, the authors argue that managers in football, specifically Sporting Directors, should 'exploit' social networks and create 'bonding ties'

to recruit staff and players. This argument fails to account for the ways that social networks favour certain groups, i.e., white men.

In contrast, Lawrence (2018) and Bradbury (2011, 2013) both argue that homogenously white 'insider networks' in football create and sustain racial inequalities in non-playing roles. However, these works do not consider how homogenously male networks affect the recruitment of women in football. Given the hetero-masculinist and gender exclusive cultures of football (Caudwell, 2011; Cleland, 2016; Williams, 2003), women may find it much harder than men to secure job opportunities and promotions in football through these social networks. In a recent article, Parnell *et al.* (2020) acknowledged that a reliance on closed social networks to recruit non-playing staff may have consequences for gender and racial inequalities; however, they stop short of offering a critical analysis of how the Football World functions to include and exclude certain bodies. As such, there is a pressing need to understand how the recruitment practices of football create and sustain gender inequalities in non-playing and management roles. Through biographic interviews with women leaders in football, this thesis will shed light on women's pathways into football leadership, moving us beyond a barriers-based approach to understanding gender inequalities that examines the conditions of entry into leadership positions for women.

3.4 Above the 'Glass Ceiling'

Much of the research on women's under representation in sport leadership has focused on barriers to leadership (Burton, 2015). However, it is also crucial to consider the voices of women who *do* work in sport leadership as 'experts' in their organisations (Pfister & Radtke, 2009). Moreover, there is a tendency in feminist literature on gender and organisations to present women's access to leadership as the ultimate feminist goal. Yet, women continue to face discrimination and exclusion when they reach leadership roles

(Glass & Cook, 2016; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich & Atkins, 2007; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015; Watts, 2009), are routinely criticised for showing solidarity with patriarchal organisations (Foster, 2015; Rottenberg, 2014; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015), and leave in greater numbers than men (Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021; Torre, 2014, 2017a; Zimmerman & Clark, 2016). As such, as well as asking why there are so few women in leadership roles compared to men, we should also ask why leadership, especially sports leadership, is so inhospitable to women and welcoming to men. Moreover, we must also examine how women survive unwelcoming environments to understand the emotional and cognitive processes they encounter while working in leadership roles in male domains.

In this section, I will review literature on women's *challenges above the glass ceiling* and *strategies of survival* in male-dominated industries and sport industries. I will also critique literature that presents women leaders as either *'agents of change' or* '*cogs in the* machine' and review literature examining the reasons *why women leave leadership.* I will argue that relatively little is known about women's leadership experiences and attrition in sport, especially football, compared to other male-dominated industries. Moreover, I will argue that examining women's experience of leadership in male-dominated industries through a victim paradigm overlooks the role of enjoyment and agency in women's career choices. Therefore, this thesis will make a significant contribution to scholarship in this area by considering the views and experiences of women who have worked in leadership in men's football to understand enablers and impediments of success, and the factors that influence women's decisions to stay in or leave football leadership.

3.4.1 Challenges above the 'glass ceiling'

Despite reaching leadership positions, women continue to face challenges and discrimination because of their gender (Glass & Cook, 2016; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). Several studies have shown that when women achieve leadership roles in male-dominated industries, they are met with a 'chilly climate' that can push them back out again (Britton, 2017; Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Reilly, Jones, Rey Vasquez & Krisjanous, 2016). Through interviews with over 100 women leaders in the UK, Tutchell and Edmonds (2015) found that most women had to deal with offensive comments about their gender in the workplace and many recounted experiences of sexual harassment at the hands of male colleagues. These experiences function to belittle and intimidate women who are viewed as intruders in a man's world. In a rare study of women's experience of working in male team sport management, Hindman and Walker (2020) found that women leaders felt overlooked, had their abilities routinely questioned, and were sexually objectified by male colleagues. Women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries such as sport also experience hyper-visibility because of their scarcity (Billing, 2011; Glass & Cook, 2016; Kanter, 1977a). Thus, women's actions, behaviours, and appearance are placed under the spotlight, resulting in greater scrutiny than their male colleagues.

Existing research also suggests that women's senior positions are more precarious than those of their male counterparts. The concept of the 'glass cliff' was introduced by Ryan and Haslam (2005) to describe the tendency for women to occupy risky and precarious leadership roles. The authors found that FTSE 100 companies who appointed women to their boards were more likely to have performed badly in the years preceding women's appointment than those companies who hired men to the board. Similarly, Glass and Cook

(2016) found that women were more likely to be promoted during times of crisis or scandal within an organisation. Crucially, the glass cliff phenomenon results in women being blamed for organisational failures and fuels pervasive beliefs that women are unsuitable for leadership roles. Paradoxically, the appointment of women to leadership roles following periods of scandal and mismanagement can also be a move to repair the reputation and image of an organisation. For example, Ahn and Cunningham (2020) argue that FIFA's gender-based initiatives to increase the number of women in leadership roles were, in part, a strategy to help rebuild its reputation following the bribery and money laundering scandal that rocked the organisation in 2015. Nonetheless, the reliance on women to manage and repair organisational reputations places a disproportionate burden on women leaders and feeds into gender stereotypes that women are essentially 'moral' (Tronto, 1993) and good at institutional housekeeping (Sharon. Bird, Litt & Wang, 2004).

Women leaders are also less likely than their male counterparts to have access to support networks within their organisation, making it harder for women to get the backing for their ideas and gain support with career progression (Cabrera, 2007; Glass & Cook, 2016; Ibarra, 1993; McGuire, 2002; Ryan *et al.*, 2007). Following a survey of over 1000 finance workers, Mcguire (2002) found that women, regardless of race, received less informal support from workplace networks than white men. The author argues that influential network members may be reluctant to build working relationships with women and Black workers because these groups are culturally perceived as "risky investments" (McGuire, 2002, p. 316). That is, because women and Black workers tend to occupy lower status leadership roles than white men, the holders of institutional power, i.e., white men, may be inclined to only support other white men who they believe have more potential for success. Networks targeted at specific groups, such as women-only networks, can provide valuable emotional support for group members but they offer little in the way of access to those in the most

powerful positions (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). In sum, structural power differentials, which exist between leadership roles at the same level, negatively affect women's and Black workers access to power and influence.

Moreover, leadership is not synonymous with power. Although more women have moved into leadership roles in recent decades, research suggests that they are less likely than men to hold positions of power, i.e., leadership positions that control resources, have access to confidential information, and are responsible for making strategic decisions (Bolzendahl, 2014; Bozhinov, Koch & Schank, 2019; Whitler & Henretta, 2018). For example, data from the 2013-14 Sydney Scoreboard Global Index for women in sport leadership showed that while 18% of board members for NGBs of sport in Europe were women, only 8% held the position of chairperson – the most influential role on the board (Adriaanse, 2019). Thus, women's inclusion in leadership roles only tells part of the story. We must also consider the *type* of leadership roles women hold if we are to fully understand and address gender inequalities in sport leadership. This thesis will make an original contribution to knowledge in this area by examining the gender makeup of leadership roles in men's professional football in the 'new' football era (Williams, 2006). Crucially, this thesis will also go beyond the numbers to examine women's experiences of working in different leadership roles in football.

3.4.2 Strategies of Survival

Given the inherent challenges that face women in leadership positions in male-dominated industries, women leaders often develop strategies to survive. For example, research suggests that women who work in male-dominated professions must adapt to, rather than challenge, masculine cultures to overcome structural impediments to success (Barnard,

Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty, 2010; Faulkner, 2011; Kanter, 1977a; Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty, 2006). These women develop strategies to assimilate into the dominant masculine culture (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009; Hatmaker, 2013); to become "one of the boys" (Barnard *et al.*, 2010, p. 370). One such strategy women leaders deploy is to downplay their femininity. In a study of women engineers, Hatmaker (2013) found that women deliberately wore little to no makeup, wore trousers instead of skirts, and avoided talking about 'feminine' topics in the workplace. This strategy allowed women to foreground their identity as an engineer over their identity as a woman because the two identities were considered incongruous by many of their male colleagues. Crucially, their male colleagues did not have to worry about displays of masculinity because engineering was viewed as de facto masculine.

In sport, researchers have also found that women in leadership positions attempt to distance themselves from femininity (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Shaw, 2006). In a recent study, Hindman and Walker (2020) found that women leaders in male-team sports dressed to conceal their female bodies. However, rather than using this as a tactic to amplify their professional identity, these women dressed 'conservatively' to avoid unwanted sexual advances from male colleagues and athletes. Nonetheless, they still fell victim to sexual objectification regardless of how they dressed. This was especially the case when women were around male athletes because there was an assumption that women only worked in male-team sports to find an athlete husband. As Mewett and Toffoletti (2008) found, women in sport are constructed as predatory while male athletes are viewed as rogue and hyper-sexual. Thus, women who dress in ways that display their female bodies are seen as encouraging attention from male athletes who are allegedly "incapable of holding their biological drive in check" (Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008, p. 177).

Women in leadership positions must also negotiate a careful balance of appropriating masculine norms without appearing to be too masculine. As Tutchell & Edmonds (2015) note, women leaders are under pressure to behave like men but when they do, they are deemed ruthless, aggressive and bossy. Thus, the woman leader is trapped in a double-bind whereby she "cannot win no matter what she does" (Oakley, 2000, p. 324). Double-binds are used by those in power to oppress those without it by constructing unachievable expectations, or narrow boundaries of acceptable behaviours (Hall Jamieson, 1995). Crucially, imposing double-binds enables those in power to justify their continued dominance by pointing out the *inevitable* failings of others. When women do demonstrate the behaviours associated with corporate leadership, they are often accused of being too masculine or a bitch (Schippers, 2007; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003). Thus, women must tread a fine line between being liked and being successful (Zheng, Kark & Meister, 2018).

Within much of the literature on women's experiences of working in male-dominated professions, femininity is viewed as problematic (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Faulkner, 2007; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2016); in conflict with success, authority, and approval from colleagues. For example, studies on women's experiences of working in male-dominated professions note how women must navigate and control their performance of femininity in the workplace to be accepted (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Faulkner, 2009; Forbes *et al*., 2015). Mavin and Grandy (2016b) developed a theory of 'respectable business femininity' to explain how women elite leaders experience the interconnection of leadership as masculine and the need to perform a respectable femininity. They argue that women elite leaders experience tensions between being seen as respectable leaders *and* women and that these tensions manifest through the disciplining of the body and appearance. These women have to cautiously navigate their displays of femininity to avoid being seen as too sexual or too masculine in their appearance.

One area that is missing from much of the research on respectable femininity in the workplace is a consideration of racial differences in acceptable performances of femininity. Collins (2004) notes that normative femininity is defined alongside whiteness (thin body, light skin, straight hair, blue eyes). She argues that while white beauty standards objectify white women, "their white skin and straight hair privilege them in a system in which part of the basic definition of whiteness is superiority to blackness" (Collins, 1990a, p. 79). As such, Black women may find it harder than white women, if not impossible, to perform an acceptable femininity in the workplace. Furthermore, Black women may face harsher sanctions than white women for transgressions. For example, Koval and Rosette (2021) found that Black women with natural hair were perceived as less professional and were less likely to be considered for a job interview than Black women with straight hair or white women with straight or curly hair.

Furthermore, the concept of respectability is deeply classed (Skeggs, 1997). That is, the performance of respectable business femininity is not only characterised by sexual modesty and whiteness but is also fundamentally based on a middle-class respectable ideal (Adamson & Johansson, 2021). For example, those from poor and working-class backgrounds may feel the need to hide their authentic selves by changing their accent or physical appearance to 'pass' as respectable (Elkins & Hanke, 2018). Indeed, social class is a significant determinant of elite leadership. Privately educated individuals are vastly over-represented in elite leadership positions in Britain, including those in politics, business, and the media (The Sutton Trust & Social Mobility Commission, 2019). These findings highlight the importance of considering intersectional differences in the maintenance and disruption of organisational cultures that define acceptable femininity and masculinity.

3.4.3 Women Leaders: 'Cogs in the Machine' or 'Agents of Change'?

Scholarship on women leaders in male-dominated industries often dichotomously presents women leaders as either 'agents of change' or 'cogs in the machine' (Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; Stainback, Kleiner & Skaggs, 2016). For example, studies have found that having women in senior roles changes workplace cultures for the better (Huffman, Cohen & Pearlman, 2010; Kanter, 1977a). Certainly, liberal feminist efforts to increase the number of women in leadership roles are predicated on the expectation that women leaders will act as agents of change and challenge patriarchal structures from within (Srivastava & Sherman, 2015). However, this literature sits apart from a contradictory body of work that suggests women leaders, under the conditions of neoliberalism, actually repudiate gender inequality (Baker & Kelan, 2019; Gill *et al.*, 2017; Nash & Moore, 2018; Rottenberg, 2014) or worse, act in ways that impede the advancement of other women (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). As exemplified in the proliferation of metaphors such as 'queen bee' (Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar & De Groot, 2011; Mavin, 2006; Staines, Tavris & Jayaratne, 1973), women leaders in male-dominated industries are often blamed for undermining the advancement of other women who they view as a threat.

The problem with these contrasting bodies of literature is that they present women leaders as either good (agents of change) or bad (cogs in the machine) for gender equality, as if women hold a fixed position in one scenario or that the two possibilities are mutually exclusive. This either/or approach also places a disproportionate expectation on women leaders to advance gender equality without acknowledging the complex gendered context of leadership for women (Mavin, 2006). As I have discussed in this chapter, women are more likely than men to be placed into insecure leadership roles and are at greater risk of

losing their jobs (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Women leaders also face heightened scrutiny and greater performance pressures than their male counterparts (Glass & Cook, 2016). As such, attempts to highlight inequalities or challenge the status quo threatens the already precarious position of women leaders. Thus, women's ability to challenge inequalities may be thwarted by the lack of security in their positions. In sum, women leaders in male-dominated industries may find it difficult, if not impossible, to challenge inequalities, even if they wanted to.

An oft-cited strategy for survival in male-dominated industries is for women to repudiate or internalise structural inequalities. For example, in one of the few studies to have looked at the experiences of women leaders in sport, Claringbould and Knoppers (2008) found that women directors, unlike their male counterparts, recognised the gendered meanings of the workplace and the impact that they had on women's success; however, they continued to present this as a woman's issue. The absence of a critique of structural inequalities by women leaders was also found in a recent study of women executives in the financial sector (Baker & Kelan, 2019). These women 'split off' the undesirable parts of their organisation in order to present their workplace as gender neutral. Nash and Moore (2018), in their study of women leaders in STEM industries, also found that women turned the focus of workplace inequality on themselves rather than structural inequalities. The authors argue that a neoliberal climate of meritocracy and competition renders structural gender inequalities inarticulable and attaches women to a 'cruelly optimistic' belief in fairness (Nash & Moore, 2018, p. 9).

Neoliberalism is a world view, prevalent in Western societies, which promotes state deregulation and free market competition. At the individual level, neoliberalism celebrates and promotes the autonomous and self-serving individual (Williams, 2013). Meritocracy –

the notion that anybody who works hard enough and who has the right skills can achieve success – is based on this neoliberal ethos of individualism and self-regulation (Nash & Moore, 2018). The meritocratic ideal is that anyone, regardless of gender, race, class, or sexuality, can reach the top. Thus, a neoliberal reading of gender inequality in the workplace "places the burden of responsibility for women's underrepresentation in leadership positions onto individual women rather than organizational inequality regimes" (Nash & Moore, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, the tendency to position women leaders as either good or bad for organisational equality – as 'agents of change' or 'cogs in the machine' – grossly oversimplifies the complexities of being a woman leader in a male-dominated industry and neglects to consider the conditions under which women leaders are able or willing to challenge inequalities in the neoliberal workplace. Therefore, I argue along with Baker & Kelan (2019, p. 3) that alongside 'adding more women' approaches "there is also an ethical responsibility to understand at a deeper level how women manage the effect of neoliberalized organizational systems and cultures that continue to exclude them from equal opportunities." By exploring women's experiences of navigating leadership in football, this thesis offers a unique opportunity to explore women's ability and willingness to challenge football cultures from within.

3.4.4 Why women leave leadership

Rates of attrition from leadership roles in male-dominated industries, which is much higher for women than men, significantly contributes to gender inequalities in leadership (Torre, 2017a). Yet, while a great deal of scholarly attention has been paid the barriers women face in achieving leadership positions in sport (Burton, 2015), very little is known about why women leave sport leadership. As Hindman and Walker argue (2020, p. 64), "hiring more women may only be part of sport's gender diversity problem: Challenges also lie in getting

them to stay." As I discussed earlier in this chapter, women may be pushed out of leadership roles in male-dominated workplaces because the 'chilly climate' is unwelcoming to them (Britton, 2017; Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Reilly *et al*., 2016) or because they are more likely than men to hold 'glass cliff' positions (Ryan *et al*., 2007). Furthermore, media reports suggest that women 'opt out' of corporate leadership to resolve work/family conflict (Belkin, 2003; Stone, 2007). However, a growing body of literature suggests that women's reasons for leaving leadership positions are not primarily driven by deterministic push/pull factors (Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021; Biese-Stjernberg, & Choroszewicz, 2019; Biese & McKie, 2016; Zimmerman & Clark, 2016; Cabrera, 2007). This literature suggests that women enact agency to leave or change their careers in order to seek balance, challenge, and authenticity.

In 2003, Lisa Belkin published an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled 'The Opt-Out Revolution.' In the now widely cited article, Belkin argued that the so-called gender revolution in the workplace had stalled because successful women often left leadership roles to have children and never went back. Although Belkin acknowledged structural barriers that prevent mothers from returning to the workplace, she suggested that women *choose* not to return because they simply find motherhood more fulfilling. In fact, Belkin states, "why don't women run the world? Maybe it's because they don't want to." The opt-out revolution, Belkin states, is not a failure of feminism, it is the beginning of a new revolution where women *and* men are choosing more fulfilling lives. Yet, Belkin's concept of a fulfilling life centres on the family, specifically on having children. This framing suggests that women only have two options in life – work or family.

Existing research on women's decision to leave leadership overlooks the influence of interests outside of work and family. As Foster (2015, p. 16) argued in her critique of corporate feminism,

> "[t]here is no room, in the corporate feminist world, for a civil life, a political life, an emotional life outside the nuclear family unit, or even downtime. All time is accounted for, and if a woman is not putting in her full attention at work, the only possible explanation is that she is dropping out to procreate rather than that – heaven forbid – she might not like her job or may have pursuits that sustain her interest more fully."

Indeed, women's need and desire for leisure time has been historically overlooked (Pope, 2017) in favour of an "'overwhelming focus'…on childcare as the primary non-work concern" (Wilkinson, Tomlinson & Gardiner, 2017, p. 643). Leisure – which can be loosely defined as having free time to "please yourself" (Green, Woodward & Hebron, 1990, p. 5) – is "deeply gendered" (Green & Singleton, 2006, p. 854). Because women are more likely than men to have domestic responsibilities, having 'spare time' to spend on activities outside of the family unit or paid work is an unfamiliar experience for many women (Holland, 2017). Moreover, women with domestic responsibilities often feel a lack of entitlement to leisure time because of the gendered expectation for women to find motherhood wholly fulfilling (T. Kay, 1998; Y. D. Miller & Brown, 2005). Certainly, as a mother and a PhD student with a full-time job, I find it difficult to carve out leisure time for myself and I often feel guilty when I do for not spending that time with my son. Furthermore, public leisure spaces, which are principally designed by and for men, have implicitly and explicitly excluded women's bodies (Green & Singleton, 2006; Green *et al.*, 1990; Pope, 2017). For these reasons, it is perhaps unsurprising that women's motivation

to leave paid work to focus on leisure activities has not featured in popular narratives of the 'opt out' revolution. Yet, for us to move beyond the work/family conflict narrative, we must consider leisure time as a meaningful feature of women's lives. Indeed, I know first-hand how important leisure time is for one's mental health and happiness. As Biese & McKie (2016) argue, women who leave high-level careers are not necessarily opting out, they are often 'opting in' to a lifestyle that enhances their wellbeing.

The 'opt-out' revolution narrative also neglects to interrogate the reasons why people find elite leadership so unfulfilling. Of course, most people need to work – opting out is a luxury that only those with financial stability can choose. However, if corporate leadership is the pinnacle of success – the holy grail for liberal feminism – then why do so many women feel unfulfilled in these positions? While some women may feel pushed out by sexism or pulled towards a family life or leisure activities, a growing body of research suggests that women are leaving corporate leadership to do work that is meaningful and that helps society (Cabrera, 2007; Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021). This trend has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many people to re-evaluate their careers and priorities. When all but essential workers had to stay home during lockdown, countless people came to the realisation that their jobs were not essential to the running of the country (Slater & Gordon, 2020). Essential workers were not chief executives or directors, they were supermarket workers, cleaners, bus drivers, care workers, and medical staff. Indeed, applications for nursing courses increased by 32% in 2021 (Ford, 2021). Notably, over 10,000 applications were from people over 35 years of age, which suggests many applicants were looking for a career change. Perhaps the most telling statistic was that 12% of applications in 2021 were from men, a 40% increase on the previous year. It would seem that a new revolution is brewing in the workforce, one that is fundamentally changing women *and* men's career aspirations.

Mainiero & Sullivan's (2005) Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) offers a useful framework for understanding the complex and shifting reasons people leave or return to their careers throughout their lives. Originally designed as a framework for understanding women's career paths, the model proposes that the need for balance, challenge, and authenticity shift throughout women's careers, like pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope, becoming more or less important as women move through different stages of their work and personal lives. *Balance* refers to a "state of equilibrium" between paid work and non-paid-work responsibilities and interests (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006, p. 116). Crucially, this definition leaves room to consider a desire for balance that transcends the resolution of work/family conflict. *Challenge* refers to the desire to do work that is both stimulating and contributes towards a feeling of self-worth (Cabrera, 2007). Finally, *authenticity* is the need to pursue activities and interests that align with one's values and beliefs, which might include a search for purpose, spiritual growth, autonomy, unrealised dreams, or a need to evaluate one's priorities (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006).

Crucially, KCM proposes an alternative to the 'opt out' revolution (Belkin, 2003) or 'chilly climates' to explain women's attrition from business leadership. In this regard, the model explicitly embraces the role of agency in women's career transitions. Moreover, it captures the need for meaning and value in one's life and work beyond traditional ideas of 'success' as measured by rungs on the career ladder. Using the KCM model, Shaw and Leberman (2015) found that authenticity, a passion for the job, balance, and feeling challenged by their work was important for women leaders to thrive in sport organisations. Critically, this research focussed on *what* success is and how success is facilitated, rather than hindered, by organisational structures and cultures. Taking cue from this research, this doctoral thesis moves beyond a barriers narrative to explore the multiple and shifting reasons why women enact agency to stay in or leave football leadership.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I traced the origins and development of scholarship on gender inequalities in the workplace. I argued that Acker's theory of gendered organisations offers a commanding explanation for gender inequalities in work and organisations. In reviewing literature on the explanations for women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, I further argued that structural inequalities shape women's access to leadership roles in male-dominated industries and sport professions. However, I contended that existing literature on gender inequalities in sport leadership overwhelmingly focuses on barriers to leadership without considering the experiences of women leaders. Therefore, I reviewed wider literature on the challenges women face 'above the glass ceiling', including the pressure to perform a respectable business femininity and the expectations for women to act as 'agents of change'. Finally, I reviewed literature on the reasons women leave leadership roles and argued that there is pressing need to move beyond a work/family conflict narrative to explain women's attrition from leadership. Specifically, I argued that we must consider the role of agency in women's decisions to stay in, challenge, or leave leadership roles. It follows that a theoretical framework for the current thesis must account for and explain structural inequalities that relate to gender. However, as I have argued in this chapter, acknowledging structural inequalities does not necessitate the disavowal of individual agency. Thus, we must also theorise the role of agency in women's navigation of gendered organisations.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: 'EXTREMELY GENDERED' ORGANISATIONS

In the previous chapter, I argued that structural inequalities shape women's access to, and experiences of, leadership in male-dominated industries. It follows that a theoretical framework for understanding women's participation in football leadership should account for structural gender inequalities. While several theories could serve this purpose, very few centre on gender or women's experiences of structural inequalities. That is, gender is often added into or onto existing theories of social inequality, i.e., Marxist Feminism (Barrett, 1988) or Feminist approaches to Bourdieu (Adkins, 2004). This is not to say that these theories are ineffective in understanding gender inequalities, but if gender is a central organising principle of organisations, I argue it is necessary that my theoretical framework should draw on theories that explicitly centre gender and women's experiences of organisational inequalities. Moreover, football is not just *any* organisation. It is distinctive in terms of its association with men and masculinity. As such, any theory of gender inequalities in football should also account for the pivotal role of masculinity in the cultural construction of football.

In the opening sections of this chapter, I will present Sasson-Levy's (2011) theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations as a way to understand persistent gender inequalities in men's football. In subsequent sections, I will expand on Acker's concept of the ideal abstract worker to understand how constructions of the ideal worker in the new economy have affected women's access to leadership roles. By bringing together Acker's prominent concept of the ideal worker and Sasson-Levy's lesser-known theory of extremely gendered organisations, I develop a novel theoretical framework to explain how the mutually reinforcing pressures of the ideal worker norm and the extremely gendered regime of football sustain severe gender inequalities in football leadership. Finally, I will consider the role of postfeminist sensibilities and agency in women's navigation of work in the new economy and consider how acts of

tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2008; Meyerson & Scully, 1995) can help women to enact agency to challenge inequalities within the structural limits of an extremely gendered organisational regime.

4.1 'Extremely gendered' organisations and a case for including men's football

Sasson-Levy (2011) developed the concept of 'extremely gendered' organisations as a way to understand the rigid gender regime of the Israeli military. Sasson-Levy argues that the gender regime of the military in Western societies is so deeply entrenched that it constitutes an 'extreme case' of gendering. In this section, I will argue that men's football in England is an example of an 'extremely gendered' organisation and that this has consequences for women's involvement. First, I will present Sasson-Levy's (2011) theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations, which draws on Acker's theories of *Gendered Organisations* (Acker, 1990), and *Inequality Regimes* (Acker, 2006), as well as Connell's (2005) concept of *Hegemonic Masculinity*. Following this, I will make a case for including men's football in conceptualisations of extremely gendered organisations. However, I will argue that the role of women in supporting or challenging extremely gendered regimes is under-theorised in Sasson-Levy's work. As such, I will also draw on Schippers' (2007) theory of *Gender Hegemony* and Butler's (1999) concept of the *Heterosexual Matrix* to fully consider the moderating role of women and femininity in extremely gendered organisations.

4.1.1 Defining an 'extremely gendered' organisation

Sasson-Levy establishes criteria for defining the military as an extremely gendered organisation, including the exclusion of women through formal policies, a highly gender-segregated workplace, a high level of top-down control, and crucially, a high degree of legitimacy for gender inequalities. This latter point is perhaps the most crucial in Sasson-Levy's theorising. Drawing on Acker's (2006) later work on *inequality regimes*, in which

Acker explains the conditions under which organisations are willing or able to change, Sasson-Levy suggests that extremely gendered organisations have resisted change because gender inequalities are perceived as highly legitimate. As Sasson-Levy (2011, 406) elaborates, "not only is the military highly masculinist but its masculinism enjoys strong cultural legitimacy". For Acker (2006), legitimacy of inequality refers to the belief in or acceptance of inequality. Crucially, she argued that organisations are only able to change if there is a high degree of visibility of inequalities and low legitimacy for those inequalities.

In the case of the military, inequalities are highly visible but highly legitimate. That is, the military is so "closely bound up with essentialist and hierarchical conceptions of gender" (Sasson-Levy 2011, 392) that it faces few challenges to its organisational gender regime. As Sasson-Levy argues, the military is so inextricably tied to idealised notions of men, masculinity, and the state that efforts to admit women, especially in the most senior roles, have been met with greater resistance than in other, even highly gendered, organisations. Furthermore, Sasson-Levy (2003) demonstrates that efforts to increase the proportion of women in the military have only resulted in their further marginalisation by limiting their inclusion to 'feminised' and lower-ranking roles and excluding them from frontline combat. Crucially, Sasson-Levy argues that this has been necessary to protect the organisation's sense of self from the threat of women.

Fundamental to Sasson-Levy's theory – and what sets it apart from other theories of gendered organisations – is that she argues that the military is not masculinised by chance; it exists *because* it is masculinised. Significantly, this characterisation is vital for constructing and maintaining hegemonic definitions of masculinity within society (Connell, 2005). The concept of hegemony, which was first introduced by Antonio Gramsci to explain how the ruling classes sustained their dominance (Morton, 2007), refers to the active maintenance of a group's claim

to superiority (Connell, 2005). Thus, *hegemonic masculinity* refers to the patterns of practice that allow men's dominance over women to continue by positioning hegemonic masculinity as normative and superior (Connell & Messerschmitdt, 2005).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, which was introduced by Connell in 2005, can be defined as "the currently most honoured way of being a man" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832) within a given gender regime and time in history. Hegemonic masculinity is achieved through identification with those who embody it. That is, all men receive a patriarchal dividend from hegemonic masculinity through the overall subordination of women (Connell, 2005). As Connell (2005) argues, the central axis of power in the Western gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men. Thus, "it is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony" (Connell, 2005, p. 77). As Gramsci argued in his prison notebooks (written between 1929-1935), ruling classes prevail not just through state-as-force but through consent from other social classes (Gramsci, Forgacs & Hobsbawm, 2000). That is, the ruling classes must incorporate the political, economic, and intellectual ideological interests of other social classes to gain legitimacy and authority. Thus, hegemony is a persuasive, rather than a coercive, form of control (Hargreaves, 1994). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity can be conceptualised as the current strategy for legitimising men's dominance over women. That is, the successful claim to, support of, or complicity with hegemonic masculinity is central to the legitimisation of gender inequalities in organisations, such as the military.

However, Connell argues that when the patriarchal gender regime is challenged, e.g., through women's entry into previously male-dominated professions, patriarchy faces a "problem of legitimacy" (Connell, 2005, p. 74) whereby patriarchy must be undone or defended in the face of changing gender relations. It follows that women pose a "multi-level threat" to extremely

gendered organisations *and* the wider patriarchal order of society (Sasson-Levy 2011, p. 407). To this end, Sasson-Levy questions whether change is possible or even desirable if the military continues to be constructed as legitimately masculine. That is, if women pose such a threat to the masculine character of an organisation, their inclusion, especially in the most hegemonically masculine conferring roles, not only puts women at risk of harm but may also help the organisation legitimise its problematic practices and processes. For example, women who achieve leadership positions in male-dominated industries are symbols of organisational equality, even when the organisation continues to exclude most other women.

Although Sasson-Levy (2011) considers the military to be a unique example of an 'extremely gendered' organisation, Tyler, Carson, and Reynolds (2019) have more recently argued that the concept can be extended to other highly militarised or masculinised organisations, such as the fire service. Their research opens avenues for considering whether there are other organisations "that also have to be constructed as male institutions in order to exist?" (Tyler, Carson, and Reynolds 2019). If so, this has consequences for how we approach and implement gender equality efforts within particular organisations. As Tyler, Carson & Reynolds (2019, p. 1306) suggest, "standard ways of approaching organisational change in relation to gender equality ... will be even more likely to fail, in part, because the importance of the social value and/or functioning of the organisation relies so heavily on being gendered ... as well as culturally masculinised". As such, they recommend that the concept of 'extremely gendered' organisations be tested in other contexts.

In taking up Tyler, Carson and Reynolds' recommendation in this thesis, I further develop the application of this modest but compelling theory by considering men's club football in England as an example of an 'extremely gendered' organisation. In doing so, I open new theoretical avenues for considering how women are included and excluded, not just in the 'extremely

gendered' organisation of men's football but also in other sporting and extremely male-dominated contexts.

4.1.2 Men's football: An 'extremely gendered' organisation?

Sport offers an opportune context for applying the concept of 'extremely gendered' organisations because gender segregation and resulting inequalities are not only routinely legitimised in sport, but they are also fundamental to its construction. That is, by design, sport segregates women and men on the basis of male athletic superiority, and this has consequences for women as athletes as well as leaders. For example, in a recent study on the underrepresentation of women leaders in the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Pape (2020) found that the gender-segregated nature of Olympic sport, and the resulting presentation of men as athletically superior to women, underpinned an organisational logic of male-superiority that functioned to informally exclude women from leadership roles. Similarly, Claringbould & Knoppers (2007, pp. 505-506) note:

> "If the primary activity of an organization is part of the construction of a desirable masculinity, such as occurs in sport, the boundaries of entry to governance may be more strongly policed than when the primary activity is associated with preferred femininity."

This not only suggests that women may find it harder to progress in the sport context because of its association with masculinity, but it also suggests that organisations with a strong association with masculinity may warrant particular consideration as extremely gendered organisations. Crucially, if hierarchical conceptions of gender play a leading role in women's exclusion from leadership in Olympic sports – where women and men largely compete on the same terms, albeit separately – then the organisational logic of male-team sports, such as men's

football, may be even more uncompromising when it comes to admitting women into leadership roles.

Football in England has traditionally been considered a ‘male-preserve’ (Dunning, 1986) and has a long history of formal, cultural, and symbolic exclusion of women from playing football (Williams, 2003). Moreover, sport is the “leading definer” of masculinity in society (Connell, 2005, p. 54), and football in the UK is particularly associated with masculinity due to its association with physical strength, skill, and power (Magrath, 2018). Indeed, football has been traditionally considered an enclave for socially acceptable expressions of physical violence and displays of ‘manliness’ (Dunning, 1986, 1999). As such, like the ‘extremely gendered’ organisation of the military, men’s club football is considered an important site for maintaining and reproducing hegemonic forms of masculinity (Fielding-Lloyd and Meân, 2011; Harris, 2007; Magrath, 2018).

In football, hegemonic masculinity is said to embody hypermasculinity (Burstyn, 1999), strength, aggression (Dunning, 1986), and heterosexuality (Swain, 2000). However, idealised hegemonic masculinity does not have to be embodied by heterosexual men to achieve ascendancy over women and subordinate masculinities; hegemony is made successful by consent to, support of, and complicity with the ideal. For example, the (male) “armchair football fan” does not embody the hegemonic masculinity of the football player, but they benefit from the association with this masculine ideal (Schippers, 2002, p. 30). However, certain groups of men, such as Black men and gay men, do not receive the same patriarchal dividends from association with hegemonic masculinity as white heterosexual men because they are not afforded the same social authority (Connell, 2005). Thus, the cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity in football, and the benefits that association with it yields, are only available to a select group of men.

As an ideologically white, heterosexual masculine industry (Bradbury 2013; Clayton and Harris 2004), men's club football serves an essential role in protecting and producing white, heterosexual, male dominance in society. As Sasson-Levy (2011) argues in the case of the military, this helps explain why women's inclusion, especially in positions of power, can be viewed as a threat to masculinity both within and beyond the organisation. Indeed, sport's resistance to women in leadership has been understood by many scholars to be symptomatic of hegemonic masculinity within sporting organisations (Hargreaves, 1994; Walker & Satore-Baldwin, 2013). The maintenance of hegemonic power in sport, through practices and performances of accepted masculinity, creates a hostile environment for women whose presence threatens the dominant group (Burton, 2015; Anderson, 2009). For example, Whisenant *et al.* (2002) found that hegemonic masculinity was 'entrenched' in sports administrations and that the hyper-masculine environment of intercollegiate sport in the US was partly responsible for women's persistent underrepresentation in leadership positions in sports administration. While US-based, the findings from this study are supported by Norman's (2010) study of elite women coaches in the UK, where the preservation of hegemonic masculinity was found to restrict women's access to the top coaching jobs.

I argue that considering football as an 'extremely gendered' organisation offers a compelling explanation for severe gender inequalities in football by theorising the fundamental role of masculinity in the industry. However, the role of femininity in maintaining or challenging extremely gendered organisational regimes is largely under-theorised in Sasson-Levy's work. As such, I turn to the concepts of *hegemonic gender relations* (Schippers, 2007) and the *heterosexual matrix* (Butler, 1999) to theorise femininity within extremely gendered organisations.

4.1.3 Hegemonic Gender Relations and the Heterosexual Matrix

The maintenance of hegemonic masculinity is fundamental to the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations. However, given that gender is relational, we must also consider the role of femininity in maintaining and challenging extremely gendered organisational cultures. Indeed, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity has been criticised for limiting discussions of structural inequalities to explanations of male power, with little examination of the complicity and resistance of individuals. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) responded to this criticism in a reformulation of hegemonic masculinity by acknowledging that relations among masculinities are not always a direct exercise of power over women and that changes in the gender order of society, such as women's movement into male-dominated organisations, challenge the assumption of subordination. They suggest the need for a better way of understanding gender hierarchies, arguing that it would be more beneficial to consider the role of hegemonic gender relations, some of which will reify hegemonic masculinity while others will challenge it.

Mimi Schippers' (2007) reformulation of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity considers the relationship between masculinities and femininities as doing the work of hegemony. To elaborate on this idea further, Schippers utilises Judith Butler's (1999) *Heterosexual Matrix* to describe how masculinities and femininities create a dynamic relational structure in which they are positioned against the 'idealised relationship.' For Butler (1999), agreement between masculinity and femininity is maintained through regulatory practice that seeks to protect the gender order through *compulsory heterosexuality*. In other words, heterosexuality is assumed and required to reify the uneven binary relationship between masculinity and femininity. In this formulation, masculinity and femininity are distinct in that they signify heterosexual

desire; femininity desires that which is masculine, and masculinity desires that which is feminine.

While Schippers acknowledges that there is more to masculinity and femininity than erotic desire, she contends that the construction of heterosexual desire is the 'essence' of gender difference: "the *difference between and complementarity of femininity* and *masculinity*" (Schippers, 2007, p. 90, emphasis in original). Thus, femininity and masculinity are bound and differentiated by the heterosexual matrix and crucially, they are placed as oppositional and hierarchical (Schippers, 2007). For example, the presence of symbolic feminine and masculine roles in the workplace, such as the secretary who acts as 'the office wife' to the, invariably, male manager, provides the "hegemonic scaffolding" for hierarchical gender relations (Schippers, 2007, p. 91). This is because jobs that symbolise femininity, such as 'communal' jobs (Eagly & Steffen, 1984), for example, supporting or organising roles (Burton *et al.*, 2009), are always subordinate to jobs that symbolise masculinity such as decision-making roles or disciplinarian roles (ibid). Thus, gender segregation in the workplace is the result of maintaining an 'idealised relationship' within the heterosexual matrix.

As noted in the previous chapter, women leaders must conform to a 'respectable business femininity' whereby they must appear feminine enough to be desired as women but also display the masculine traits desired in leadership. However, women leaders must not appear too masculine in their appearance. By using the concept of the heterosexual matrix, it can be argued that for women to present as a 'pretend man' disrupts the heterosexual matrix because compulsory heterosexuality dictates that men cannot desire men. However, to appear as hyper-feminine puts women leaders at risk of being viewed as subordinate within the heterosexual matrix because femininity is necessarily inferior to masculinity. Women who transgress these

narrow rules, and disrupt the idealised relationship between masculinity and femininity, may lose the privilege associated with being elite leaders.

However, Schippers' theory of hegemonic gender relations also provides the space to theorise about relations of femininities and masculinities as contradictory or as deviating from the ideal relationship. Therefore, Schippers' model leaves room to consider the role of femininities in challenging hegemonic gender relations (Budgeon, 2014). As such, we can also view transgression from 'respectable business femininity' as a mechanism to challenge and disrupt the organisational culture. For example, Holmes and Schnurr (2006) found that women in IT often made strategic use of traditional femininity to parody and contest the contradiction that successful women cannot be overly feminine. They observed how these women 'played up' to stereotypes about femininity being incompatible with IT and were happy to take on 'feminine' tasks, such as office renovations. However, rather than reinforcing negative views of women's capabilities, the researchers observed that ultra-feminine women were ironically and playfully contesting gender stereotypes embedded within IT cultures by presenting traditional femininity as unproblematic. These performances disrupt the heterosexual matrix by presenting women as feminine *and* powerful. However, it is worth noting that these women already held senior positions and so had less to lose than women in lower positions by not conforming to a respectable business femininity (Mavin & Grandy, 2016b).

Crucially, I argue that the concept of hegemonic gender relations and the heterosexual matrix can help us to understand better women's roles within and experiences of 'extremely gendered' organisations. In the following section, I further argue that incorporating the ideal worker norm into an examination of extremely gendered organisations will help us to understand the ways that masculinity conferring industries function to control women's access to, and experiences of, leadership roles.

4.2 The Ideal Worker

Although Sasson-Levy draws extensively on Acker's theory of gendered organisations in her work on the military as an extremely gendered organisation, she does not discuss the 'ideal worker' beyond embodying a hegemonic masculine norm. Yet, the concept of the ideal worker is fundamental to Acker's theory of gendered organisation. That is, Acker (1990) argued that the gendered substructure of an organisation is supported by an organisational logic – the underlying assumptions and practices that construct organisations, and the image of the ideal worker as male. Drawing on Acker's concept of the abstract worker, Williams (2001) also introduced the concept of 'the ideal worker norm' to explain how the gender arrangements of paid work and unpaid care work prevent women from assuming the position of an ideal worker. In this section I argue that both Acker's and Williams' concepts can usefully explain women's unequal access to leadership roles. I begin by detailing the 'abstract worker' and 'ideal worker norm' concepts before considering how the notion of the 'ideal worker' has changed to suit the demands of the 'new' economy. Following this, I apply the concept of the ideal worker to the modern football workplace to consider the extremely gendered expectations of the ideal football worker.

4.2.1 Ideal Worker Norm

In concurrence with Acker's concept of the abstract worker, Williams (2001) introduced the concept of the 'ideal worker norm' to explain how the gender arrangements of paid work and unpaid care work prevent women from assuming the position of an ideal worker. Central to both Acker's (2006, 2012) and Williams' (2001) concept of the ideal worker is the gender arrangements of production (paid 'market' work) and reproduction (unpaid 'family' work). That is, an ideal worker can give primacy to paid market work because they are unencumbered

by unpaid family work. This gender arrangement, which has persisted for decades in capitalist societies, has a greater impact on women's access to professional and managerial work than men (Davies & Frink, 2014). However, Williams goes a step further than Acker in suggesting that these gender arrangements, which she refers to as domesticity, have retained their hold because they not only prioritise paid work, but they also necessarily undervalue and marginalise unpaid care work.

Because women are more likely than men to be primary caregivers, Williams (2001) and others (Benard & Correll, 2010; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Crittenden, 2001; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) argue that it is motherhood, rather than gender per se, that prevents women from being ideal workers. This view, of course, risks blaming women for being less-than-ideal workers by having children. However, central to Williams' thesis is that the arrangements of paid work, which are often based on the traditional life patterns of men, are to blame for the marginalisation of women in the workplace, not women who choose to have children. Williams also criticises employer's 'entitlement' to workers who can give primacy to paid work. That is, an economy that values unmitigated commitment to paid work explicitly devalues unpaid care work. This devaluation acts as a "powerful force field" that pushes men towards the ideal worker norm and pulls women into traditional caring roles (Williams, 2001, p. 38). Moreover, Williams argues that this arrangement has remained 'unbending' despite decades of feminist challenge and the introduction of equal rights legislation.

While women's overall participation in the UK workforce is at a record high of 72%, 40% of women, compared to just 13% of men, work part-time (Devine & Foley, 2020). Data from public sector workers shows that the main reasons women give for working part-time are '*to spend more time with family'* or '*because domestic responsibilities prevent full-time working*' (ONS, 2019b). In contrast, the main reason men give for working part-time is that they are

'*financially secure*' and so '*do not need full-time work*' (ibid). Women in the UK are also seven times more likely than men to opt-out of paid work to look after family or the home (ONS, 2020). It is also important to note that unpaid care work transcends childcare. There are over six million unpaid carers in the UK who look after an elderly, ill or disabled family member or friend (Carers UK, 2019). Of this six million, 58% are women (ibid). In short, the arrangements of paid and unpaid care work in the UK remain significantly gendered, and this continues to fuel gender inequalities in the home and the workplace.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also set gender equality efforts back significantly. Provisional studies in the UK show that more women than men have lost their jobs or faced a reduction in pay and hours during the pandemic (Adams-Prassl, Boneva, Golin & Rauh, 2020; Oreffice & Quintana-Domeque, 2020). During the pandemic, women also took on an average of 30 additional hours of childcare per week compared to men, who took on an average of 19 additional hours (Sevilla & Smith, 2020). The evidence presented here suggests that the 'force field' of domesticity is as strong today as it has ever been. However, the nature of paid work and the composition and structure of the 'traditional' family has changed significantly since the concept of the ideal worker was first introduced. In the following sections, I will detail each of these changes in turn and show how the concept of the ideal worker can be applied to the current arrangements of family life in the new economy.

4.2.2 Changing families, unchanged gender roles

The original ideal worker concept is based on a white Western 'traditional' family model of mother-caregiver, father-breadwinner. However, this model does not account for cultural or racial differences in domestic arrangements. For example, many women in British Asian families live in multigenerational households where caregiving responsibilities are not only

shared between grandparents and parents but are also increased for women by the expectation to care for parents and parents-in-law (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli & Bell, 2011). There are also a rising number of lone-parent families, same-gender parented families, and male-caregiver/female-breadwinner families whose gender arrangements differ from the 'traditional' family model. For example, studies have found more egalitarian childcare arrangements in same-gender parented families than in mixed-gender parented families (Goldberg, Smith & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson, Sutfin & Fulcher, 2004). Similarly, Pinho and Gaunt (2019) found that male-caregiver/female-breadwinner families 'undo' traditional gendered caregiving roles. These progressive family dynamics suggest that the pervasive gender arrangements of domesticity that underpin the notion of the ideal worker may be eroding.

However, research also suggests that traditional gender concepts and practices still shape the experiences of non-traditional families. For example, Meisenbach (2010) found that female breadwinners in mix-gender parented families struggled to manage the 'masculine' ideal worker norm with the pressures of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996). Intensive mothering refers to the expectation that mothers should invest their time and emotions into raising 'good' neoliberal citizens while their (male) partners invest their time and emotions in paid work (Valencia, 2015). Thus, the societal expectation to 'be there' for children is different for women and men (Edgley, 2021). As such, instead of observing gendered role reversals, Meisenbach (2010) found that female breadwinners felt pressured to have successful careers AND be supermom.

Regardless of family arrangements, working fathers are still treated differently than working mothers. For example, while women often face penalties in the workplace for having children, men are frequently rewarded (Correll *et al*., 2007; Glauber, 2018). However, these rewards

vary by social class and race (Hodges & Budig, 2010). For example, US-based studies suggest that high-earning white men receive the greatest fatherhood wage premium (Glauber, 2008, 2018). It is important to note that women without children also face a 'motherhood penalty' at work because they are often judged as selfish or uncaring for choosing not to have children (Benard & Correll, 2010). Childfree women can also face difficulties asking for time off because they are perceived as not having responsibilities or interests outside of paid work (Peterson & Engwall, 2016). In short, the gender arrangements of domesticity continue to affect women adversely regardless of their family situation; mothers are viewed as less-than-ideal workers while childfree women are viewed as less-than-ideal women (Lewis, 2018).

Given the pressures of modern work and family life, working mothers often opt for 'mommy track' jobs that provide the flexibility to do paid work and be primary caregivers to children (Lewis, 2018; Williams, 2001). However, this work is often lower in pay and status than jobs with less flexibility, such as professional and managerial jobs, which require long working hours and extensive travel (Acker, 2012; Billing, 2011; Williams, 2001). That said, significant numbers of women have moved into professional and managerial jobs in the *new economy* – loosely defined as a shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service and knowledge-based economy driven by technological innovation and neoliberal ideals of globalisation and free-market competition (Carnoy, 2009). Indeed, the characteristics of the ideal worker in this new economy are markedly different to those originally proposed by Acker and Williams. I will detail these changes in the next section.

4.2.3 The Ideal Worker in the New Economy

The ideal worker is not a static concept; it changes with the requirements of a modern economy. Indeed, Acker's (1990) and Williams' (2001) original image of the ideal abstract worker as

someone who can dedicate themselves to 8-hours of continuous and uninterrupted work 5-days-a-week with a life-long employer no longer applies to the modern, neoliberal worker. Workers in the new economy frequently change jobs to find new opportunities, better conditions or because of increasing job loss and insecurity (Crowley & Hodson, 2014). Globalisation, advances in mobile technology, and unceasing consumer demand for products and services mean jobs rarely follow a 9-5, 5-days-a-week pattern. As such, ideal workers are expected to make themselves available 24/7, whether in the office or at home. Indeed, several scholars suggest that the work-life, home-life distinction no longer applies in the modern neoliberal age and that the expectation for workers to manage their own time, workloads, and employability has blurred the distinction between work and home (Holmgren, 2018; Kelliher, Richardson & Boiarintseva, 2019; Musilek, 2020; Wajcman, Bittman & Brown, 2009).

The separation of the home (private, reproduction) sphere and the work (public, production) sphere is a problematic concept. There has always been an overlap between the public and private spheres, especially for working-class women and Black women. For example, paid domestic and live-in workers, who are often working-class women and Black women, are neither situated in the public nor the private sphere (Davies & Frink, 2014). Furthermore, childcare, housework, and unpaid care work have a market value – not only does it allow certain workers, usually men, to dedicate themselves to paid work, but it also means the state does not have to pay to provide care. Indeed, a recent report found that unpaid carers saved the UK government £135 billion during the COVID-19 pandemic (Carers UK, 2020). While acknowledging the limitations of a separate spheres paradigm, it is still notable that modern working arrangements have colonised workers' home-lives in ways previously unimagined by Acker (1990) and Williams (2001).

The deregulation of working hours in the new economy has led to a ‘long working hours’ culture and intensification of work in many industries. In the UK, this has been compounded by the option for employees to opt out of the Working Time Directive of a maximum of 48 hours per week of paid work (Barnard, 2003). Advances in mobile technology have also made it possible for people to work anywhere, anytime, creating a boundaryless working day/week (Holmgren, 2018). Paradoxically, in an era of work intensification, most workplaces have also introduced flexible working policies and more generous parental leave to help workers balance paid work with unpaid domestic and caring responsibilities. However, value and reward in paid work are still based on hours worked and presenteeism, meaning flexible working has actually presented an opportunity for some workers to spend *more* of their time doing paid work (Kelan, 2009). As Kelly *et al.* (2010) found in their study of a corporate ‘Results Only Work Environment’, an initiative that rewards results rather than hours worked, the ideal worker norm remains pervasive and embedded in Western workplace cultures even when organisations make significant attempts to change the culture of long working hours. As such, workers may not take advantage of flexible working and parental leave for fear of being viewed as less committed than their colleagues who are willing and able to forgo such benefits (Drago, Wooden & Black, 2009).

The ‘ideal’ worker in the new economy, especially professionals and managers, also increasingly act as entrepreneurial subjects who derive a sense of identity and satisfaction from paid work at the expense of all other life commitments (Neely, 2020; Rottenberg, 2019). This worker must spend out of paid work hours managing and raising their professional profile (V. Smith, 2010), for example, through social media platforms and dedicated online networking sites such as LinkedIn. The ideal worker in this economy is measured against their ‘employability,’ so they must continuously look to bolster their skills and knowledge and show an unwavering passion and dedication to their profession (Neely, 2020; Smith, 2010).

Increasing precarity in paid work only exasperates the pursuit of an ideal professional identity in the new economy as workers compete to secure scarcely available permanent contracts (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). As I will argue in the following section, the modern football workplace is an extreme microcosm of the economy, and this has extreme gendered consequences.

4.2.4 The Ideal Worker for the Modern Football Workplace

Like other industries in the new economy, the English football industry from the early 1990's embraced neoliberal ideals of free-market competition, new globalisation, and capitalism (Beek *et al.*, 2019; Brooks, 2019; Cleland, 2015). As a result, the industry has become increasingly commodified over the past 30 years through the introduction of lucrative satellite TV deals, higher ticket prices, and club merchandise. Along with an increasing digitalisation of football through new technologies such as social media (Fenton & Helleu, 2019), the commodification of football in the new economy has driven an insatiable demand for the football 'product' around the world (Brooks, 2019; Schmidt & Holzmayer, 2019). As a result, football clubs must run 24/7 operations to meet the demand for up-to-the-minute and interactive football content (Lawrence, 2018).

These demands increase the need for unencumbered workers who can make themselves available 24/7. This is especially the case for managers and senior leaders who must be available to make and sign-off key decisions. Moreover, the football worker must also be available during matches. Before the introduction of the Premier League in 1992, league matches only took place at 3 pm on Saturdays. However, in the move to increase the televisation of English football, matches now take place throughout the weekend and weekday

evenings as well as bank holidays[6]. Notably, these are times when parents especially may find it hard if not impossible to find childcare.

The football season is also punctuated with moments of internal crisis, such as poor team performance, player injuries, relegation, the sacking of a manager, poor fan and footballer behaviour, and financial difficulties (Elliott, 2019). Football organisations must also respond to external political and social crises, such as the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, which prompted players to take a knee at the start of every match of the 2020/21 season (MacInnes, 2020). The digitalisation of football also increases the risk of crisis. That is, fan and footballer behaviour is no longer confined to the stadium; it unfolds on social media channels throughout the season, at any time of the day or night, and clubs must be ready to respond promptly. As such, crisis management is an inherent function of football organisations and their leadership teams.

In short, the global demand for English football in the new economy and a culture of crisis management necessitates a 24/7 operation. As such, the ideal football leader must be infinitely available, not just to proactively respond to the demand for the football product but to reactively respond to moments of crisis. However, as I have argued in the previous sections, the ability to work long hours and make oneself continuously available is implicitly gendered. The expectation of total availability is further reinforced through the expectation to put work first and to spend extended periods away from home. Notably, these expectations are also found in other 'extremely gendered' organisations such as the military and the fire service, where workers spend indefinite periods away from home.

[6] The 'blackout' rule, introduced in the 1960s to protect matchday attendance, prevented weekend matches with a 3 pm kick-off from being televised (Lucas, 2021).

Although jobs in the new economy are increasingly insecure, and industries are vulnerable to market shifts, the modern football industry represents an extreme microcosm of this general trend. It is an industry with an "endemic instability problem" and job insecurity (Parnell *et al.*, 2018, p. 242). For example, most football clubs are financially insecure and very few make a profit, meaning clubs are sensitive to financial crises. For example, the loss of matchday revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic led Arsenal FC to make 55 staff redundant (BBC Sport, 2020). Significantly, most of the redundancies were in the commercial and administrative departments (ibid), where there are proportionally more women compared to the core occupational areas (see chapter 5). Changes in ownership and football management, which have become increasingly common in modern football, can also lead to significant job losses (Lawrence, 2018).

Given the unstable nature of jobs in football in the new economy, workers must invest in social networks to ensure job security. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, women may find it harder than men to access social networks and find opportunities to mix with 'insiders.' That said, the demands of the modern football industry call for workers with a wide range of business skills (Lawrence, 2018) and this should push football organisations to look beyond their immediate networks for new recruits. The introduction of specialist training and education programmes for football executives, such as degree programmes offered by the University Campus of Football Business, is evidence of this growing demand for fresh talent. This has the potential to open doors for women who might have previously been excluded from 'insider networks.'

4.3 Negotiating the middle-ground: Women, agency, and power?

Although the theories presented so far offer a conceptual framework for understanding structural gender inequalities in what I consider to be an extremely gendered organisation, the question of agency remains unanswered. That is, can women exercise agency within the limits of an extremely gendered and neoliberalised regime and if so, how? Agency – "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2010, p. 28) – is frequently conceptualised as something people have (for examples see: Anderson, 2009; Benschop, 2009; Fodor, Glass & Nagy, 2019). However, this view requires us to think about people as either having agency or not, creating a false dichotomy between freedom and powerlessness. Consequently, women are either presented as mere victims of gender inequalities or hyper-agentic subjects unaffected by or able to freely challenge gender inequalities (Stringer, 2014). Reality is much more complex; rarely are women completely powerless or completely free-choosing (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). For example, women leaders are simultaneously advantaged by their organisational position (and the social status and wealth it brings) and disadvantaged by their marginalised position as women in a male-dominated environment (Mavin & Grandy, 2016a).

The complexity of these power dynamics has led others to view agency as social practice, a "self-conscious" action that is "contingent on a matrix of material and social conditions" (Herndl & Licona, 2017, p. 121). In this regard, agency is temporal, contextual, and shifting. It is not something people have or accumulate; it is an opportunity for action. This conceptualisation allows us to consider the possibility for women to act within the limits of structural inequalities given the opportunity. Crucially, this shifts the focus of analysis away from individual action or inaction that underpins 'agents of change' or 'cogs in the machine' literature onto the conditions that allow or constrain individual action. Thinking about agency as a social practice also moves us beyond the "agents not victims" trope (Dahl, 2009, p. 392)

that ignores the complex and contradictory middle-ground that women leaders must navigate in their daily lives.

In this section, I present the concept of postfeminist sensibilities to understand how women navigate structural gender inequalities. Although feminists have heavily critiqued postfeminism for ignoring structural inequalities, I argue that postfeminist sensibilities present opportunities for women to challenge oppressive power structures. I move on to consider 'tempered radicalism' (Meyerson, 2008) as a postfeminist strategy for disrupting extremely gendered regimes. I argue that while agentic acts of tempered radicalism are limited in their ability to fundamentally change organisational inequality regimes, they are often the only options available to women as they navigate structural inequalities in a neoliberal world.

4.3.1 Postfeminist Sensibilities

Postfeminism is a contested concept; however, it is widely understood as a response to feminism. Some see it as a backlash to or the end of feminism (Faludi, 1992), while others argue that postfeminism is an 'entanglement' of feminist and anti-feminist ideas (McRobbie, 2004). The latter views postfeminism as a "profoundly contradictory" sensibility (Gill, 2008, p. 442), whereby women are expected to overcome collective and structural inequalities through individual strategies of self-improvement. Thus, a postfeminist sensibility "places the burden of responsibility for women's underrepresentation in leadership positions onto individual women rather than organizational inequality regimes" (Nash & Moore, 2018, p. 3). The emphasis on the individual in this postfeminism indicates the inscribing of neoliberal ideals on the feminine subject. That is, as a mode of governmentality, neoliberalism promotes autonomy, self-surveillance, and self-regulation (Foucault, 2008; Williams, 2013). This results in women overcoming the contradictions of the ostensibly gender-neutral values of market

competition and meritocracy and the reality of gender inequalities in the workplace through self-regulation and self-improvement. However, in a postfeminist context, it is women who are expected to surveil, regulate, and improve themselves more so than men and in different ways (Gill, 2008; Kumra & Simpson, 2018).

In the world of professional work, a sphere where women have been historically excluded, ambitious career women now fill the demand for entrepreneurial and self-regulating neoliberal workers in the new economy (Kauppinen, 2013; Kumra & Simpson, 2018). However, as I argued in the previous sections, the conditions of work in the new economy are gendered, so the ideal neoliberal worker is still coded masculine. As such, it is hard, if not impossible, for women to embody the ideal neoliberal worker, and this continues to reinforce gender inequalities in the workplace. However, Rottenberg (2014) argues that even women who are advocates of gender equality have bought into neoliberalism. This so-called 'neoliberal feminism' has been embraced by elite women leaders, who espouse feminist ideas whilst adopting neoliberal ideals:

> "Individuated in the extreme, this subject is feminist in the sense that she is distinctly aware of current inequalities between men and women. This same subject is, however, simultaneously neoliberal, not only because she disavows the social, cultural, and economic forces producing this inequality, but also because she accepts full responsibility for her own well-being…" (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 420).

Neoliberal feminism is somewhat of an oxymoron in that neoliberal ideals of individualism and market competition sit in uncomfortable opposition to the feminist project of collective social justice. Nonetheless, neoliberal feminism has found steady footing in the world of business precisely because of this paradox. In placing responsibility for gender equality onto

individual women, neoliberal feminism removes the need for a critique of structural inequalities. The proliferation of leadership courses for women, such as those offered by the FA, UEFA, and Women in Football, is evidence of a neoliberal postfeminist sensibility in the football industry. These courses, which aim to upskill and empower women, are based on a cultural pressure for women to make themselves more confident or resilient in the workplace to overcome or manage inequalities (Gill *et al.*, 2017).

Ambitious middle-class women who espouse neoliberal feminist ideas are ideal workers in the world of business because they take full responsibility for gender inequality. They work harder than men, sacrifice family life, personally invest in their professional development and present these actions as "freely chosen" (Gill & Scharff, 2011, p. 7) rather than a consequence of patriarchy. Indeed, the most famous woman in English football leadership, Baroness Karren Brady, Vice President of West Ham United FC, has been accused of being a 'neo-liberal subject' who shows solidarity with the patriarchal structures of football (Wilkes, 2015), despite publicly espousing feminist views (Brady, 2012). As such, Rottenberg (2014, p. 432) argues that "ambitious individual *middle-class women* themselves become both the problem and the solution in the neoliberal feminist age."

However, while there is a need to be critical of a neoliberal postfeminist sensibility in the world of leadership and governance, critics tend to overcorrect the hyper-agentic and individualistic discourse of postfeminism with a disavowal of agency, choice, and communal responsibility among women leaders. Seldom do critics acknowledge or attempt to understand the complexity of women's navigation of leadership and gender inequality in a neoliberal world or consider how women leaders challenge gender inequalities within the constraints of neoliberalism. As Prügl (2015, p. 627) contends, "the challenge for scholars is to better understand the conditions under which neoliberalised feminisms provide openings to challenge oppressive power

structures.” Indeed, Kelan (2018) argues that current postfeminist sensibilities no longer repudiate gender inequality but see gender equality as valuable and worth fighting for in the workplace. That is, gender equality now has ‘symbolic value’ to organisations that want to appear diverse and inclusive. The solitary woman leader in a male-dominated neoliberalised organisation thus occupies a complex and contradictory position. She is both a symbol of equality and inequality, an outsider on the inside, at once valuable and dispensable.

The sporting arena provides an opportune context for examining postfeminist sensibilities because neoliberal discourses of meritocracy and individual choice dominate the narrative on women’s underrepresentation in sport leadership in Western European countries (Knoppers, Hovden & Elling, 2019). These narratives attribute women’s underrepresentation in sport governance to a ‘lack of ability’ or a personal choice ‘not to take advantage of opportunities offered’ (ibid). Moreover, meritocratic narratives in sport governance may be more pronounced than in other male-dominated industries because they are inherently tied to essentialist beliefs about male athletic superiority (Pape, 2020). Also, endemic instability problems in the new football era mean that women leaders may face greater pressures than their male counterparts to show solidarity with unequal workplace cultures and invest in neoliberal feminist ideals of self-regulation and self-improvement to bolster their job security. As such, greater empirical and theoretical attention needs to be paid to the actions, however limited by sociocultural context, women leaders take in their football careers that accounts for the contradictory middle-ground that women leaders in extremely gendered organisations occupy. In the following section, I present the concept of *tempered radicalism* as a way to understand how women leaders enact agency to challenge unequal gendered power structures from within.

4.3.2 Tempered Radicalism

Although not explicitly cited as a theory of agency, Meyerson and Scully's (1995) concept of *tempered radicalism* offers an avenue to understand how organisational outsiders navigate the middle-ground between the structural inequalities that limit the possibility for action and opportunities to challenge those inequalities. The authors argue that individuals who do not easily fit within their organisation because of their identity or beliefs must "struggle continuously to handle the tension between personal and professional identities at odds with one another" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 586). As such, these individuals must enact a tempered form of radicalism if they want to change their organisations and stay true to their personal identities. These individuals are radicals because they "challenge the status quo, both through intentional acts and also just by being who they are" (ibid). However, they are tempered because they seek moderation. Moderation is required because without it, radical acts of resistance could threaten the professional position of the organisational outsider. As such, a woman leader in a male-dominated environment who wants to change the workplace culture to better suit women must "find ways to rock the boat, but not so hard that she falls out of it" (Meyerson, 2008, p. 4).

To challenge and change their organisations from within, tempered radicals choose from a spectrum of strategies depending on the opportunity for action. These strategies range from *resisting quietly and staying true to oneself*, *turning personal threats into opportunities, broadening impact through negotiation*, *leveraging small win*s, and *organising collective action* (Meyerson, 2008). One end of the spectrum involves small and subtle acts of resistance that pose little threat to the position of the organisational outsiders. Strategies at the other end of the spectrum are more public and so likely to encounter opposition. Crucially, these strategies are limited by context. For example, what someone in a very senior leadership

position can do may be different from what someone in a lower managerial position can do. Nonetheless, each act of tempered radicalism is meaningful and intentional.

For women leaders in extremely gendered organisations, accountability, leading by example, and spearheading gender equality initiatives can be viewed as acts of tempered radicalism (Kelan & Wratil, 2018). Crucially, these acts are also available to men who want to shift organisational cultures. In fact, men have less to lose than women by being tempered radicals. Moreover, tempered radicalism is not limited to challenging gender inequalities. As Meyerson and Scully (1995) argue, Black women and men have long been tempered radicals in the workplace. That is, Black workers are tempered because they must often downplay their blackness, i.e., 'code switch' (McCluney, Robotham, Lee, Smith & Durkee, 2019), to successfully navigate the workplace. This might involve changing one's accent or appearance in exchange for employment opportunities.

In fact, many people code switch at work to hide parts of their identity that may be professionally compromising. For example, without thinking about it, I downplay my Yorkshire accent in certain professional and academic contexts because of pervasive class-based stereotypes about northerners (Parveen, 2020). Although code switching prevents people from being true to themselves in the workplace, it also grants them entry to organisations from which they have been historically excluded. As such, just being present in a hegemonically white, male-dominated, middle-class organisation as an 'outsider' can be a radical act and one that can instigate change.

Of course, incremental and individualised strategies for change are subject to intense criticism, and the ability of these strategies to change unequal power structures is questionable (Foster, 2015; Rottenberg, 2019). Yet, these strategies may be the only ones available to women leaders

under the conditions of neoliberalism or the only ones that pose the least threat to their organisational position. Thus, as an agentive social practice, tempered radicalism provides a useful lens through which to examine and understand the conditions for women leaders to act within the limits of structural inequalities without reducing women to either ‘agents of change’ or ‘cogs in the machine’. I further argue that neoliberal feminism can also be viewed as a tempered form of radicalism. That is, under the conditions of neoliberalism and ongoing gender inequalities in the workplace, women leaders still have limited opportunities for action. Yet, they act to call out gender inequalities and adopt strategies to overcome and challenge them. Indeed, the concept of tempered radicalism emerged from the authors’ experiences as feminist scholars in the neoliberal environment of a university business school (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). As the authors elaborate, “[we] find ourselves in the awkward position of trying to master the norms of our profession in order to advance and maintain a foothold inside important institutions, but also trying to resist and change the profession's imperative and focus” (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 587).

The concept of tempered radicalism appealed to me because I share with the authors a struggle “to act in ways that are appropriate professionally and authentic personally and politically” (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 587) as a feminist. In this doctoral thesis, I critique the very same neoliberal and gendered structures that I have worked hard to gain an advantage within. I have worked unreasonably long hours attending conferences, writing academic papers, and reviewing journal articles in the hope that it will boost my employability in the academic market, all the while knowing that the reliance on unpaid work in academia disadvantages those with primary caring responsibilities, most of whom are women. Nevertheless, I have simultaneously tried to use my position to speak out about inequalities in the academy and in ‘rocking the boat,’ I have lost valuable ‘insider’ connections. I would come to realise through this doctoral research that, in many ways, women leaders in football shared the same struggles

in trying to balance a desire for success and a desire for gender equality within a ruthlessly unequal industry.

Of course, tempered radicalism is extra, burdensome, and frustrating work. Given that those already marginalised within organisations are the ones who take on this additional unpaid labour, tempered radicalism can actually make the situation of organisational outsiders worse. As Meyerson (2008, p. 155) notes, tempered radicalism can give workers a sense of satisfaction but also "frustration, setback, and bouts of burnout." Moreover, she argues that when workers no longer feel that they can live authentically because of their work, they may have no choice but to "acknowledge that the right the choice is to move on" (ibid). In fact, leaving an extremely gendered organisation may be the ultimate act of agency.

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I argued that men's football can be understood as an "extremely gendered" organisation and that this has consequences for gender equality efforts. I also elaborated on the theory of extremely gendered organisations by considering the role of women and femininity in supporting or challenging extremely gendered regimes. Specifically, by considering the role of hegemonic gender relations, we can consider performances of femininity as supporting or deviating from the heterosexual matrix, a matrix that positions women as inferior to men. I also considered how the ideal worker materialises in the extremely gendered organisation of the modern football workplace. In doing so, I argued that football is an extreme microcosm of the new economy and that this has extreme gendered consequences. Notably, football's entitlement to workers who can dedicate themselves fully to the 24/7 world of football excludes workers with caring responsibilities, most of whom are women. However, I have also moved beyond structural explanations of gender inequalities to consider how to conceptualise agency within

the limits of an 'extremely gendered' regime. Specifically, by considering agency as a social practice, I argue that postfeminist sensibilities offer opportunities to challenge oppressive gendered regimes. Finally, I argue that tempered radicalism can be a postfeminist strategy for disrupting the extremely gendered organisation from within.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the "choices we make" about what or who to research, our choice of theory and method, and our decisions about how we analyse and interpret our data (Silverman, 2013, p. 113). Because, as researchers, *we* make these choices, the methodological approach we take cannot be separated from who we are and how we think about the world. There is no single approach to researching social life, and whatever path we take is ladened with philosophical, theoretical, and practical dilemmas and questions. Namely, "what is the nature of social reality?" (ontology) and "how can social reality be known?" (epistemology) (Blaikie, 2007, pp. 3-4). While there is no right or wrong way to approach these questions, their answers fundamentally shape how we conduct our research and, therefore, the types of knowledge we produce about the social world. As such, we must critically engage with our ontological and epistemological beliefs and interrogate our assumptions about them throughout the research process. This critical engagement necessarily involves reflexivity – the practice of "critical self-scrutiny" and a commitment to exposing ourselves and our role in the research process (Mason, 2002, p. 7). In adopting a reflexive approach, I have chosen to write in the first person to remind the reader of my presence and influence in writing as the researcher.

In this chapter, I explain and reflect on my methodological approach to this doctoral research with reference to ontological and epistemological dilemmas and questions. First, I discuss the meaning and practice of feminist research and explain how Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) offers a useful approach for conducting feminist research. I then explain my choice of qualitatively driven mixed methods to collect data and follow this with a reflective account of ethical considerations, sampling, and data collection. Finally, I introduce Situational Analysis (SA) as a valuable method of data analysis in CGT and

reflect on the process of data analysis, interpretation, and theory development. I must note that in CGT, sampling, data collection, and data analysis are simultaneous and iterative processes; however, for clarity, I discuss each process in separate sections.

5.1 Doing Feminist Research: Reflections on Constructivist Grounded Theory, Reflexivity, and Intersectionality.

For me, feminism is a commitment to a way of life and seeing the world that transcends the research process. In this sense, I did not choose a feminist approach to the research of women in football; feminism is my approach to life. That is, I do not think about feminism as a research tool that can be picked up or "put down and put away" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 14); feminism is integral to who I am. My feminist beliefs are very much shaped by the work of postmodern Black and or queer feminists, such as bell hooks, Judith Butler, and Sara Ahmed. Scholars who, in defending women's rights, also acknowledge that not all women are oppressed by the same power structures or in the same ways. Notably, these scholars denounce systems of power, such as class oppression, white supremacy, colonialism, and compulsory heterosexuality, that create and reinforce *different* inequalities between women and between men in our society. Like these scholars, my stance as a feminist researcher is that human experience is diverse and contextual, that there is no single experience of being a woman. Thus, my research approach must account for multiple realities and reject the idea of a single objective truth. As a feminist, I also believe that exposing and challenging oppressive power structures should be central to the pursuit of knowledge in social research.

However, feminists disagree on what feminist research is and what form it should take; consequently, feminist research approaches are multiple and varied (Hesse-Biber, 2014). So, while I spent no time at all deciding to do 'feminist research,' I spent the entirety of my

PhD journey reflecting on and agonising over what this meant in practice. The questioning and requestioning of beliefs and assumptions about the world is, as Ahmed (2017) reminds us, feminist practice. Indeed, she warns us that overconfidence in our feminist beliefs can be damaging; that "there is no guarantee that in struggling for justice we ourselves will be just" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 6). For example, the steadfast commitment of white middle-class feminists to advancing their class status within patriarchal systems harms working-class women and Black women who are excluded from those systems (hooks, 2000). In addition, the unwavering ideology of Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism denies the rights of perhaps the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society (Da Costa, 2021). Thus, Ahmed (2017) challenges us to think about feminism as a movement rather than a static concept. Therefore, as feminists, we should allow ourselves to be moved – to reposition ourselves when confronted with our prejudices. It follows that feminist research, in whatever form it takes, should always facilitate movement, change, and reflection in the research process.

I spent many months searching for a research approach that embraced these elements, at times feeling overwhelmed by the range of options available but often underwhelmed by what they had to offer. On several occasions I ventured into the world of Critical Theory, having been alerted to its advantages by academics and peers (all of whom were male) in the field of sport sociology. While I found solace in its rejection of objective truth and the fundamental goal of challenging oppressive power structures, I often found myself asking, 'where are the women?' Yet, in turning to overtly feminist approaches to social research, I often found myself asking 'which women?' For example, Feminist Standpoint theory places women's experiences at the centre of knowledge production with the aim of viewing the social world from the standpoint of women as an oppressed group (Hekman, 1997). However, if women's experience of the social world is diverse, then how do we choose a

‘standpoint’ from which to view those experiences? As Harding (2004, p. 7) introspectively asks, “aren’t consciousnesses only individual?” if so “what is a ‘collective group consciousness’?”

Additionally, I am critical of the idea that all women are oppressed. For example, while the women leaders I interviewed for this doctoral research were marginalised in the world of football, they were notably privileged by their social position as business leaders. Indeed, as a feminist researching a group of socially privileged women, I often felt paradigmatically homeless; uncomfortable with assumptions of women’s collective oppression that underscored many feminist approaches to social research and frustrated with the silence on gender in critical approaches to researching leadership and organisations. Moreover, I found the distinct lack of methodological detail in these approaches bewildering. In rejecting the scientific method, I wondered if critical and feminist approaches to social research had abandoned methodology entirely. That is, very few approaches to social enquiry offer guidance on collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. Fewer still offer any guidance on developing explanations about the social world, which, in my view, is fundamental to sociological research.

In discovering Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) I finally found an approach to research that made explicit its feminist orientations, rejected the idea of a single truth, and offered a methodological blueprint for conducting research and developing theory. Broadly speaking, Grounded Theory (GT) is a method and methodology for theory construction from empirical data (Charmaz, 2008b). Although originally developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) as an objectivist approach to qualitative research, there are now multiple strands of GT (Charmaz, 2008a; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 2007). Notably, Glaser and Strauss split off into differing strands of GT. I had always thought of GT in the Glaserian tradition

(Glaser, 1992, 1998, 2002) – based on the assumption that social reality is "out there" (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, p. 748) in the data, waiting to be inductively discovered by the researcher, and that formal theory is developed by seeking an objective truth free from prior experience or theoretical knowledge (Charmaz, 2008c). In this sense, GT had never appealed to me as an approach to feminist research. However, my curiosity in GT was piqued when I read an essay by Adele Clarke entitled '*Feminism, Grounded Theory, and Situational Analysis Revisited'.* I was struck by Clarke's argument that Grounded Theory has always been implicitly feminist. That is, by foregrounding its roots in symbolic interactionism, Clarke showed how GT's emphasis on lived experience, situatedness, deconstructive analysis, and difference(s) is "always already implicitly feminist" (Clarke, 2012, p. 391).

However, in developing Constructivist Grounded Theory, scholars including Clarke and Charmaz, have taken GT in an *explicitly* feminist direction. Unlike Glaserian GT, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) engages with postmodern concerns about difference (Clarke & Friese, 2007) by starting "with the assumption that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed" (Charmaz, 2008c, p. 169). Moreover, CGT adopts an abductive (bottom-up *and* top-down) logic rather than a purely inductive (bottom-up) logic of enquiry. That is, constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge that findings and theories are not simply discovered from the data by the researcher; they are co-constructed by the researcher and participants and influenced by the researcher's experiences and prior engagement with social scientific concepts. As Charmaz (2006, p. 47: emphasis in original) argues, "[w]e *construct* our codes because we are actively naming data…[w]e may think our codes capture the empirical reality…[y]et it is *our* view: we choose the words that constitute our codes." In practice, constructivist grounded theorists will start with *sensitising concepts* (Blumer, 1969) – initial ideas about what to pursue – from personal

experiences and prior engagement with theory. However, they are open to and guided by new theories and lines of inquiry that develop through interactions with research participants, the field of study, and their data.

Moreover, constructivist grounded theorists argue that "we must take the researcher's position, privileges, perspectives, and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality" (Charmaz, 2008c, p. 469). This emphasis on researcher subjectivity appealed to me as a feminist because central to any feminist research praxis is a critical examination of ourselves as the primary research tool (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014). As a feminist researcher, I must acknowledge my power as the researcher and be upfront about my influence on the research process. Therefore, to claim that social scientific concepts "emerge from the data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 36) without taking account of the researcher's influence on data analysis can be considered an anti-feminist endeavour. As such, feminist researchers often take a reflexive approach, choosing instead to reflect on their subjective position and how this influences how they interpret the data.

Reflexivity is the continual exercise of turning back on oneself to consciously acknowledge our position in terms of power, culture, and influence within the research (Mason, 2002). This practice involves making explicit our past experiences so that readers can better understand our interpretations of the data. Crucially, by "[v]iewing the research as constructed rather than discovered" CGT "fosters researcher's reflexivity about their actions and decisions" (Charmaz, 2008c, p. 469). Putting reflexivity into practice involved keeping a reflective journal, having an ongoing and open dialogue with my supervisors and peers about my research process, and engaging with scholarship that challenged me to critically interrogate my position as a white, university-educated, middle-class woman. Reflective journaling, which is now standard practice in social research, facilitates reflexive

habits by encouraging the researcher to write about and examine their experiences, particularly their assumptions, goals, and beliefs about their research (Etherington, 2004). I kept several notebooks of reflections during this research, including one I wrote in immediately after each interview. These notebooks became a personal commentary on my research process, logging thoughts, decisions, and challenges along the way. Although I did not analyse the content of these journals as 'data,' I referred to them throughout data analysis and write-up as a reminder of my initial thoughts and preconceptions during fieldwork to provide a "research 'trail'" (Ortlipp, 2008) of my developing understanding of the research problem.

Conversations with my supervisors about key decisions and challenges prompted further reflexive practice. Particularly, as 'critical friends' (Smith & McGannon, 2018), my supervisors challenged me to critically reflect on issues of race and class in women's experiences of football and leadership. Prompted by these discussions, the most reflexive practice for me has been my engagement with the scholarship of Black feminists throughout my research. The works of bell hooks (2000), Patricia Hill Collins (1990b, 2004), and Sara Ahmed (1998, 2006, 2017) have been particularly influential in my PhD journey. Notably, this scholarship has challenged me, as a white woman, to be intersectional in my research and my approach to feminism. Having an intersectional sensitivity means actively seeking approaches to gathering data that account for intersectional experiences. As I will detail later in this chapter, taking a purposive sampling approach allowed me to seek a diverse sample of women to interview. Furthermore, an intersectional sensitivity means presenting data in ways that account for the differences in women's experiences. Women's experiences of working in football are not only shaped by gender but also by multiple intersections of identity, including race, class, sexuality, and ability, as well as the power structures of capitalism and globalism. As Collins and Bilge

(2020, p. 24) argue, football “offers a rich site for using intersectionality as an analytical tool.”

Yet, to my mind, the field of football studies has yet to fully realise the potential of intersectional feminist analysis. Gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability in football are often researched in silos and, at best, relegated to a single chapter in football handbooks. I too have been frequently pigeonholed in the field as a researcher of women’s football as if that is the only place where ‘gender’ happens. I have, on several occasions, had papers accepted at football conferences only to be included in the ‘women’s football’ section. In short, it seldom occurs to people, even in my own field, that gender, as well as other intersecting identities, crosscuts every aspect of the football industry – including leadership. That said, studies of gender and sport leadership are not necessarily feminist, let alone intersectional. As Knoppers & McLachlan (2018) argue, there has been a lack of feminist scholarship in the study of sports leadership. The authors go on to argue that gender and sports scholars should make explicit their feminist principles – something I have endeavoured to do in thesis by taking an explicitly feminist approach to research using CGT, adopting reflexive practice, and approaching this research with an intersectional sensitivity.

5.2 Data Collection Methods and Procedure

In this thesis, I took a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach to data collection. That is, while I employed a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, the “core assumption” of my research approach is that “social reality is constructed and that subjective meaning is a critical component of knowledge building” (Hesse-Biber & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2015, p. 5). Therefore, my primary data collection method was qualitative

biographic interviews with women who have worked in leadership roles in men's professional football clubs and governing bodies in England. However, given that so little is known about women's leadership work in football, I also used supplementary quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a foundational understanding of the research context. These methods included archival research to produce descriptive statistics on the proportion and types of leadership roles held by women in the 'new' football era and an analysis of the gender pay gap reports of men's football clubs in England.

My data collection process resulted in four different datasets: quantitative data on the proportion and types of leadership roles women have held in men's club football and football governing bodies in England; quantitative data on the gender pay gap in football; qualitative narrative data from gender pay gap reports; and in-depth interview data from twenty-three women who have worked in football leadership. In this section, I discuss each method in turn, and offer a reflexive account of my data collection journey. However, I begin by reflecting on philosophical dilemmas in conducting mixed methods feminist research.

5.2.1 Feminist Research: Navigating the Quantitative/Qualitative Divide.

Historically, feminist researchers have been wary of quantitative research, viewing quantitative methods as androcentric or overly empiricist (Spierings, 2012). These concerns stem from the longstanding exclusion of women from quantitative research and the tendency for social theorists to apply grand theories to the lives of women whom they never included in their data. Thus, feminist researchers have long been critical of quantitative methods that over-generalise their findings and lack reflexivity. While I sympathise with these concerns, I do not believe that quantitative or mixed methods are

antithetical to a feminist research paradigm. While, as a feminist, I am disposed to making "everything into something that is questionable" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 2) and thus remain critical of positivistic tendencies in quantitative research, there is a necessary degree of pragmatism that we must employ as social researchers to avoid the "*defeatist* stance" that there can be no systematic understanding of social life (Blaikie, 2007, p. 51, emphasis in original). Although CGT is associated with qualitative research, it is informed by the pragmatist tradition in social research (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019) – the recognition that our understanding of social life is partial but that a partial knowledge of the social world is still valuable.

In this regard, I argue that quantitative data and research can be useful in building a better, albeit partial, understanding of social life. Notably, auxiliary quantitative research can be used to establish a research context; define a research population; or generate new qualitative research questions (Hesse-Biber & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2015). As Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2015, p. 76) argue, quantitative or mixed methods are not "inherently housed in any one theoretical tradition" and that mixed methods research "can provide feminists with an important set of knowledge excavation tools." Indeed, Ann Oakley (1999, p. 251), a feminist and vehement critic of the qualitative/quantitative dichotomy, argues

> "in our excitement to dismantle patriarchy I and other feminist social scientists had mistakenly thrown at least part of the baby out with the bathwater. Women and other minority groups need 'quantitative' research, because without this it is difficult to distinguish between personal experience and collective oppression."

I believe, along with Oakley, that there is a necessity for quantitative research to better understand structural differences between diverse groups of people in society. Once we have this understanding, we can then seek situated knowledge through qualitative enquiry.

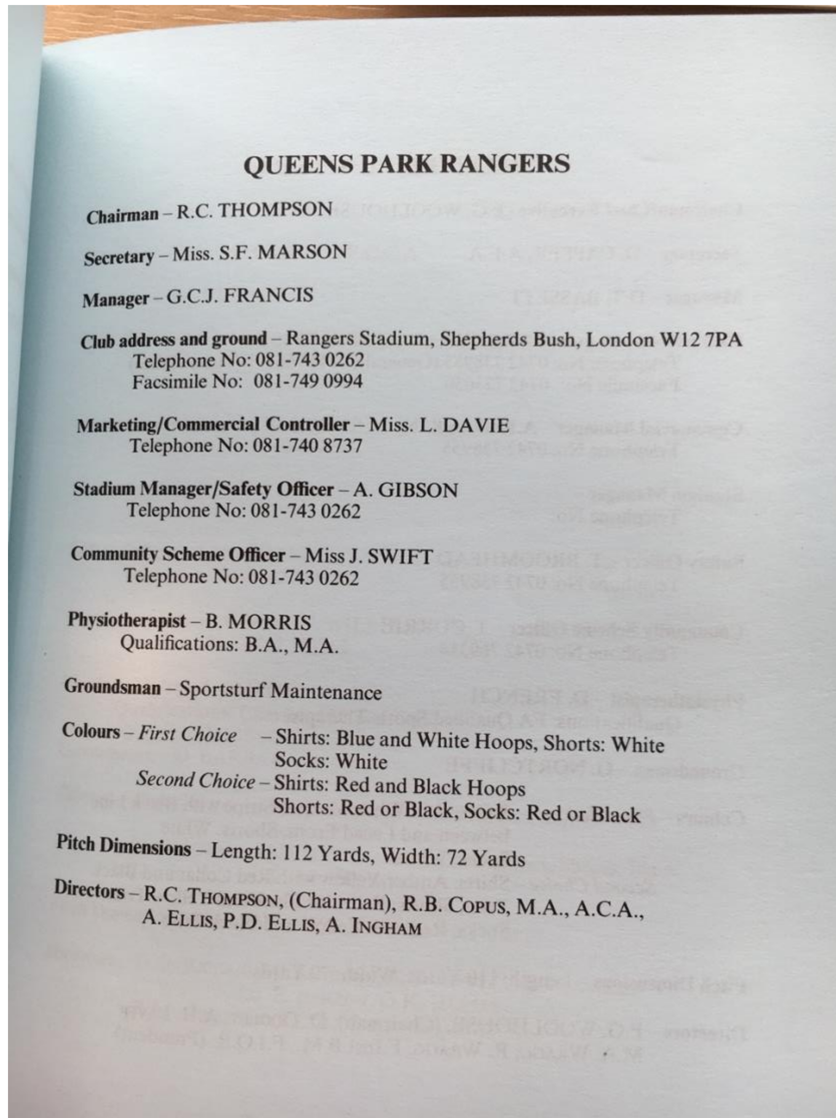
However, I must stress that I do not view mixed methods as a form of triangulation – using different methods to find a 'true' fix on the phenomenon (Silverman, 2013). As I have previously argued, there is no single experience of social reality – it is multiple, constructed, and subjective. Seeking 'truth' through data validation is incompatible with a constructivist feminist epistemology. Instead, my mixed methods approach can be described as *crystallization* (Ellingson, 2014), the process of gathering multiple types of data and using multiple methods and theories to look at a phenomenon from different angles. Here, the aim is not to find a singular truth, "but to open up a more complex, in-depth but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). While I do not seek data validity, I do seek methodological rigour. Tracey (2010) argues that this includes using sufficiently appropriate and complex theories, samples, and data analysis procedures; being self-reflexive and transparent about research methods; offering thick description of social life; being ethical, and; using methods and procedures that fit the stated goals. Crucially, I argue that a qualitatively-driven mixed methods approach using CGT, as described in this section, facilitates Tracy's (2010) criteria for rigorous qualitative, as well as mixed methods, research.

5.2.2 Collecting Archive Data

My data collection journey started in 2018 when I first visited the National Football Museum's archive in the Collections and Research Centre, aptly buried under the Town End stand at the Deepdale Stadium in Preston. My intention on my first visit was to find

the names of potential interviewees; however, as I will detail in this section, this exercise quickly became a method of data collection that would provide context for and supplement my interview data. My first challenge in finding information on women leaders in football was practically navigating rows and rows of seemingly disorganised boxes and books. Although curators at the museum were able to offer guidance on where I might be able to find information, there was no guarantee that I would find anything about women leaders at all. As Castan-Vicente, Nicolas, and Cervin (2019) contend, there are historiographical and epistemological issues with using archival materials as data sources. Notably, archives are not objective repositories of historical facts, nor are they absolute. They are reflections of what different archivists at various times considered worthy of record. Thus, if women are absent from the archives, it is not necessarily because they were not involved in football; it could be the case that archivists and football organisations that fund and house the archives considered women's involvement unworthy of documenting.

Despite these limitations, I was able to find useful data on women leaders in men's football by searching the archives' collection of football league handbooks. These handbooks are published at the beginning of each season and give details of each team in each league, including key personnel. The archive held handbooks from the early 1970s to the present day, so this felt like a good place to start finding the names of women leaders that I could interview. As archive materials cannot be removed from the centre, I spent two days going through all the handbooks and photographing each key personnel page.


QUEENS PARK RANGERS

Chairman – R.C. THOMPSON

Secretary – Miss. S.F. MARSON

Manager – G.C.J. FRANCIS

Club address and ground – Rangers Stadium, Shepherds Bush, London W12 7PA
Telephone No: 081-743 0262
Facsimile No: 081-749 0994

Marketing/Commercial Controller – Miss. L. DAVIE
Telephone No: 081-740 8737

Stadium Manager/Safety Officer – A. GIBSON
Telephone No: 081-743 0262

Community Scheme Officer – Miss J. SWIFT
Telephone No: 081-743 0262

Physiotherapist – B. MORRIS
Qualifications: B.A., M.A.

Groundsman – Sportsturf Maintenance

Colours – *First Choice* – Shirts: Blue and White Hoops, Shorts: White
Socks: White
Second Choice – Shirts: Red and Black Hoops
Shorts: Red or Black, Socks: Red or Black

Pitch Dimensions – Length: 112 Yards, Width: 72 Yards

Directors – R.C. THOMPSON, (Chairman), R.B. COPUS, M.A., A.C.A.,
A. ELLIS, P.D. ELLIS, A. INGHAM

Figure 3: Photograph of a page from the 1992/93 EFL Handbook taken March 2018.

Once I returned to my office, I searched each photograph to find women listed in a management position and added their details (name, position, organisation, year) to an excel spreadsheet. Identifying women was a somewhat simple task in that, in contrast to men, they were often demarcated by a title, i.e., ‘Miss’ or ‘Mrs’ (see Figure 3). This was perhaps the first indicator that women were an exception in football administration rather than a rule. Whilst recognising the limitations of using forenames to decipher gender, I relied on forenames to indicate gender in cases where titles were omitted. However, to

mitigate the risk of misgendering workers, I crosschecked Director and Secretary roles against Companies House listings, which include titles for all board members. In all other cases, I ran a Google search to learn the gender of workers, i.e., use of gender pronouns in online articles or social media pages.

Alongside football league handbooks and Companies House listings, I searched the staff pages of football club and governing body websites to find women currently working in leadership positions in men's professional football clubs and football governing bodies. I also searched the LinkedIn pages of football organisations for people listed as having worked there. Initially, this work was as an exercise to identify potential interviewees, but during a discussion with my supervisors, I realised that my now extensive list of potential interviewees was, in itself, a valuable data source. Over six months in 2018, I continued to search for women who had worked in football leadership, stopping once I had exhausted archive and online searches. This process resulted in a sample of 728 women who, between them, had worked in 835 leadership roles in men's professional club football and football governing bodies in England between the 1987/88 and 2017/18 football seasons.

When I started collecting data on women leaders, I believed, like most people, that Karren Brady was the first woman ever to hold a senior leadership role in men's football when she became the MD at Birmingham City in the 1992/93 season. Although I expected to find women who had worked as club secretaries before Brady's appointment – given that secretarial work has long been considered women's work (Truss, Alfes, Shantz & Rosewarne, 2013) – I was not expecting to find women who had worked as executives or directors. However, to my surprise, that is precisely what I found. My prior assumptions, albeit informed by the history books, about women's absence from leadership roles were already being challenged before I had even started the interviews.

Constructivist Grounded Theory, unlike traditional GT, encourages researchers to engage with prior theory and assumptions, to acknowledge that we are unable to detach ourselves from our existing knowledge or preconceptions about the phenomena we are researching (Charmaz, 2008c). Therefore, we should critically engage with our prior assumptions rather than attempt to 'bracket' them – a method of suspending prior assumptions in research (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Indeed, interrogating my assumptions about football and women leaders became an ongoing dialogue with my supervisors, peers, and myself. As I gathered more data on women's leadership roles in men's football, I came to question whether football even was "a man's world" – the working title of my thesis at the time – and whether my assumptions about women's marginal role in football were exaggerated. In making sense of the ostensible contradiction between my prior assumptions about women in football and my data, I turned to feminist theories of gender and organisations. Although I had already engaged with several theories prior to data collection, it was not until I read Joan Acker's work on gendered organisations that I had a frame of reference to interrogate the embedded, and often subtle, ways that organisations privilege men. Ultimately, engaging with new theories during and after data collection brought me to the conclusion that football is, indeed, a man's world. This process is CGT at work – adaptive, abductive, flexible, and informed by both data and theory simultaneously.

Taking cue from existing theories, I generated a set of descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel to explore patterns in the data. First, I organised all leadership roles into meaningful occupational areas. For example, some women were listed as hospitality managers while others were listed as events or conference managers. In reality, these roles are responsible for the same operational areas, so I merged these roles into one category – Hospitality, Events & Conferencing. This exercise resulted in thirty-four distinct occupational areas within which I categorised all leadership roles held by women. I then totalled the number

of leadership roles women held in each category and calculated the percentage of overall leadership roles for which these occupational areas accounted. I further ordered the occupations by number of leadership roles held by women and calculated the cumulative total of these categories (see Table 1). This procedure allowed me to see how many occupational categories accounted for the majority of leadership roles held by women.

ROLE	NUMBERS	%	CUM %
Commercial & Sales	129	15.4%	15.4%
Club Secretary	105	12.6%	28.0%
Ticketing	96	11.5%	39.5%
Finance & Accounts	72	8.6%	48.1%
Marketing	63	7.5%	55.7%
Disability Liaison	41	4.9%	60.6%
Communications, Public Relations & Media	36	4.3%	64.9%
Customer/Support Services	35	4.2%	69.1%
Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director	33	4.0%	73.1%
Human Resources	26	3.1%	76.2%
Community Projects	24	2.9%	79.0%
Inclusion & Equality	21	2.5%	81.6%
Business Development & Operations	19	2.3%	83.8%
Hospitality, Events & Conferencing	16	1.9%	85.7%
Retail & Merchandising	15	1.8%	87.5%
General Operations	14	1.7%	89.2%
Administration	12	1.4%	90.7%
General / Office Manager	12	1.4%	92.1%
Football Development	12	1.4%	93.5%
Facilities, Safety & Security	10	1.2%	94.7%
Legal & Governance	7	0.8%	95.6%
Safeguarding	5	0.6%	96.2%
Sport Science	5	0.6%	96.8%
Projects	5	0.6%	97.4%
Football Operations	4	0.5%	97.8%
Club Doctor/Head Physiotherapist	4	0.5%	98.3%
Academy/Youth & Education	4	0.5%	98.8%
Director Of Football	2	0.2%	99.0%
Chief Operating Officer	2	0.2%	99.3%
Club Relations	2	0.2%	99.5%
Games Programme Manager	2	0.2%	99.8%
Chief Coordinating Officer	1	0.1%	99.9%
Match Manager	1	0.1%	100.0%
TOTAL	**835**		

Table 1: Number and proportion of leadership roles held by women in football between 1987/88 and 2017/18

The data I collected on the proportion and type of leadership roles women have held in football is, to my knowledge, the only data that is available on women's leadership work in football in the 'new' football era. Therefore, it is an original and important source of data on women's historical role in football, which demonstrates the originality and significance of this doctoral research. However, the data is not directly comparable to men's roles in football. Because I initially collected information on women leaders to identify potential interviewees, I did not collect data on men's leadership roles in football. To have done so would have been an insurmountable task for one researcher within the limits of a 3-year PhD. Nonetheless, the data I collected tells us where women's leadership work has been concentrated and, as I will discuss in my findings, this tells a powerful story about the extremely gendered organisation of men's football.

5.2.3 Gender Pay Gap Reports

In 2017, employers in the UK with over 250 employees were, for the first time, legally required to report their Gender Pay Gap – the difference between the average earnings of women and men expressed relative to men's earnings (Government Equalities Office, 2020). When the first gender pay gap reports became publicly available in April 2018[7] – 7 months into my PhD – I was keen to see how men's football clubs fared. As I began to sift through the data, I once again realised that the reports offered a rich data source that could help me tell the story of women and leadership in men's football. Following a discussion with my supervisors, I decided to incorporate an analysis of GPG reports in my doctoral research.

[7] The snapshot date for the 2018 Gender Pay Gap publications was 5th April 2017.

I analysed the reports of all the forty-eight men's football clubs in England that were eligible to report their gender pay gap and the FA's gender pay gap report. I began by recording all the quantitative data in an Excel spreadsheet (see appendix 1), which included:

- Difference in pay between women and men calculated by mean hourly rate
- Difference in pay between women and men calculated by median hourly rate
- Percentage of women and men working in the organisation
- Percentage of women and men in the upper pay quartile
- Percentage of women and men awarded bonuses in the previous 12 months
- Mean difference in bonus pay awarded to women and men
- Median difference in bonus pay awarded to women and men

In addition, twenty-one clubs supplied voluntary data which included:

- Difference in pay between women and men calculated by mean hourly rate, *excluding* playing and coaching staff
- Difference in pay between women and men calculated by median hourly rate, *excluding* playing and coaching staff
- Percentage of women and men in the upper pay quartile, *excluding* playing and coaching staff
- Percentage of women and men awarded bonuses in the previous 12 months, *excluding* playing and coaching staff
- Mean difference in bonus pay awarded to women and men, *excluding* playing and coaching staff

- Median difference in bonus pay awarded to women and men, *excluding* playing and coaching staff

I then calculated the mean average gender pay gap in men's club football and the mean average gender pay gap by league. I also analysed the gender pay gap report of the FA but did not include its data to calculate these averages. As I will detail in the data analysis section, I also analysed the supporting statements provided by each club. Although these statements provide illuminating organisational explanations and rationales for the gender pay gap, to my knowledge, this research is first time analysis has been carried out of narrative data in GPG reports. This further demonstrates originality and innovation in this doctoral research.

5.2.4 Qualitative Biographic Interview Approach

Qualitatively driven research endeavours to develop a holistic and complex representation of the social world that considers the multiple contexts in which social phenomena are experienced (Creswell, 2009; Mason, 2002). Therefore, qualitative methods offer the most appropriate avenue for understanding *how* different women experience and interpret their experiences of working in leadership in the context of men's professional football. This approach relies on people's meanings, interpretations, and shared understandings as the primary source of data (Mason, 2002), yielding rich, detailed, and nuanced descriptions of social life. This 'thick description' (Geertz, 1993) is required to understand how and why women navigate leadership roles in the male domain of football in the ways that they do. Existing research of women working in male-dominated professions (Faulkner, 2009, 2011; Hatmaker, 2013), leadership (Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021; Mavin & Grandy, 2016b; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015), and sports leadership (Claringbould & Knoppers,

2008; Forbes, Edwards & Fleming, 2015; Pfister & Radkte, 2009) has made use of qualitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of women's experiences. These studies show that qualitative methods, such as interviewing, are most suitable for exploring how women *construct* their leadership stories in a male-dominated world.

In this study, I used biographic interviews as my primary qualitative data collection method. Biographic interviewing, sometimes referred to as life-history interviewing or oral history interviewing, "emphasizes the placement of the individual within a nexus of social connections, historical events, and life experiences (the life history)" (Miller, 2003, p. 5). Crucially, this method recognises that storytelling is an important feature of the human experience (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). As such, biographic interviews invite people to share personal stories about their past, specifically stories about a certain time, event, relationship, or juncture in their life (Bornat, 2012). For this doctoral research, I was interested in women's career stories; how they came to work in football and leadership; what their career path had been up to that point; and how they experienced and constructed different aspects of the football leadership world at different points in time (both within their career and historically). However, I must stress that biographic interviewing is not about constructing a chronological order to people's stories. The focus of biographic interviewing is on how people make sense of their life story and how they convey meaning in that story to others (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Thus, biographic interviewing tells us less about what happened and more about what it meant to people and how they made sense of it (Portelli, 1998).

As I argued in earlier in this chapter, I believe that there is no single 'truth' that we can discover as social researchers. Social research, for me, is about continuously building a better rather than complete understanding of the social world. Biographic interviewing

enables this endeavour by building a partial but meaningful and heterogenous picture of a particular phenomenon, time or event. While biographic interviews may overlap or converge on certain experiences, they represent a collection of stories rather than a single narrative. Biographic methods are also popular in feminist research because they allow people to tell their stories on their own terms. As Armitage and Gluck (2006) argue, as a critical feminist method, biographic interviewing is one of the best approaches to understanding women's consciousness and coping strategies, which is especially important for me in understanding how women experience and survive the extremely gendered world of football leadership. In practice, this means keeping questions open-ended and encouraging participants to tell stories, allowing those stories to unfold in the direction that the participants choose. Furthermore, biographic interviews help to situate women's stories and experiences historically, which is crucial for uncovering hidden or silenced narratives throughout history, such as women's involvement in football leadership.

However, I am critical of the suggestion that biographic interviewing gives voice to marginalised or silenced groups (Bornat, 2012). As Gluck and Patai (1991) warn, interviewees are not equal partners in the research process; once the interview ends, the power rests with the researcher to re-write women's stories. Again, this highlights the need for critical reflexivity in the research process. Indeed, I have battled throughout this research process to do justice to women's stories and faithfully recount their experiences, whilst also staying true to my feminist beliefs, i.e., being critical of the cultures and structures that these women are part of. At times, this criticality has felt like a betrayal of the trust that these women put in me. However, I am reminded by Patricia Hill Collins that it is not my job to tell other women's stories on their behalf, "each of us must learn to speak for herself" (Collins, 1990b, p. xiv). Indeed, there is a difference between the silence on women's stories in the history of football and women being silenced. The women I

interviewed, while part of a marginalised historical narrative, had the power and social privilege to speak for themselves. So, while I centre their stories in this thesis to help uncover a neglected area of scholarship, and remain mindful of my power as the researcher, I have endeavoured to move beyond a retelling of women's stories. In this sense, I critically engage with the contradictions in women's stories and consider the role that women leaders themselves play in the maintenance of problematic football cultures and structures.

5.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Although this doctoral research is considered low risk in terms of potential harm that it poses to participants and the researcher, it is vital to consider the ethics and practicalities of gaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and any potential risks in conducting the research. Moreover, feminist research ethics calls for an ethics of care and social justice (Preissle & Han, 2012). That is, ethical considerations should not just be guided by a prescribed institutional standard but should be guided by the needs and wants of the participants. So, while this doctoral research received ethical approval from Durham University's Ethics Committee on the 8th of May 2018 (see appendices 2), conversations about research ethics continued throughout the research process between myself, the research participants, and my supervisors.

During one conversation, my supervisors challenged me to think about my decision to include interview extracts related to first-hand experiences of racism. Given that so few Black women work in football leadership, the concern was that the anonymity of Black women in my sample could be compromised. Following this conversation, I contacted the interviewee and discussed these concerns with her. Despite the risks, she felt it was important for her to share her experiences and so we decided to include the extracts in

question. This experience forced me to reflect on my privileged position as a white woman and my responsibility to ensure the safety of my interviewees but to also ensure that their experiences of racism are not silenced because of rigid research ethics guidelines.

To gain informed consent, I first gave potential interviewees a participant information sheet (see appendices 3) that explained what the research was about and what their participation would involve. I also gave potential interviewees the opportunity to contact me via phone or email to discuss the research in more detail and address any concerns about taking part. This process ensured that potential interviewees were fully informed about the research process and their involvement. I gained formal consent at the beginning of each interview through a signed consent form (see appendices 4) in line with item 19 of the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2017). However, verbal consent was also sought and renegotiated throughout the interview and thereafter. As Mason (2002) argues, renegotiating consent is an important part of the research process as participants become more aware of what their consent means. In this regard, I made it clear that participants could withdraw their consent during the interview and request their withdrawal up to six months after their interview. Moreover, in encouraging participants to speak freely about their experiences, I made it clear that, upon their request, parts of their interview transcript could be removed, i.e., if a conversation pertained to another, potentially identifiable person or the participant felt that in hindsight the information they provided was too sensitive to be used in the research. This happened on several occasions during the interviews where women asked me not include certain conversations in the final transcript.

I also ensured that only I knew the participants' identities to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. After each interview, I uploaded a tape recording of the interview to a secure, password encrypted file and deleted the file from the audio recording device. I later

transcribed all interviews verbatim but removed any identifiable names and places from the transcript and used pseudonyms in place of participants' names[8]. I removed specific names of football organisations from the transcripts and replaced these with general terms such as 'Premier League Club', because distinguishing between women's experiences at different levels of football was important in the data analysis and writing-up stage. All data relating to the study has been stored securely on a password-protected computer. Paper documents, such as consent forms, have been locked in a filing cabinet and will be securely destroyed six-months after the completion of this thesis.

I took the following steps to negate any potential risks of harm or upset being caused to the participant or me. First, in acknowledging that topics, such as experiences of sexism and harassment, may cause upset, I made it clear that participants did not have to answer all or any of the questions if they felt unable or unwilling to do so. Moreover, as is common practice in biographic interviewing, the interview guide was open-ended and driven by the participants' storytelling. In this regard, participants were free to direct the interview in ways that they felt comfortable. Moreover, in travelling and conducting research on my own, I was particularly conscious of my own safety. Certainly, travelling alone as woman is unduly risky. Therefore, I ensured that my partner knew the time of each interview and I called them after the interview had finished. I also placed the name and contact details of the participant and location of the interview in a sealed envelope, only to be opened by my partner if they did not hear from me within a certain timeframe. Fortunately, my partner

[8] The only exception to this was Annie. Given the historical significance of Annie's role in football, I adapted the consent form to include an option to use identifiable information. As some biographical researchers argue, the use of real names is vital in uncovering the stories of those who have been marginalised and forgotten throughout history (Boyd, 2008; Newton, 2015). The University of Durham Ethics Committee accepted an adapted version of the consent form on 21 November 2018 (see appendices 4). No other participants agreed to have their real names published.

never needed to open these envelopes. I then securely destroyed the envelope when I returned home.

5.2.6 Sampling Methods and Procedure

I used purposive theoretical sampling and snowball sampling to choose potential interviewees for this doctoral research. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method whereby researchers use their judgement to select cases of a particular type (Blaikie, 2010). Theoretical sampling, which is purposive in its approach, is an important strategy in CGT for grounding data analysis and fleshing out new lines of enquiry (Charmaz, 2008c). As Clarke argues, "[t]houghtful theoretical sampling strategies can be used to pursue particular aspects of situatedness, difference(s), and variations" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxxiv). In practice, this involves seeking new data sources to refine data analysis categories or address gaps in the data. This process helps the researcher "think systematically" through the design of research, "especially decisions regarding future data to collect" (Clarke & Friese, 2007, p. 372). For this reason, data analysis and sampling in CGT are simultaneous. However, early purposive sampling is based on initial hunches and engagement with existing theory. Snowball sampling is also a non-probability sampling method, but unlike purposive and theoretical sampling, it is driven by recommendations from existing participants. My use of snowball sampling was purely pragmatic given the difficulties in sampling from a small and notoriously guarded (Parnell *et al.*, 2021) population of football leaders.

My early purposive sampling strategy aimed to cover a range of experiences between the top four leagues of men's football and across the three decades that have spanned the new football era (1990's to the 2010's). I used my list of women leaders gathered via archival

research as a sample frame for this task. Initially, I focussed on contacting women who were still active in football, given the relative ease in finding their contact details via staff directories and football League Handbooks. I contacted these women by their work email and also posted a written invitation to their workplace (see appendices 5). I also put out a call for interviewees via the Women in Football (WIF) network who were project partners in the early stages of my doctoral research. I also gave WIF a brief list of women to match against their membership list and contact directly with information about my research.

However, I became conscious that having an intermediary party involved in contacting potential interviewees could compromise the promise of anonymity. I also worried that the organisation was starting to show undue interest in and influence over who I should and should not interview. Therefore, with the backing of my supervisors, I decided to cut my ties with the organisation. Accessing research participants and fields through gatekeepers in social research is often complex, although rarely theorised (Crowhurst, 2013). As researchers, we often require access to a population that only a gatekeeper can provide, but this method of access involves a negotiation of trust and power between the researcher and the gatekeeper whereby the gatekeeper is able to control the researchers' access to the field of study. As such, Crowhurst (2013) argues that we should view gatekeepers as active participants who are embedded, participating in, and influencing relations of power. Cutting ties with an organisation that could help me gain access to research participants was risky, but I felt strongly that their continued involvement compromised the integrity of my research. In hindsight, distancing myself from the organisation perhaps helped me to secure future interviews. That is, several women I interviewed were wary of the organisation's agenda and so would have been unlikely to speak with me if I had continued to partner with them. This experience highlights the significance of gatekeepers in social research and the need for careful and early reflections on our methods of access.

In the absence of a gatekeeper, I continued to contact women who worked in football via email and letter. I also contacted three women via recommendations from women I had interviewed (snowball sampling). I also searched for and contacted potential interviewees on LinkedIn – a professional networking site. Not only did this help me to make direct contact with women who had a public profile, but it also helped me to track down women who were no longer working in football. These women were an important sub-sample because they not only had experiences of working in football before and in the early days of the new football era, but they were likely to be more candid about their experiences given that they no longer worked in football. However, I would later learn that some women had signed legal contracts not to speak publicly about their former employers. While some of these women were still happy to take part, the negative consequences that taking part in my research could have caused if their identities were revealed further underscored the need for me to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

In the preliminary stages of data analysis, I noticed several gaps in the data. Notably, experiences of working in the lowest professional league (League 2) and experiences of working in football operations and development, i.e., roles with direct everyday contact with male players. That is, my first set of interviewees all felt that lower league football and what they termed 'football facing" roles had distinct cultures that made it more challenging for women to work in. As such, I contacted women who had experience of working in League 2 and or football facing roles (theoretical sampling). It was especially challenging to find women who had worked in football facing roles; however, through a targeted recruitment strategy I secured interviews with women who met the criteria. As I continued with data analysis and recruitment, I was also keen to address the lack of racial diversity in my sample. So, once again, I adapted my recruitment strategy to target Black

and Asian women working in football by searching articles on the Kick It Out website – an organisation dedicated to improving equality and diversity in football.

In total, I contacted 105 women who had worked in the leadership and governance of men's football. I received twenty-seven initial replies and a further eighteen replies after I sent a follow-up email. Although nine women who responded declined to take part on the grounds that they were too busy, thirty-six women agreed to take part in my research. However, twelve of these women either cancelled their planned interview or did not respond to my request for a suitable interview date. Dropouts are to be expected in any kind of research, especially when participants are asked to give up a substantial amount of their time. As such, I was unsurprised that so many women, many of whom had hectic and high-profile jobs, dropped out of the study.

Pseudonym	Age	Highest Position Held	Most Recent Football Organisation	Highest/Lowest League (if different from most recent)	No. of football organisations worked for	Line Management Responsibilities	Years active in football (present = active at interview)	Length of Tenure
Alex	46	Executive Director	Championship Club	Premier League	2	yes	2008 - Present	10 years
Alyssa	50	Non-Executive Director	Governing Body		2	n/a	2013 - Present	6 years
Amanda	36	Executive Director	League 2 Club		1	yes	2011 - Present	7 years
Anna	34	Executive Director	Championship Club	League 1	2	yes	2014 - Present	4 years
Claire	38	Executive Officer	League 1 Club		2	yes	2011 - Present	7 years
Elaine	58	Head of Department	League 1 Club	Championship/League 2	1	yes	1998 - 2015	17 years
Fran	70	Executive Officer	Governing Body		1	yes	2016 - Present	3 years
Gemma	30	Head of Department	Premier League Club		1	no	2015 - Present	4 years
Harriet	48	Head of Department	Premier League Club	League 1	2	yes	1997 - Present	21 years
Helen	n/d	Executive Officer	Championship Club	Premier League	1	yes	2000 - 2017	17 years
Jayne	61	Executive Officer	League 1 Club	Championship/non-league	1	yes	1988 - 2009	21 years
Laura	48	Executive Officer	Governing Body		1	yes	2016 - Present	3 years
Leslie	38	Head of Department	League 2 Club	League 1	1	yes	2017 - Present	2 years
Lisa	51	Executive Director	Premier League Club		1	yes	2011 - Present	7 years
Louise	50	Executive Officer	Governing Body		1	yes	1998 - Present	20 years
Annie	75	Chief Executive Officer	Non-league club	Championship	5	yes	1985 - 2003	18 years
Megan	37	Head of Department	Governing Body		1	yes	2018 - Present	6 months
Melinda	44	Non-Executive Director	Premier League Club		1	n/a	2016 - Present	2 years
Mia	29	Executive Officer	Championship Club	League 1	2	yes	2014 - Present	5 years
Nicola	44	Executive Director	Premier League Club	Championship	2	yes	2009 - Present	10 years
Sophie	50	Head of Department	Premier League Club		2	yes	2008 - Present	10 years
Tracey	53	Head of Department	Premier League Club		2	yes	2001 - 2016	15 years
Yasmin	44	Executive Director	Championship Club	Non-league	1	yes	1997 - Present	21 years

Figure 4: Interview Participant Details

I interviewed a total of twenty-three women for this doctoral research (see Figure 4). I collected demographic data at the end of each interview via an optional demographic survey (see appendices 6). Interviewees were aged 30-75 (*M*=47 years). All self-identified as women and identified with the gender they were assigned at birth. Eighteen were active in football during the time of the interviews, and tenures ranged from 6 months to 21 years (*M*=10 years). Fourteen held paid executive positions in men's professional club football or football governing bodies, two held voluntary non-executive roles, and seven held paid head of department positions. All but one of the women who worked in a paid position had line management responsibilities. Occupational areas included: commercial services (n=2), communications (n=2), marketing (n=2), operations (n=3), finance (n-1), football operations (n=2), football development (n=1), football performance (n=1), ticketing (n=1), supporter services (n=1), human resources (n=1) and Chief Executive Officer (n=4). Because most men's professional clubs and football governing bodies are responsible for women's teams, some women worked across both the men's and women's games. However, only one respondent had sole responsibility for women's football.

Seventeen women held a degree or higher degree and seven women held professional qualifications. Seventeen women were married, civil partnered, or cohabiting, and ten women had children at the time of the study. Twenty women identified as heterosexual, and three women identified as gay/lesbian. Twenty respondents identified as white British, two identified as Black British/African, and one identified as white but not British (I have chosen not to reveal the nationality of this participant as this would risk identifying them). Although white British women represent the majority of participants in this research, this broadly represented the racial demographics of women leaders in football at the time (Bradbury, Van Sterkenburg & Mignon, 2014).

Although my sample represented a cross-section of women leaders working in football leadership, one of the often-noted limitations of non-probability sampling methods in qualitative research is that data from these samples cannot be used in population estimates (Blaikie, 2010). In this regard, many believe that generalisation is not possible in qualitative research (Blaikie, 2010). While some view this as a limitation of qualitative research, others have argued that generalisability is not the purpose of qualitative research (Denzin, 1983). That is, qualitative research aims to develop a rich understanding of social life that can still be useful to the population, even if it is not generalisable (Blaikie, 2010). However, I take the view along with Smith (2018) that the problem with the perceived lack of generalisability in qualitative research is that generalisability is predominantly understood in terms of statistical-probabilistic generalisability. If we view generalisability in terms that make sense to qualitative research rather than quantitative research, qualitative research can and should endeavour to be generalisable.

Generalisability in qualitative research is possible through transferable findings (Smith, 2018; Tracy, 2010). That is, "readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). Throughout this thesis, I draw comparisons with different sporting contexts and male-dominated professions to aid the transferability of my findings. Moreover, generalisability is possible in qualitative research through theoretical generalisation (Smith, 2018), whereby the researcher develops social theories that can be applied in other contexts. Indeed, as a methodology for theory development, CGT facilitates this type of generalisability. In later sections of this chapter, I will explain how I developed theories that could be used in other sporting and male-dominated contexts.

5.2.7 Interview Procedure

In CGT, interview questions start with initial hunches and sensitising concepts based on prior engagement with existing literature theory (Charmaz, 2006). As such, my initial interview guide included questions based on my assumptions about women's experiences. However, as is the case in biographic interviewing, I also ensured that questions were open-ended and facilitated storytelling (Bornat, 2012). So, initially, I asked the following questions with prompts:

1. Tell me about your current/last role at the football club/organisation?
2. What do/did you do on a typical day?
3. What are/were your main responsibilities?
4. Tell me about your journey into football leadership?
5. What were the key moments or decisions that led you to this role/your most senior role in football?
6. What do you remember about your first day working in football, and how did it feel?
7. How old were you at the time?
8. Do you have a different perception of that experience now looking back?
9. How do/did you feel about being a woman in a male-dominated workplace?
10. What is your experience of being the only or one of the only women in the room, i.e., in meetings?
11. Do/did you feel that there are/were any expectations on you to behave a certain way in this environment?
12. How do/did you experience being in a senior position as a woman in football?
13. Have you experienced any barriers to success while working in football leadership?
14. What does success mean to you?

15. How do you make sense of gender inequalities in football leadership?
16. What does it mean for you, as a woman, to work/have worked in a senior role in football where women are in the minority?
17. How do/have you balance/d your career with other responsibilities or activities outside of work?
18. What happens/happened if you need/ed to leave work early or take some time off?
19. (if applicable) what was your experience of leaving football?
20. What led you to make that change?
21. How did you feel about leaving football?

In line with constructivist grounded theory, I changed and adapted my interview guide as I learnt more about women's experiences and identified areas for theoretical development. Some initial lines of inquiry, guided by my previous engagement with existing literature and theory, proved fruitless. For example, I quickly realised that despite being one of the only women in a senior leadership role in their organisations, women often worked with other women on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, asking women how they felt about working in male-dominated environment – a prior assumption of mine – was often met with confusion or resistance. As such, I adapted to the interview questions to ask, "are there ever any times when you are the only woman in the room and if so, what is that experience like?" This question proved far more illuminating than the first in that it revealed specific places where women were in the minority, e.g., at the training ground or in the boardroom. These areas became significant sites of analysis.

Furthermore, although biographic interviewing is concerned with the meaning of events rather than their chronology, when asked about their career histories, most women presented a well-ordered, chronological narrative of their journey into football leadership. Similarly, Brown and

Kelan (2020) found that elite women leaders presented a neat and 'well-rehearsed' career history. The authors argue that this neatness could be the product of impression management, which is vital to women's leadership careers. They also argue that neatness suggests that women's career narratives are repeated and practised. Indeed, given the growing interest in women leaders, especially women leaders in sport, several women had prior experience being interviewed about their position as a woman in football. That said, most of these interviews were for media purposes, where women's identities were made public. Given the assurance of anonymity, I had an opportunity to dig deeper than these media interviews. As such, as the interviews progressed, I moved away from asking about women's career journeys, focussing more on specific career events and transitions, i.e., women's experiences of applying or getting a promotion.

Moreover, ongoing conversations with my supervisors encouraged me to think about facilitators of success. Again, based on existing literature, I had assumed that women would have come up against significant barriers to leadership. However, I learned that women's experiences of accessing leadership were shaped by people and life circumstances that *enabled* success. Thus, I once again adapted my interview guide to ask, "who has supported you the most in your journey to football leadership" and "how do you make-sense of your success as a woman?" The answers to these questions yielded a rich source of data on privilege and gendered expectations of the ideal worker.

One topic that became increasingly salient to my research was motherhood. Although I had always planned to ask women about their work/life balance, I had not planned to focus on specific parenting experiences or choosing whether or not to have children. Yet, every woman I interviewed, regardless of whether they had children or not, spoke about the impact of motherhood on women's careers in football. When I started conducting this research, I was

childfree. Perhaps my childfree position influenced my lack of direct questioning about motherhood in my early interviews. However, three years into my PhD I became a mother, and my world changed. Subsequently, my approach to my research changed.

Although I had completed data collection at this point, I was still deep in the data analysis process. Suddenly, the narratives concerning women's experiences of pregnancy, maternity, and childcare took on a new meaning for me. When Harriet told me in her interview that she felt unable to leave work to be with her son when he fell over in the playground and hurt himself quite badly, I felt sympathy for her. But when I reread that interview back as a mother, I instinctively put myself in her position, imagining what I would have felt if it were my child who had hurt themselves. I realised that had I have had children when I conducted the interviews, I would have asked different questions and in different ways. This reflection served as an important reminder that my position as a researcher matters. As Oakley (1981, p. 55), herself a mother, reflected after interviewing women on their transitions to motherhood, "[w]here both share the same gender socialisation and critical life-experiences, social distance can be minimal".

One of the benefits of doing research with a community to which you belong or that you have experience of, i.e., being a woman in football, can help generate good research relationships and facilitate open communication through shared understandings (Gorman-Murray, Johnston & Waitt, 2016). However, Lepowsky (2012, p. 72) argues that an assumption of a shared identity or experience with our participants is a "self-delusion." Instead, my identity as a woman granted me what Nash (2016) refers to as a 'tenuous' insider status. This tenuous insider status acknowledges that I may share certain experiences unique to women, but that our differences across race, class, and sexuality undermine and destabilise assumptions of

sameness. I learned this lesson when I entered the boardroom with one of my research participants.

Strictly speaking, my research was not an ethnography; however, during my 12 months of fieldwork, I spent a significant amount of time in and around football clubs. Occasionally an interview would take place in an empty boardroom, but, for the most part, I was kept away from the real comings and goings of the club. The only exception was when an interviewee invited me to attend a home match as her guest. The bulk of our interview took place in her office but given that it was a match-day, and she was short of time, she said I could sit with her in the boardroom and ask her more questions. This was perhaps the only time that I could see, for myself, what is what like for women in these spaces. Yes, I had been to plenty of football matches as a fan, but I had never been in the boardroom or the director's box on match-day, and it was a completely distinct experience.

The boardroom is a space where the macho world of business and the hyper-masculinity of men's football collide. In this space, talk was not just about the match and the performance of players – a topic I was familiar with – it was about money. The money talk, more so than my gender, made me feel completely out of place. While I shared the experience of being a woman with my interviewee, I was bewildered by her lifestyle as an 'elite' leader. At one point, the woman I was interviewing mentioned that she had just bought a new car. I naively asked her what it was, expecting her to say something vaguely familiar. When she explained it was custom Rolls Royce I was taken aback. I realised that while we were both women in this male-dominated space, our similarities began and ended there.

Football business is an elite environment, and while not every woman I interviewed could be described as elite or wealthy, they were often mixing in environments that were. Indeed, most

of my fieldwork encounters took place in corporate boardrooms, fancy hotel lobbies, and leafy London suburbs (where some of my interviewees lived). These elite and wealthy environments were beyond my realm of experience. As welcome as the women made me feel in their world, I was uncomfortable in my bones. As Bourdieu would say, this was not my 'field'. I toned down my Yorkshire accent and wore uncharacteristically smart clothes. I knew that impression management was important if these women were going to trust me with their stories. So, I tried to fit in.

In practice, I found myself moving in and out of insider status throughout the interviews. When women recalled experiences of men talking down to them, I nodded along with empathy. Often, they would say things like, "you know what it's like," and as a woman I knew, implicitly, what they were describing. That said, sharing an experience as a woman was not always useful in that, in these moments, I would sometimes neglect to probe further. To ask, "what is it like?" That said, on the whole, I found it useful to share those experiences as a tenuous insider. I felt trusted, as a fellow woman, with their stories. However, as a relatively young student (young in comparison to most of my interviewees), with no experience of corporate business or leadership, I was also an outsider, naïve to the world in which these women lived and worked. Because of this, I perhaps missed opportunities to question the intricate dynamics of football business. That said, my focus in this research was on gender rather than business management. In this sense, my being a woman in this space certainly shaped my line of questioning and helped me to build rapport with my interviewees.

5.3 Data Analysis

In CGT, data collection and data analysis are simultaneous and iterative processes. Therefore, data analysis should start early to inform the sampling procedure and evolving lines of enquiry.

The data analysis process in CGT consists of two phases: *initial* (open) coding and *focussed* (selective) coding (Thorberg & Charmaz, 2014). *Initial* coding involves line by line, paragraph by paragraph, or incident by incident labelling of the data. This labelling produces multiple codes that are subsequently developed, merged, or modified as more data are analysed and compared. Coding at this stage is simple but precise and remains open to interpreting what is happening in the data rather than forcing data into preconceived concepts (Thorberg & Charmaz, 2014). This "grounds" the researcher in the data and opens up unforeseen avenues of enquiry (Charmaz, 2006, p. 82). In practice, the use of in vivo codes – codes created from participants' language – helps with this grounding. Focussed codes "pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48) and involves sifting through and choosing initial codes that make the most analytic sense to categorise based on our research questions. *Focussed* coding involves constant comparison (Thorberg & Charmaz, 2014) of data with data, and codes with data, to refine analytic categories to give the best grasp of what is happening in the data. As Charmaz (2006, p. 3) argues, "analytic categories and the relationships we draw between them provide a conceptual handle on the studied experience".

Memos are also an essential part of data analysis in constructivist grounded theory. They "provide ways to compare data, to explore ideas about the codes, and to direct further data-gathering" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 12). Crucially, memos encourage the researcher to analyse data in the early stages. These memos are later fleshed out with more data and links to literature and theory. Thus, memos are the building blocks for writing up research findings. Although CGT offers general guidelines for data analysis, there are supplementary approaches for turning data into codes, such as Situational Analysis (see Figure 5 for data analysis process using SA).

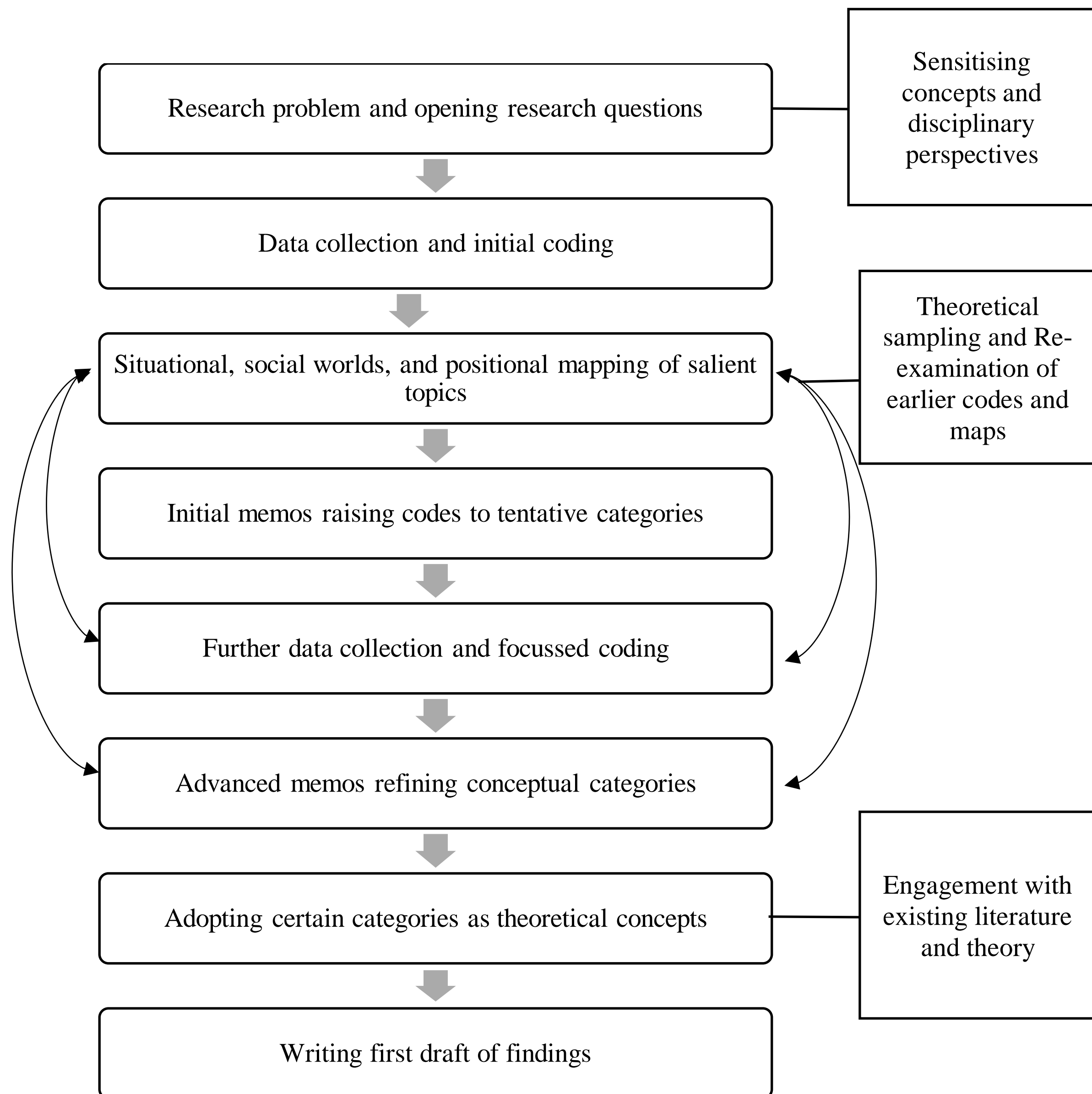


Figure 5: Data analysis in CGT process using Situational Analysis (adapted from Charmaz (2006) 'the grounded theory process')

Situational Analysis is a useful addition to the coding process in that it provides an analytical tool for 'opening up' the data (Clarke, 2005), an essential component of initial coding in CGT. It achieves this by mapping codes around different situations, social worlds, and subject positions in the data. *Situational maps* "lay out the major human, nonhuman, discursive and other elements in the research situation of enquiry and provokes analysis of the relations between them" (Clarke, 2005: xxii). *Social worlds* maps, developed from Strauss' concept of social worlds/arenas (Strauss, 1982), cartographically charts and analyses data at the meso-

level. This mapping is particularly useful when researching social groups, companies, and organisations, i.e., football clubs. *Positional maps* plot the various positions each actor takes on pertinent and controversial issues, and notes positions not articulated in the data. Maps can be hand-drawn or computer-aided, but the key is to enable them to change, grow or refine as you add more data and analyse more deeply.

These maps are intentionally ‘messy’ (Clarke, 2005). Rather than aiming for simplicity and order, as traditional GT can push researchers towards, messy maps force the researcher to engage with the partiality, uncertainty, and complexity that characterises the postmodern world. Clarke (2005, p. 95) also argues that “too much order provokes premature closure, a particular hazard with grounded theory.” Instead, regularly “adding, deleting, rearranging” your maps can be “analytically useful” (ibid). Where situational mapping and CGT unite most effectively is in what Clarke (2005, p. 85) calls the “radical” idea that “[r]esearchers should use their own experiences of doing the research as data for making these maps.” The idea is to bring the researcher’s prior knowledge, experience, and assumptions to the mapping exercises so they can be addressed in terms of their “utility, partiality, theoretical sampling, and other criteria” (Clarke, 2005, p. 85). As a sociologist, a white middle-class woman, a feminist, and a football fan, I have multiple positions, views, identities and assumptions on and about the field of study. Mapping encourages researchers to be upfront about these in the maps; to acknowledge our positions and how they influence the data analysis process. Positional mapping lends itself the most to this endeavour. Placing my subject positions on the map and relating these to discourse on that topic allows me to visualise how my position influences what is said and not said, and how I interpret what this means.

Situational Analysis is, by definition, a messy process. However, order is often desired or is the end goal for data analysis procedures with traditional GT being a notable example.

However, allowing for complexity and uncertainty presents a more true-to-life interpretation of the data. That is, life is messy and complex. Although CGT aims to generate theory, it accepts that "generalizations are partial, conditional and situated in time, space, positions, action, and interactions" (Charmaz, 2008c, p. 470). That said, we still must create some kind of order out of the mess to present our findings. One method of finding order in the chaos is to create a project map that brings together the main components of each situational, social worlds, and positional map. These are not maps used to interrogate the data; they are used to order or group analytical constructions into different categories or present them chronologically, whichever is most logical. Crucially, the process of creating, re-creating, changing, refining, and grouping the maps is analytical work that, through repetition, can help to construct a comprehensible, albeit partial and complex, narrative from the data.

5.3.1 Data Analysis Procedure

The data-analysis procedure described in this section refers to both the analysis of interview transcripts and GPG supporting statements. The main difference between the two procedures is that I did not use theoretical sampling to support data analysis of GPG reports because I already had access to the full data set. In this sense, analysis of GPG reports was a shorter process than analysing interview data. While I refer to the analysis of both datasets in this section, I analysed them as separate datasets.

Following each interview, I transcribed the audio recording verbatim and uploaded the transcripts to NVivo 12 – computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software. I also uploaded GPG reports to a separate NVivo file. The use of computer-assisted software to analyse qualitative data is subject to debate in social research, with some believing that it creates too much distance between the researcher and the data (Silverman, 2013). However,

when analysing large amounts of data, NVivo brings me closer to the data than pen and paper, which I find leads to a disorganisation of ideas. Indeed, one of the drawbacks of SA is that it can be a chaotic process. However, using NVivo helped me to order and easily access my codes and maps without getting lost in piles of paper and sticky notes. I also found the built-in memo and mapping features invaluable in conducting situational analysis using CGT. Although I find CAQDAS useful, I strongly feel that it should not be used to quantify qualitative data, i.e., to search how many times a topic is mentioned. This is not the purpose of qualitative research, and as such, I avoided using features, such as word frequencies, that encourage quantification.

The first stage of coding – initial (open) coding – involved breaking up the data, line by line, labelling topics of discourse, actors, organisations, values, attitudes, spatial elements, subject positions, and non-human elements. I did this using the nodes feature in NVivo 12 to label sections of interview transcripts, and GPG reports. I began open coding after five interviews, following the CGT practice of coding early. After each initial coding session, I merged similar labels; for example, the *buzz of football* was merged into *excitement of working in football* as I decided that these two labels were ontologically similar. Then I reread each transcript and GPG report to see if later labels could apply. This process allowed me to build up a stock of references on a particular label or to note where labels were unique to a particular case. This iterative approach helped me to modify and refine each label as I collected and analysed more data.

Then, adhering to a situational analysis strategy, I placed open codes onto a situational 'messy' map (see Figure 6). Here, I placed topics of discourse, actors, organisations, values, sociocultural elements, spatial elements, and non-human elements onto a map using the conceptual maps feature in NVivo 12. Using a type of relationship analysis in situational mapping, I then drew lines between related codes on the map. This method made it easier to

visualise patterns, connections, and hubs of activity in the data, “provoking” me “to analyze more deeply” (Clarke, 2005, p. 83). In later versions, I began to label these connections and note similarities and contradictions (see Figure 7).

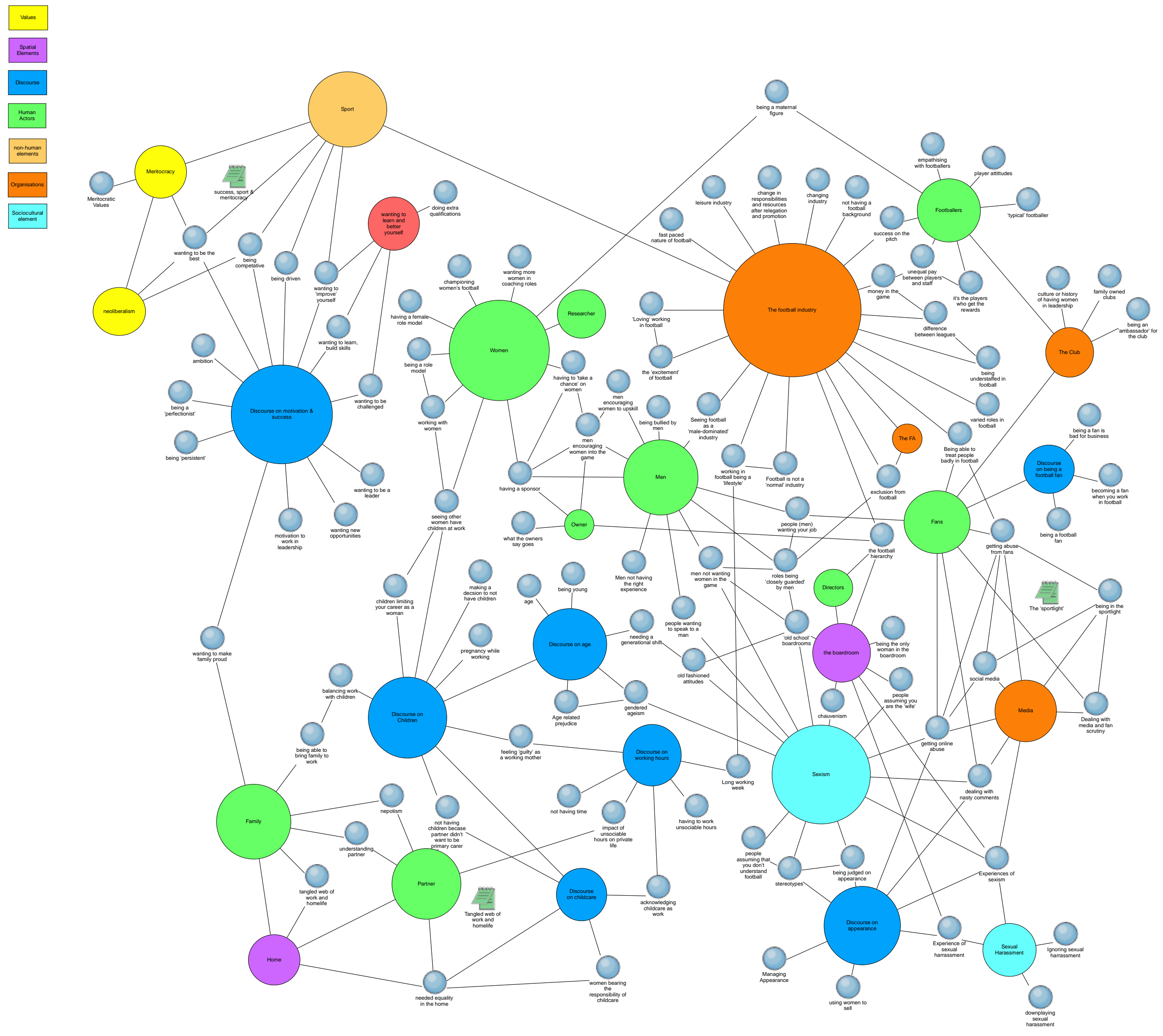


Figure 6: Situational 'messy' map after 5 interviews

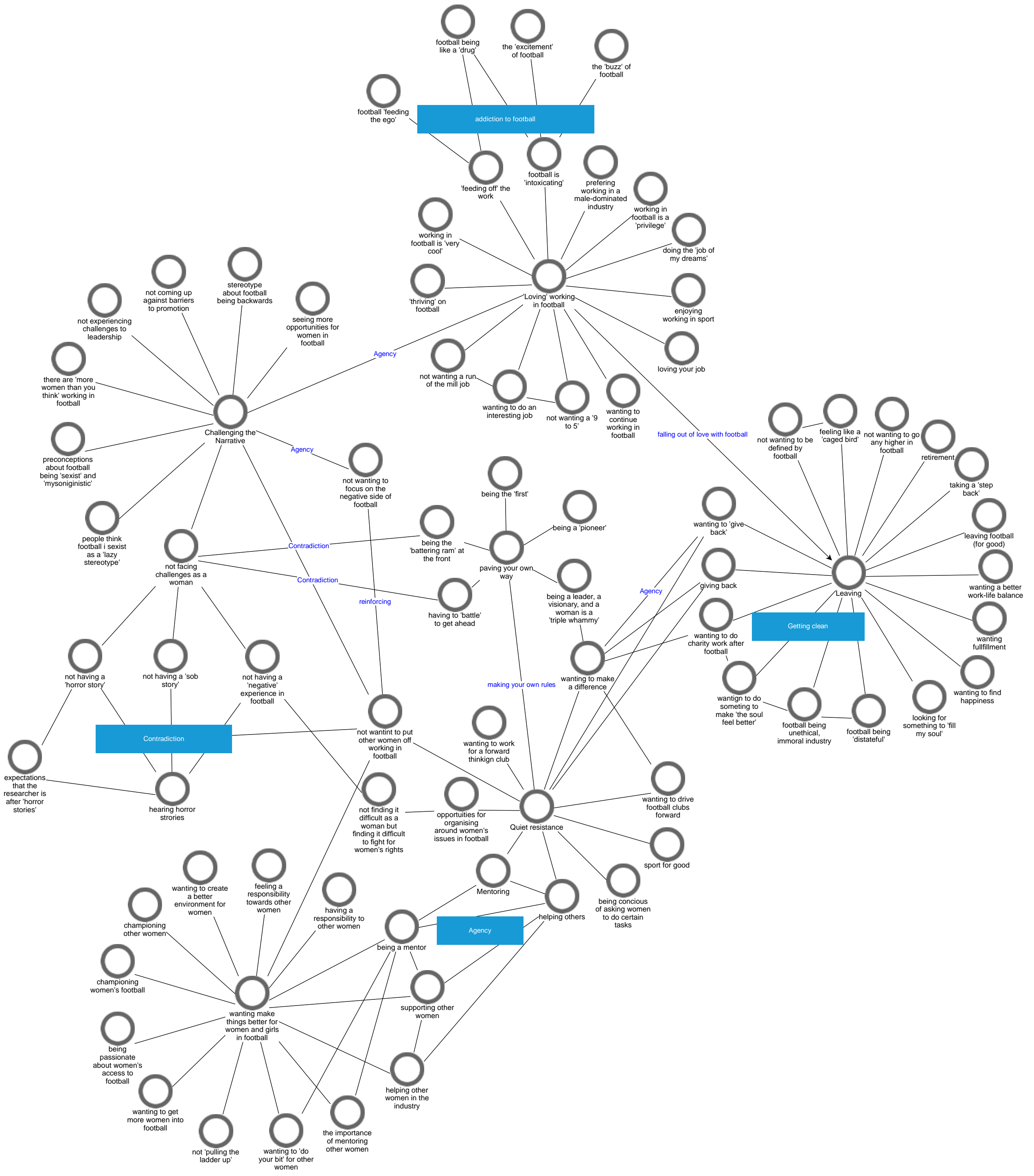


Figure 7: Situational 'Relationship' Map

After each mapping exercise, I wrote a series of memos based on interesting or surprising connections or what I saw as hubs of activity. For example, one hub of activity was around family life and working hours. I memoed this as *'tangled web' of work and home life* – an in vivo code – to keep the process of analytical abstraction as close to the women's language, meanings, and experiences as possible. I also created smaller situational maps for different events and topics relating to the research questions. For example, I created a situational map of women's dialogue around their entry into football to map key actors in and discursive constructions of their career journey into football leadership. This made it possible to visualise the messy and complex web of connections between senior actors in football and women's transition into football leadership. I assigned an in vivo code, *it's not what you know, it's who you know*, as a tentative category to explain these connections. From the mapping exercises, I refined and focused my codes, returning to existing literature and theory to adopt certain codes as theoretical concepts. In line with CGT, some of these were pre-existing concepts, others I developed from the data.

Clarke (2005) also encourages researchers to pay attention to the silences, to what is not articulated in the dialogue. As such, I did not just focus on these hubs of activity to generate memos; I spent time looking at the map and paying attention to each connection, in turn, exploring the references to each label and then moving labels in proximity to related elements. As Clarke says, "[s]imply staring at the situational map, revising it via collapsing and expanding categories/items, adding, and deleting, is analytically very provocative" (2005, p. 89). By doing this, I made surprising links between seemingly unrelated points on the map. For example, women's discourse around sexism, chauvinism, and experiences of sexual harassment seemed to gather around the spatial element of the training ground. Whilst this

connection was not always explicitly articulated by the women, mapping allowed me to make the connection visible, thus articulable.

Discussions of race were also notably missing in women's constructions of success. On reflection, this silence was partly the result of me not asking about racialised experiences. White women, including myself, tend not to see ourselves as racialised and may not make sense of our experiences as being the result of whiteness. As such, my failure to ask direct questions about race reflected my racial privilege. Yet, the silence on race was a notable finding and something I became increasingly sensitised to as I engaged with Black feminist literature. What I did not ask and what was not said or written about tells a powerful story about race and gender in football and in society. In redressing this silence, I refer to existing literature and data on racial inequalities in football and sport throughout my finding's chapters.

As I progressed with data collection and analysis, it also became clear that my initial research questions no longer aligned with the data or my developing theoretical ideas. For example, I had not originally considered the role of agency in women's choices to work in, challenge, or leave football. My pre-conceptions of the football workplace, influenced by existing literature, the media, and my own experiences as football fan, were that it was a sexist environment that limited women's choices and forced them to leave. However, my data suggested that women enacted a great deal of agency in their football careers and that their experiences were not wholly characterised by barriers and discrimination. To reconcile the difference between my initial pre-conceptions and the data, I turned to the theory of tempered radicalism and the concept of the kaleidoscope career model. These concepts provided a framework to understand how women enact agency within the limits of an extremely gendered regime. This line of enquiry, previously unplanned, became an essential chapter in the story of women's football leadership and so, I adapted my research questions accordingly. Again, this demonstrates how

constant engagement with theory and pre-conceptions, as encourage by CGT and SA, can open new avenues of discovery during the research process. In the following section, I describe how I built new theoretical concepts and developed existing theories using CGT and SA.

5.3.2 Theory Development

Following the CGT practice of engaging with existing theoretical concepts prior to and during data collection, I produced an early theoretical framework to guide my initial research questions and lines of enquiry. Guided by existing sociological studies of gender and sport, this early framework drew heavily on Connell's theory of gender regimes and the concept of hegemonic masculinity. However, as I began to collect and analyse archival data on the types of roles women have held in football leadership, I began to engage more with existing research on gender inequalities in organisations beyond sport to explain the patterns of occupational gender segregation I was seeing in the data.

This exploration of existing research on gender and organisations inevitably brought Acker's theory of gendered organisations to my attention. In this theory, I found a compelling explanation for gender segregation in organisations, not just hierarchical gender segregation, but gender segregation across jobs at the same level. However, the patterns of occupational segregation in football were, to my mind, far more severe than Acker's theory could fully account. Additionally, as I began to collect and analyse interview data, it became apparent that patterns of women's inclusion and exclusion in football were very much dictated by the distinct character of football as a bastion of hegemonic masculinity. For example, some of my initial and in vivo codes that described what was happening in the data included: 'women being excluded from "football facing" roles, 'football facing roles being a "blokes world"', 'being told you can't work in the "technical side" of football', 'women being a "threat" to men's

football'. So, while I was still very much compelled by Acker's explanations of gender inequalities in the corporate world, I felt that it could not fully account for the role of football in preserving male dominance and idealised masculinity.

I began searching for studies that used the theory of gendered organisations in distinctly male-dominated contexts. It was this search that led me to Sasson-Levy's work on the Israeli military as an 'extremely gendered' organisation. Here, I found a theoretical framework that incorporated both Acker's concept of organisations and jobs as gendered but that also accounted for the role that certain organisations play in the maintenance and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. In reading Sasson-Levy's work, I found myself replacing the word 'military' and 'combat roles' with 'football' and 'football facing roles.' Yet, Sasson-Levy (2011) regards the military, specifically combat roles in the military, as a 'unique' example of an extremely gendered arena. Nonetheless, I felt that football was an extreme case and so began to develop Sasson-Levy's theory to account for the football context.

Initially, this theory development centred very much on the concept of football facing roles, i.e., player, coaching, and football development roles, as unique definers of hegemonic masculinity. However, by focussing on unique 'football' roles, I realised that this approach was as equally limiting as Sasson-Levy's theory. That is, it could not be readily applied to other extremely gendered contexts. So, using situational mapping, I began to analyse more deeply the function and place of football facing roles within the wider organisational context. As Figure 8 shows, this mapping allowed me to visualise roles in the football club in terms of their proximity to footballers and football matches. This mapping led me to develop the concept of *core* and *peripheral* roles within the context of extremely gendered organisations. Crucially, this development enables 'theoretical transferability' (Smith, 2018) of findings so that others may apply these concepts to different organisational contexts.

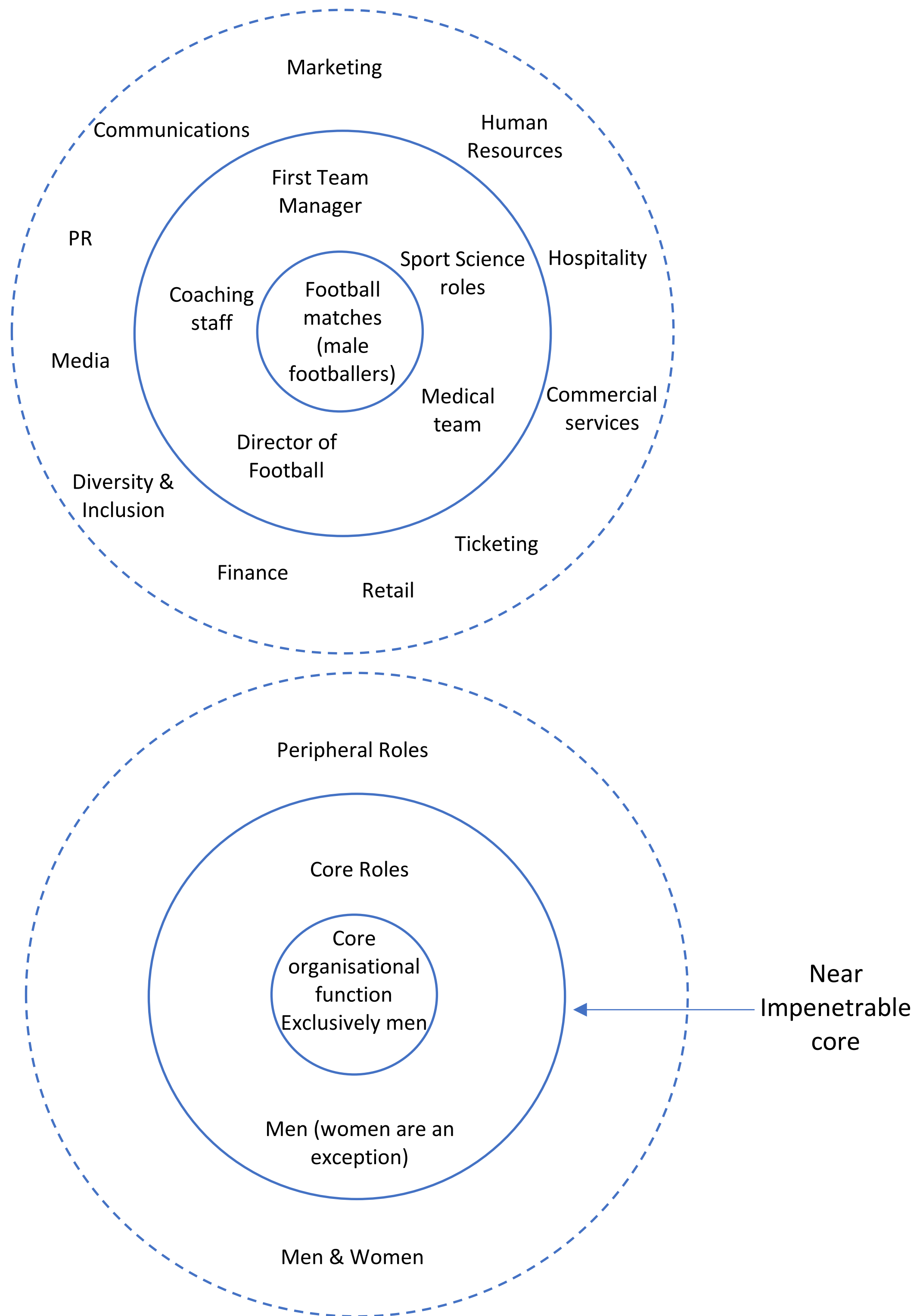


Figure 8: Situational map of 'core' and 'peripheral' roles in football.

While the theoretical development I have described so far builds on existing theory, using CGT and SA also enabled me to build new theoretical concepts. One such concept is that of the *sportlight,* what I describe in chapter 6 as an intense public interest in the performance and business of sport that manifests through relentless fan-led scrutiny and a media-driven preoccupation with the lives of athletes, coaches, and sport leaders. This new concept grew from the initial coding process and the use of in vivo codes. For example, I noted how women described their experiences in the football industry as working under an intense "spotlight." In fact, I coined the term 'sportlight' from a typo when I was writing the word 'spotlight' as an in vivo code. Using a social worlds map of the football club, I mapped the key actors and organisations that make up and influence the football world. Here, I was able to visualise the sportlight as a highly pressurised metaphorical space compounded by external organisations and actors (see Figure 9).

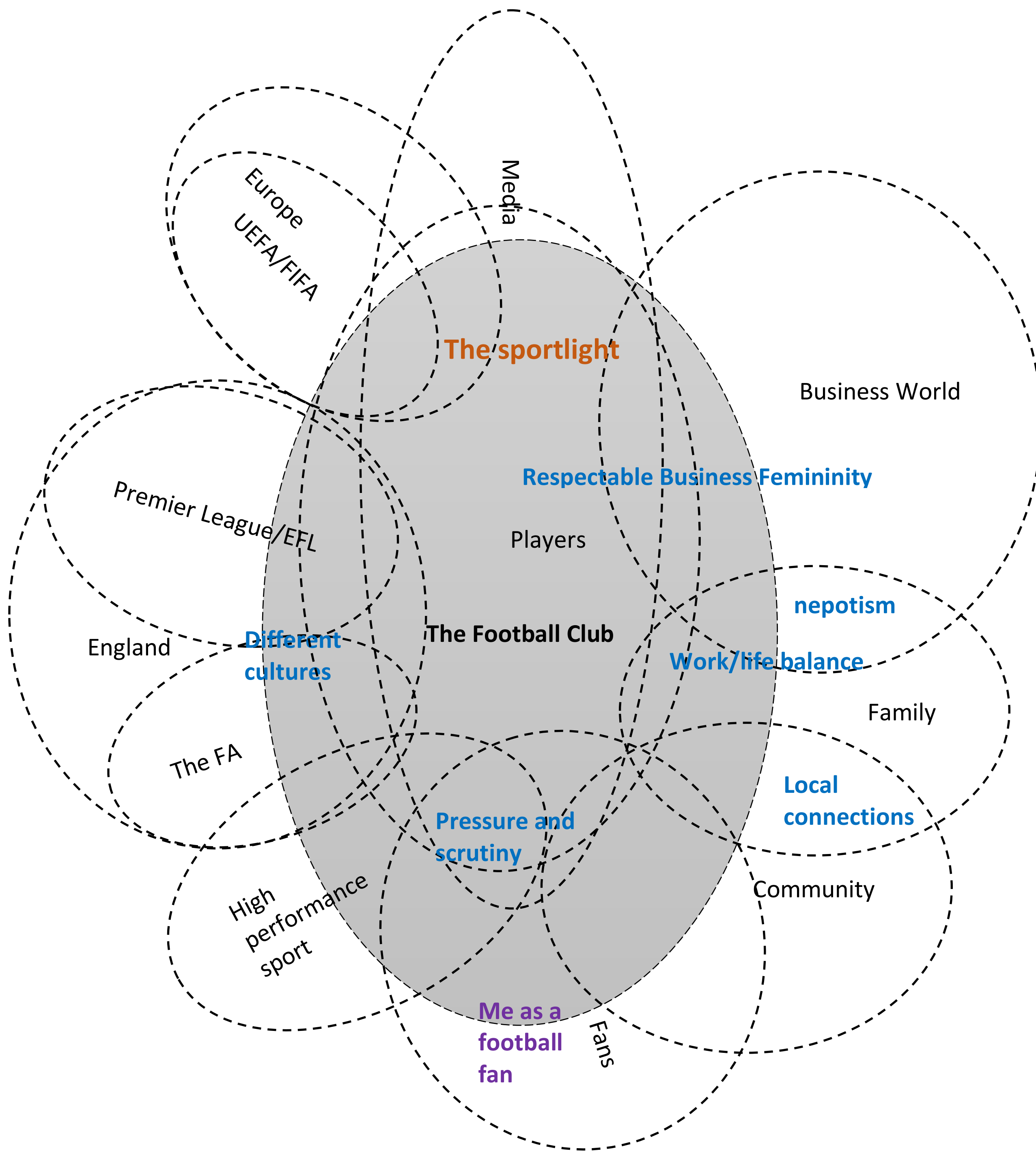


Figure 9: Social Worlds Map

By placing myself on the map as a football fan, I could also reflect on *my* role in the sportlight – a willing consumer of the media circus that surrounds football and those who work in it. Certainly, part of my enjoyment of football is the endless dissection of football matches and critique of footballers and managers that takes place on social media, Sky Sports, fan led TV channels, and in the newspapers. Probably half of all the conversations I have with my family are about football – who played well, who 'missed a sitter', how long the manger has got before they are sacked. I used to thoroughly thrive off it. However, in recognising and examining the damaging effects of the sportlight on people in football, this research has changed my approach to football fandom. In fact, my once all-consuming passion for football has been all but extinguished during four years of researching women in football. I am especially conscious of the way the sportlight damages women. Indeed, by returning to existing literature and theory, notably, Acker's concept of the ideal worker and the theory of respectable business femininity, I was able to consider the gendered consequences of the sportlight for women leaders. From this, I developed a focussed code: *being an ideal woman in the 'sportlight'* to explain the conditions of women's inclusion in football. The final set of focused codes can be viewed in Table 2.

Focussed code	Label
Limited Access to Power	Women being underrepresented in and excluded from the most powerful leadership roles in football.
Naturalising male-dominance in ‘core’ roles	Presenting football facing roles as naturally a male-domain
Protecting the heterosexual matrix	Excluding women from football facing roles based on sexuality
Illusion of Equality	The unequal division of labour between women and men; and the silence on racial inequalities.
Insider Status	Having privileged access to football and leadership
Incompatibility of football leadership and motherhood	Being unable or finding it difficult to have children and be a leader in football
Being an ideal woman in the ‘sportlight’	Performances of idealised femininity under the pressure of fans and the media
Defending football: Reclaiming the narrative	Claims that football is not inherently sexist or unwelcoming to women
Challenging football: Tempered Radicalism	Acts of resistance in football leadership
Leaving Football: The Pursuit of Authenticity	Choosing to leave football to pursue a more ethical, challenging, and balanced life.

Table 2: Focussed codes

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I argued that Constructivist Grounded Theory alongside Situational Analysis, with its focus on reflexivity, heterogeneity, and constructed knowledge, is a valuable methodology for conducting feminist research. I have also shown how CGT is a useful approach to theory development and building new theoretical concepts. Specifically, I have used this approach to develop the theory of ‘extremely gendered’ organisations and construct the concept of the *sportlight*. Given the lack of research on women’s leadership in football, these theoretical developments not only offer original explanations for men’s dominance in the industry, but I have argued that through theoretical transferability they can also be applied to contexts beyond football and sport. I have also demonstrated that the use of qualitatively driven mixed methods can be applied to feminist research and that preliminary quantitative data can be invaluable when examining an under researched phenomenon. In this regard, I have used

multiple methods of data collection, including archival research, document analysis, and biographic interviewing, to research women's underrepresentation in and experiences of football leadership.

In this methodology chapter, I have also reflected on the philosophical, theoretical, ethical, and practical dilemmas of conducting feminist research with women leaders in football. Specifically, I have challenged the assumption of women's collective oppression in feminist research and discussed the power dynamics inherent in researching privileged groups i.e., elite women leaders. I have also discussed the complex navigation of research ethics in my approach to gatekeepers and in balancing anonymity with women's desire to share their experiences. In adopting a reflexive approach to research, I have further reflected on my own position within the research and how this influenced my choice of theory, method, and analytical interpretation of data. I have discussed how my assumptions about football shaped my initial approach to this doctoral research and how these assumptions changed during data collection and analysis.

In the following chapters, I present my research findings based on my focussed codes. I present these findings under the subheadings: *On the Periphery: Women Leaders in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football*; *Conditional Entry into Football Leadership: Cultivating an Ideal Worker/Ideal Woman Identity*; and *Tempered Radicalism: Women Defending, Challenging, and Leaving Football.*

6. ON THE PERIPHERY: WOMEN LEADERS IN THE 'EXTREMELY GENDERED' ORGANISTION OF MEN'S FOOTBALL

6.1 Introduction

Research on gender inequalities in sport reveals that men are universally overrepresented in positions of leadership (Adriaanse, 2016, 2019; Anderson, 2009; Burton, 2015; Pape, 2020; Ryan & Dickson, 2018; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Women in Sport, 2018). Existing research also suggests that gender inequalities in leadership are even more acute in men's professional football than in the wider sporting world (Bradbury *et al.*, 2014; Farrer & Co, 2019; Philippou *et al.*, 2022). Sasson-Levy's (2011) theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations allows us to consider men's football as an extreme example of a gendered organisation (Acker, 1990); an organisation so "closely bound up with essentialist and hierarchical conceptions of gender" (Sasson-Levy, 2011, p. 392) that having women in leadership roles poses a threat to the organisation's masculine sense of self. However, in the face of mounting political and social pressures for organisations to actively reduce gender inequalities, such as the introduction of gender pay gap reporting in the UK (Government Equalities Office, 2020), extremely gendered organisations face a "patriarchal challenge" (Enloe, 2007, p. 97): how to admit women without sacrificing their masculine character (Sasson-Levy, 2011). Therefore, 'extremely gendered' organisations, such as men's football, warrant greater theoretical attention to understand how they function to exclude or accept women into leadership roles within this political and social climate.

In this chapter, I provide the first in-depth analysis of women's participation patterns in men's professional football in England. Drawing on the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations and the concepts of *hegemonic gender relations* (Budgeon, 2014; Schippers, 2007) and the *heterosexual matrix* (Butler, 1999), I examine the features of women's inclusion in football

leadership in the 'new' era of football (Williams, 2006) to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the gender makeup of football leadership in men's professional football clubs and football governing bodies in England, and how has this changed in the 'new' era of football (late 1980's to now)?

2. How has the gendering of football organisations influenced women's access to, and experiences of, leadership?

In the first section, I analyse the gender makeup of football leadership and demonstrate that women in football have *Limited Access to Power,* despite making up a significant proportion of workers in men's professional football clubs and football governing bodies. Following this, I analyse the types of leadership roles women have held in football to reveal a gendered substructure of *'Core' and 'Peripheral' Leadership Roles*. In the next section, *Protecting the Heterosexual Matrix,* I examine the role of heterosexuality in the peripheral positioning of women. In the final section, *An Illusion of Equality*, I evidence the redistribution of women's leadership work into new feminised and peripheral occupations. I also find that the overrepresentation of white women in leadership positions and the lack of intersectional data and reporting on gender inequalities in football further obscures the true picture of gender inequalities in football.

6.2 Limiting Women's Access to Power

Although evidence suggests that men are overrepresented in leadership positions in football, we know extraordinarily little about the patterns of women's inclusion or exclusion in football

leadership or why football leadership is a 'man's world'. Through an examination of women's leadership roles and gender pay gap reports, I offer an original contribution to this area of scholarship. In this section, I demonstrate that men are not just numerically overrepresented in leadership positions, but they also have a monopoly on positions of power and roles with the highest pay. Moreover, I show that despite women's significant presence in football as workers, men's football clubs have resisted wider societal and sport industry shifts towards gender equality in leadership roles. I further show that even when women achieve senior leadership roles, they are routinely excluded from the powerful 'inner table.' I argue that football's resistance to women in positions of power is a strategy to protect the masculine image of football from the threat of feminisation. Crucially, this shows that numerical equality is not, in of itself, enough to create a gender egalitarian workplace.

6.2.1 Football Leadership: Still a 'Man's World'

My findings demonstrate that men continue to dominate the highest-ranking and highest paid roles in men's professional football. Figure 10 shows that in the 2017/18[9] football season, women made up 14 percent of workers in the top pay quartile, 8 percent of board members, and just 6 percent of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) – the most senior managerial role within an organisation. Except for the Championship, where there were no women CEOs, these proportions were relatively consistent across all four professional leagues. Although women were better represented in senior roles at the FA, making up 24 percent of workers in the top pay quartile and 20 percent of directors, I must note that the appointment of women to the FA board was a direct result of new governance regulations imposed by Sport England and UK

[9] I collected data on the gender makeup of football in 2018. Thus, although the 'new' football era continues to the present day, my data and analysis only covers the period between the 1987/88 and 2017/18 seasons.

Sport in 2017. Before this, only one woman had ever been a member of the FA board, despite the FA having responsibility for both men's and women's football. Furthermore, the women newly appointed to the FA board in 2017/18 held independent non-executive roles that have less power and influence over strategic decisions than executive roles. Although there was no available data on the gender makeup of the top pay quartiles at The Premier League or the EFL Trust, the proportion of women on the board of directors was 33 percent and 25 percent, respectively.

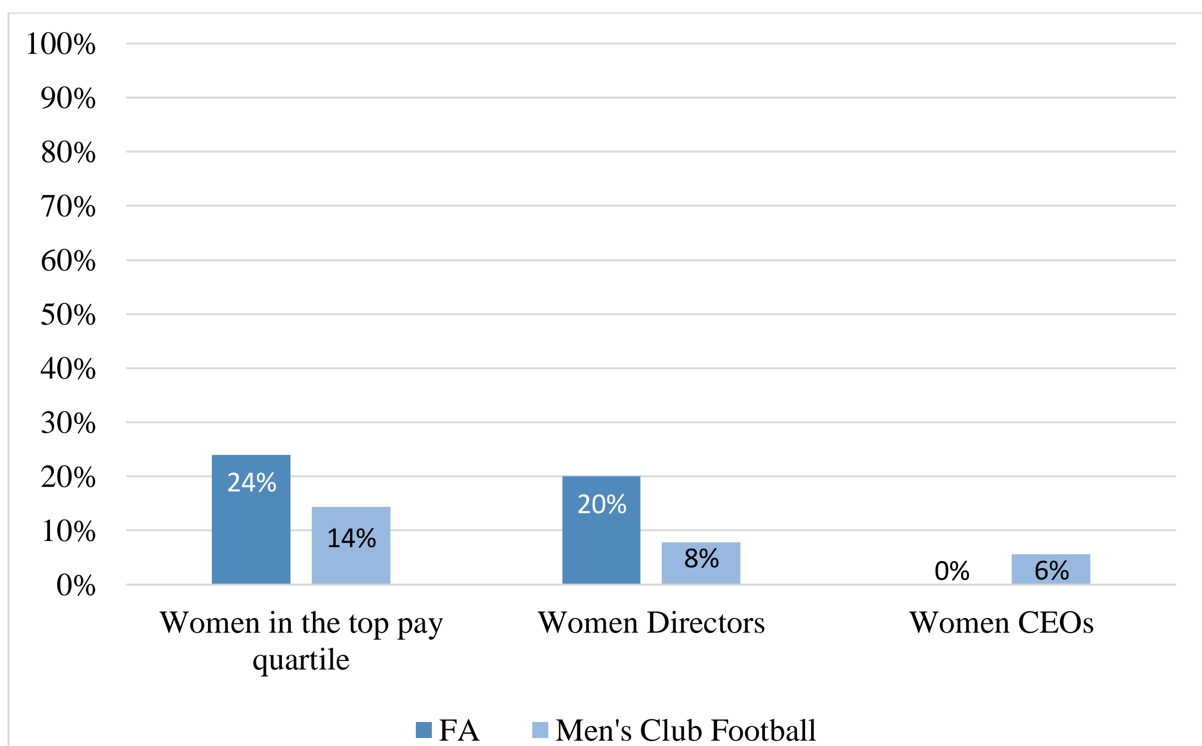


Figure 10: Gender makeup of senior football roles in the 2017/18 season

Analysis of gender pay gap reports published in 2018 also reveals severe differences in pay between women and men in football governing bodies and men's club football. Table 3 shows that the mean average gender pay gap in men's club football was 66 percent in favour of men when clubs included player and coaching staff wages. The exclusion of player and coaching staff wages results in a pay gap of 17 percent in favour of men; however, only twenty-one clubs

provided this additional data meaning the actual overall gender pay gap could be very different. At the FA, men earned on average 23 percent more than women. Because the FA does not pay player wages, this pay gap accurately reflects the pay differences between female and male non-playing staff and is a direct result of having more men in senior roles than women (The Football Association, 2018).

League	*No. Of clubs eligible to report GPG*	*Average GPG incl. Players & coaching staff*	*No. of clubs who provided adjusted data*	*Average GPG excl. Players & coaching staff*
Premier League	20/20	+82%	12/20	+18%
Championship	21/24	+68%	7/21	+18%
League 1	7/24	+49%	2/7	+15%
League 2	0/24	n/a	n/a	n/a
Club Football Total	***48/92***	***+66%***	***21/48***	***+17%***
FA	*n/a*	*+23%*	*n/a*	*n/a*

Table 3: GPG data for men's professional football clubs and the FA (snapshot date -5th April 2017). Note: + denotes GPG in favour of men, n/a = not applicable

These findings show that women are marginally better represented in the highest ranking and highest paid roles in football governing bodies such as the FA. However, they remain severely underrepresented compared to men in men’s club football. Indeed, historical data shows that progress on gender equality in the boardroom – the highest decision-making body within an organisation – has been slow within men’s club football. Table 4 shows steady progress on gender equality between the 1987/88 and 2006/07 seasons, but that progress appeared to stall between the 2006/07 and 2017/18 seasons. The number of clubs with a woman on their board in the 2017/18 season was 36 out of 92, representing just 39 percent of all men’s clubs in the

top four leagues in England. Furthermore, only nine of these clubs had achieved a ‘critical mass’ (Adriaanse, 2019; Kanter, 1977a) of 30 percent or more women on their board (see appendices 7), and only one had a ‘gender balanced’ board of 40 percent or more women (Adriaanse, 2019; Kanter, 1977a). Perhaps most remarkable of all, 28 percent (n=31) of all the clubs that have played in the top four men’s leagues since 1988 (n=110) have never had a woman on their board (see appendices 8).

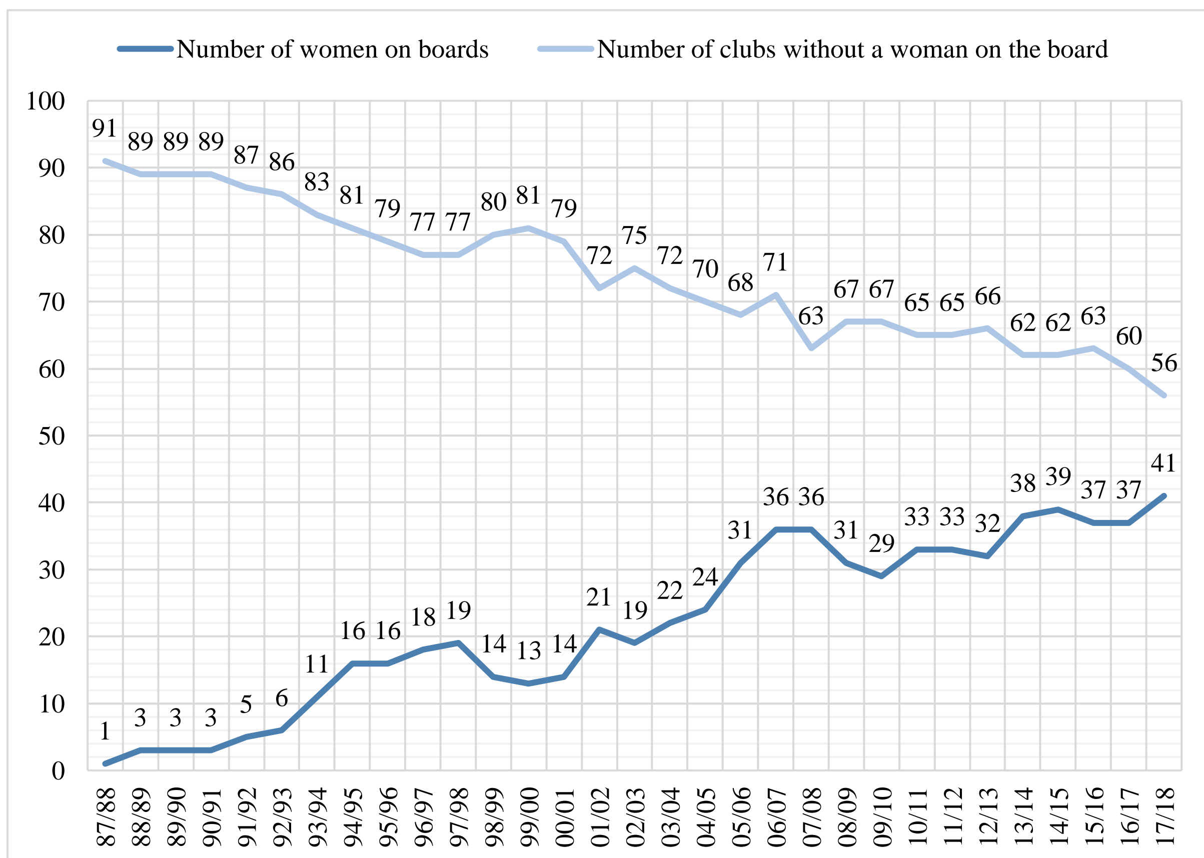


Figure 11: Number of women board members and number of clubs without a woman on their board per season in men's club football 1987/88 - 2017/18

These findings demonstrate that men’s club football has made little progress on gender equality in senior leadership roles in the ‘new’ football era despite women’s growing participation in the game as players (UEFA, 2017) and fans (Pope, 2017) over the same period. While

increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles is not enough on its own to shift an organisational culture (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Yoder, 1991), the evidence presented here shows just how far men's club football is from achieving numerical gender equality in the boardroom. This lack of progress is of particular concern because, unlike the FA, club football is not mandated to increase the proportion of women in board positions. Significantly, men's club football is falling behind other male-dominated industries, such as STEM industries, construction industries, and other sports organisations, regarding gender equality in the boardroom (see Figure 12). This evidence suggests that men's football clubs have resisted wider societal and sport industry shifts towards gender equality in senior leadership roles.

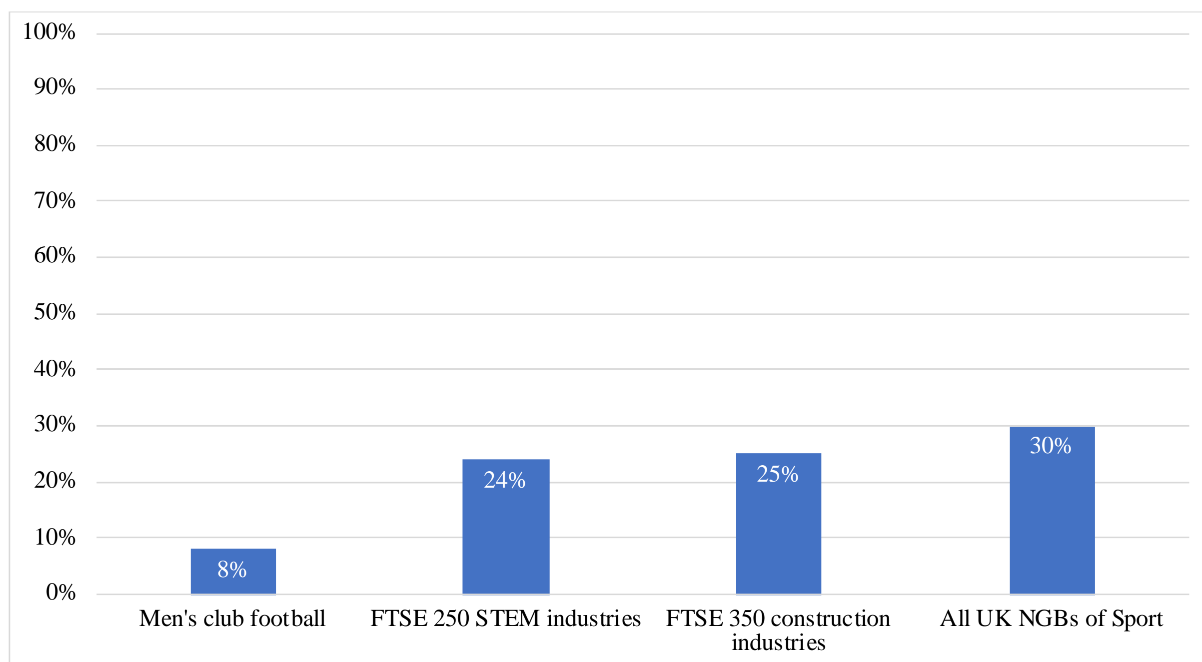


Figure 12: Percentage of women Directors in 2017/18 (FTSE Women Leaders, 2018; WISE, 2018; Women in Sport, 2017)

We can understand football's resistance to change by considering its role in the patriarchal order of society. Because 'extremely gendered' organisations like men's football play a crucial symbolic role in the preservation of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Caudwell, 2011; Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011), women's entry poses "a multi-level threat" (Sasson-Levy,

2011, p. 407). As Woodward and Winter (2004, p. 294) have argued in the case of the British Army, women's entry threatens its "collective sense of self as a masculinist institution". That said, as Figure 13 shows, women comprised a significant proportion of workers in football in the 2017/18 season: 34% in the FA and 27% in men's club football. While women's substantial presence as workers could signal a more accommodating culture for women in football, it is notable their presence in football as workers has not translated into proportional representation in senior leadership roles. This finding is significant because one of the explanations for the lack of women in senior positions is the alleged low numbers of women working in football more widely, suggesting that the proportion of women in senior roles represents the numbers of women working in football. For example, in their 2018 Gender Pay Gap report, the FA stated that they were working hard to "build a better pipeline of talented women to work in managing and governing the game" (The Football Association, 2018). This statement suggests that there are not enough women in the industry (the pipeline) to fill the top roles. However, my findings clearly refute this suggestion by showing that women *are* in the football pipeline.

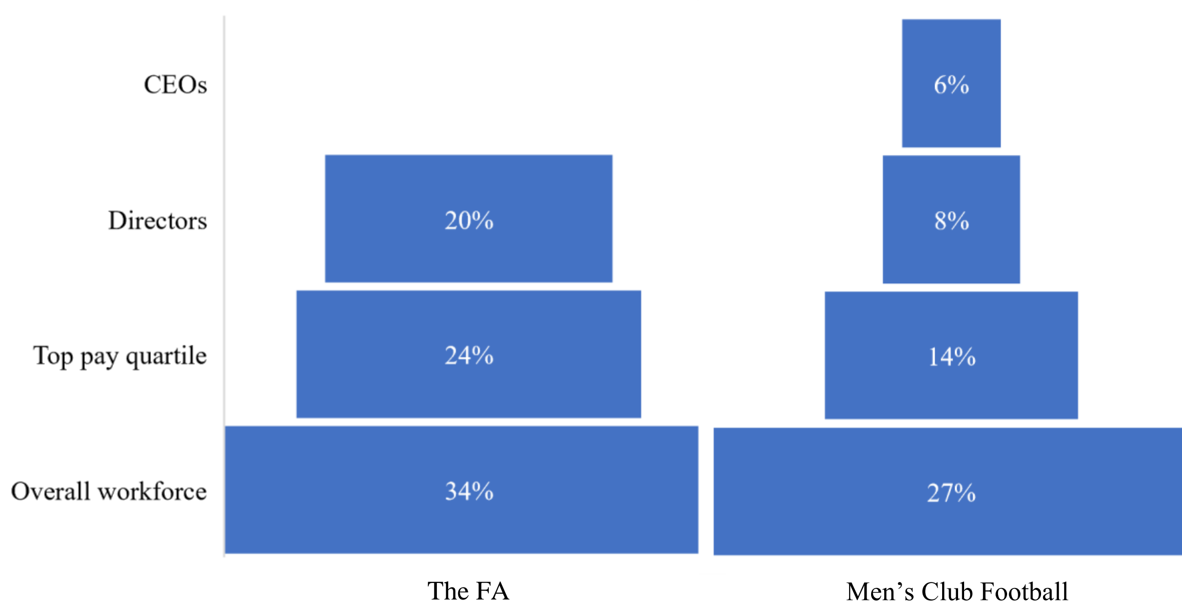


Figure 13: Percentage of women at each level of the football hierarchy in the 2017/18 season

Interview data also support the finding that women are well represented in the overall workforce but relatively scant in senior leadership roles. For example, when asked about the gender make-up of their workplace, several women said that around the office and within their immediate departments there was a good gender balance. However, most were the only women on the senior leadership team:

> *So, I'm the only female director. And senior management team… god I've never thought about it but my head of HR is female and that probably is it. That's really awful… there are plenty of females around but actually, when you look at the senior management team, then we are dominated, I guess, by males.*

Alex: 46, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2008

> *Am I the only one? I am the only woman in that group. I just thought then. So, I guess that shows that at lower levels of the club I don't feel like there's any kind of male dominance, but then when I've just thought about those rooms yeah, I am the only female in the room (laughs). So, it shows you that probably the higher up you get in football the less of us there is.*

Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

Together with the statistical data, these extracts demonstrate women's notable presence in football as workers but their relative absence in senior leadership roles. Interestingly, some women only realised this when I questioned them about it. This moment of realisation suggests that male dominance in football leadership is so taken for granted that even women do not notice it. This is notable because taken-for-granted assumptions about masculine dominance

embed a ‘masculine blueprint’ for leadership that underpins a gendered substructure that privileges men for leadership positions (Galea & Gaweda, 2018). These findings evidence that rather than a pipeline problem, women’s access to leadership has been limited.

6.2.2 Women Leaders as a ‘Multi-Level’ Threat

I find that limiting women’s access to power is a deliberate strategy to protect men’s privileged claim to power. For example, Amanda and Anna, both of whom held executive roles in men’s club football, spoke about men wanting to protect senior football roles from women:

I think that the jobs are very closely guarded by men because there aren’t that many roles in football…it’s not a big business…which means that the roles are, you know, there’s lot of [male] footballers out there that haven’t made it or agents that want to work within football.

Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

When I go out for a drink people ask you what you do and I say, ‘oh I work in football’, they say ‘oh you work in marketing?’…I get so pissed and I say ‘no, I’m the CEO’ (laughs). It happened three weeks ago with some guys…they got upset and they said, ‘how come you can be the CEO of a football club?’ Maybe 10 minutes ago they thought you did marketing at a football club, which was fine, but then all of a sudden, it’s something they actually want to be and then it’s not fine anymore.

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

These extracts show that leadership roles in football are seen by some as reserved for men. What is even more telling is that men who do not work in football also perpetuate the belief that senior roles are the reservation of men.

Because of the inextricable link between football and hegemonic masculinity in English society, women's presence in senior football roles poses a threat to masculinity even to those men who do not work in football. As Connell (2005) contends, all men, regardless of how much they identify with a masculine hegemonic ideal, still receive a patriarchal dividend from hegemonic masculinity through the overall subordination of women (Connell, 2005). That is, even when men stand to lose nothing in terms of rank or pay, increasing women's social status, especially in a masculine conferring industry, can still be viewed as a threat to masculinity because the heterosexual matrix depends on a symbolic hierarchical relationship between femininity and masculinity (Schippers, 2007). This symbolic gendered hierarchy was illustrated in an extract from Annie:

When I got the job as the General Manager at XX [The first team manager] said, 'I don't care what you call her, but don't call her the manager.'

Annie: 75, Executive Officer – Championship/non-league club, 1985-2003

Despite men having previously held the title of general manager, it was only when a woman was appointed that the first team manager felt aggrieved by having to share the 'manager' title. Sharing his symbolic status with a woman was seen as a threat to the existing gendered substructure. As Acker argues, "[i]ncreasing equality with devalued groups can be seen and felt as an assault on dignity and masculinity" (Acker, 2006, p. 455). This helps explain

women's accommodation in lower-ranking roles because having women in lower-ranking roles poses little threat to the ongoing gendered substructure (Pape, 2020).

Crucially, I argue that limiting women's access to power is more important in football because protecting male dominance is vital for the survival of extremely gendered institutions (Tyler *et al*., 2019). Industries like football stand to lose more than most by granting women access to leadership roles because they play a central role in the preservation and promotion of idealised masculinity in society (Sasson-Levy, 2011). As Connell (2005) notes, hegemonic masculinity must remain unavailable to women to legitimise patriarchal structures and practices. As such, women's exclusion from powerful roles in football marks their necessary exclusion from hegemonic masculine norms. This solves the 'patriarchal challenge' that extremely gendered industries face: allowing women's entry without challenging the image of them as ideologically masculinised industries (Enloe, 2007; Sasson-Levy, 2011). In contrast, elevating women to the same status as men disrupts pervasive ideas about the role of women within the organisation:

> *I sit in a room with twelve blokes, right? Most of the women they see at work are their assistants or doing some kind of supportive role to them…basically making their lives easier…then at home they've got daughters and sisters and mothers and wives, who have other roles for them…when you're in there kind of going, 'yeah, I'm just a peer of yours doing the same job', sometimes it just throws them.*
>
> Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

As Melinda describes, holding the same position as men within football has a destabilising effect ("it just throws them"). Indeed, the concept of critical mass assumes that having 30% or more gender diversity in a group is enough to permanently disrupt masculine cultures (Adriaanse, 2016; Kanter, 1977a). However, increasing the number of women in positions of

power and leadership alone is not enough to destabilise the masculinist gendered substructure of an extremely gendered industry. As Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) found in their study on the impact of gender quotas on governing bodies of sport, critical mass is just the first condition to advance gender equality.

6.2.3 The 'Inner Table'

The extent to which women can influence the organisation through their leadership position also impacts gender equality efforts. As illustrated by Sophie, I found that even when women reach the highest echelons of football leadership, their access to power is still limited:

> *The first time I went to a boardroom before a game, the maître d said 'oh Sophie, you are sitting here' - there was all name plaques on the table... I was sitting on a table for women. So, you'd have the table for women here and then you'd have the chairman's table and the men…about three years on, I was used to it…I knew the drill. Then the year after I went and I put my coat down, you know, and I went 'they've missed me off the table', and the maître d said, 'oh Sophie, the chairman's asked for the pleasure of your company today'. I said, 'What? Do you mean I've been upgraded to the men's table?'*
>
> Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Although Sophie was a senior leader in football and had the privilege of accessing the boardroom, her privileged position did not initially extend to the "men's" table. As Atewologun & Sealy (2014) argue, women leaders are organisational outsiders who are only 'sometimes privileged' by their senior positions. The social advantage that being a leader can bring is not guaranteed for women (Mavin & Grandy, 2016b). Because Sophie was a woman, the privilege

of sitting at the “men’s” table was something she had to earn overtime. Similarly, Alyssa discussed the politics of being invited to the “inner table”:

> *[Men] invite you to the table but there is an inner table…they say oh we invite women to the table…but you have to be smart, you have to know how to manoeuvre your way around because normally these things are done on the golf course… when you have the executive boxes, decisions are made there...I call that the inner table.*
>
> Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Alyssa described how influential decisions are made by directors (usually men) long before they reach the boardroom. As such, having a ‘seat at the table’ is not enough to access organisational power; you must have a seat at the “inner table” – the place where informal decisions are made about the organisation. One such inner table decision was said to be the catalyst for the formation of the ill-fated European Super League (Bezants & Robinson, 2021). A select group of male leaders decided to form a new league of ‘elite’ clubs without fan and player consultation or agreement from several high-profile leaders in the industry (Brownsell, 2021). Instead, the ‘backroom deal’ was made been between a select group of (male) club owners and Executives outside of the formal governance structures of football (Stone, 2021).

In her study of organisational life, Kanter (1977a, p. 164) referred to these informal practices as a “shadow structure”. Here, employees build alliances, trade information, and make important decisions all in the “shadows of formal organizational life” (McGuire, 2002, p. 304). However, the shadow structure of organisational life is gendered, as well as racialised (Ibarra, 1993; McGuire, 2002; Rutherford, 2011). White women and Black women and men receive less work-related help from informal networks than white men (McGuire, 2002), and given

that football networks are "heavily masculine and homogenously White" (Bradbury, 2011, p. 33), women and Black workers may be completely excluded from informal networking.

Throughout the interviews, I found evidence that men routinely excluded senior women from informal networking opportunities. For example, several women described experiences of being excluded from exclusively male social excursions, such as golf days and football tournaments. Elaine, who was the head of department for a Championship/League 2 club from 1998 to 2015, also recounted an experience of being excluded from an informal networking opportunity in which the club CEO secretly took a group of sponsors to a strip club, effectively barring Elaine, and other women, from the opportunity to network. Although it is not clear why Elaine was not informed about plans to take the sponsors to a strip club, Morgan and Martin (2006) found that men in professional sales work would sometimes 'sneak off' to strip clubs without telling their female colleagues. The authors noted that women were purposefully deceived about these outings because female colleagues would have disrupted the "male-bonding bravado" that centres on the objectification of women (Morgan & Martin, 2006, p. 118).

Thus, informal socialising in masculine homosocial settings not only denies women access to networking opportunities and important information exchange, but it also gives men an opportunity to strengthen their bonds with each other. In the extremely gendered organisation of football, this bonding – which is encouraged in the 'football world' (Parnell *et al.*, 2018) – may be even more significant because it reinforces the association of (heterosexual) men and football with hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, these activities necessarily exclude women as well as subordinate masculinities, for example, gay men (Connell, 2005), thus limiting their access to power.

6.3 'Core' and 'Peripheral' Leadership Roles

Existing research on inequalities in sport leadership tend to focus on hierarchical gender segregation. Indeed, existing evidence of women's underrepresentation in football leadership is limited to director and CEO roles (see for example: Bradbury *et al*., 2014; Farrer & Co, 2019; Philippou *et al*., 2022). Yet, through an examination of archival documents, I find evidence of a gendered substructure that not only limits women's access to power, but it also restricts their inclusion to 'peripheral' leadership roles. Through an examination of interview data and an original discourse analysis of gender pay gap reports, I argue that an extremely gendered organisational logic underpins this substructure by naturalising male dominance at the organisational core.

6.3.1 Peripheral Inclusion

Not only has women's access to power been limited, but I also found evidence that women's leadership work has been confined to a limited number of occupational areas. Figure 14 shows that a little over 50 percent of women's leadership work in men's professional football between 1987/88 and 2017/18 has been concentrated in just four occupational areas: *Commercial & Sales* (n=129), *Club Secretary* (n=105), *Ticketing* (n=96), and *Finance & Accounts* (n=72). Notably, these occupations are detached from the male players or the field of play. Indeed, the data shows that just 4 percent of women's leadership work has involved direct day-to-day contact with the male players; roles such as *Football Development* (n=12), *Sport Science* (n=5), *Club Doctor & Head Physio* (n=4), *Director of Football* (n=2), and *Academy, Youth & Education* (n=4). To date, no woman has held the role of First Team Manager or Head Coach in men's professional football in England, arguably the highest-ranked and most visible leadership role in the sport.

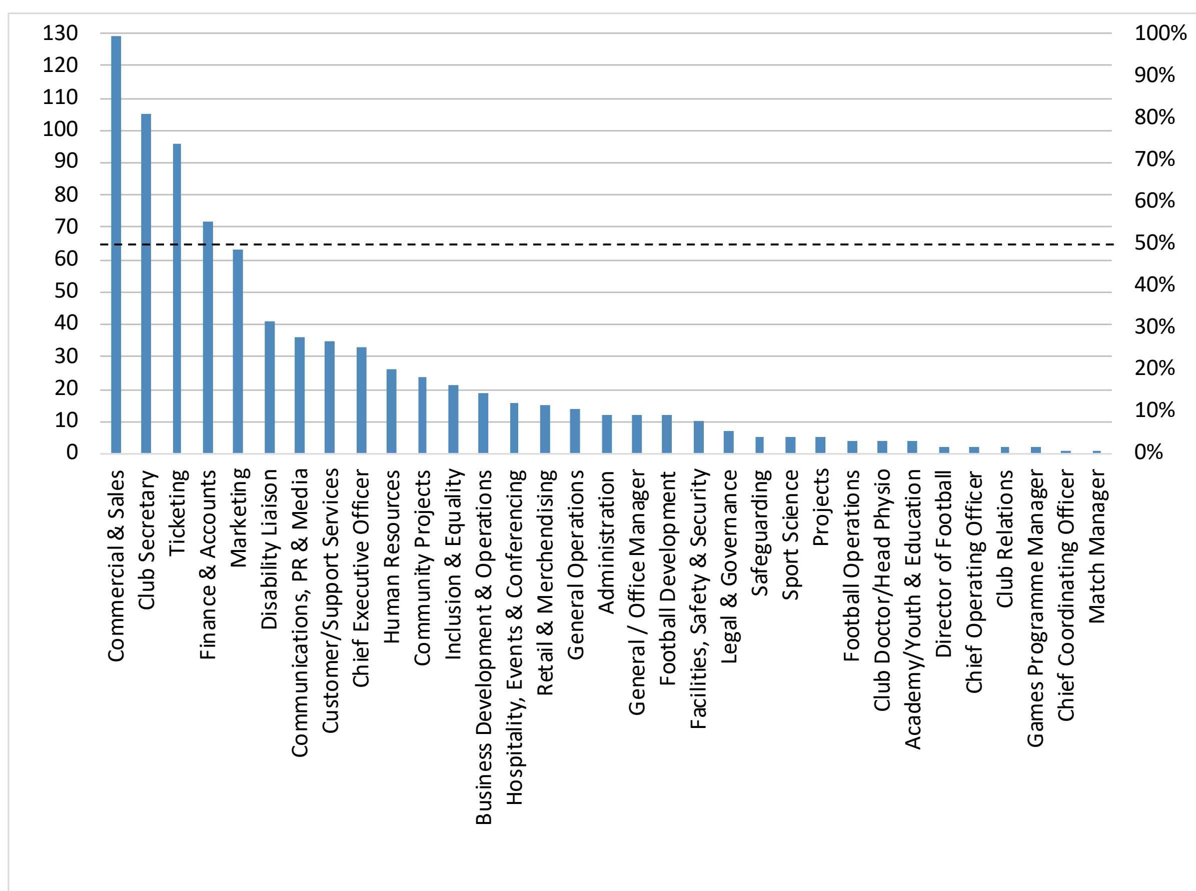


Figure 14: Number and cumulative percentage of leadership roles women have held in men's club football and football governing bodies 1988-2018

These findings show that women's leadership work has been largely *peripheral* to the *core* function of men's football in England. That is, most women's leadership roles have been removed, in terms of influence and proximity, from the male players and the playing of football matches. In contrast, leadership roles at the footballing core of the organisation have remained the near-exclusive domain of predominantly white men (Bradbury *et al*., 2014; Norman, Rankin-Wright & Allison, 2018). This is especially true for Head Coach and First Team Management roles – roles that no women, and very few Black men (Bradbury *et al*., 2014), have ever held in men's football in England. These findings on women's limited inclusion in football-related roles support the work of Fielding-Lloyd and Meân (2011, p. 24), who argue that women are positioned at the "peripheries" of the "central membership of the football

category", by which they mean the playing and coaching of football. However, my findings are the first to show that women's exclusion extends beyond just player and coaching roles into *leadership roles* proximate to the players and the field of play. This is notable because the reasons for women's relative exclusion from the field of play, such as supposed differences in athletic abilities between women and men (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011), do not apply to administrative leadership roles. Nonetheless, the closer the leadership role is to football play, in terms of proximity and influence, the fewer women there are.

These findings are supported by interview data from women leaders in football, several of whom spoke about the scarcity of women working in core football roles:

> *Obviously, on the football [facing] side, everybody at the training ground, so forty-plus people, apart from [the] cleaning lady, [is male]. There's one woman who works there who's assistant to the manager. Basically, that's it.*
>
> Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

> *If you are ever having to do anything down at the training ground, it's 100% men. So, you sometimes feel a bit awkward going in there… it's their office.*
>
> Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

Notably, these extracts present male dominance in core roles as 'obvious' and unquestioned ["it's their office"]. This reveals an organisational logic that underpins a gendered substructure of *core* and *peripheral* leadership roles within men's football that preserves (white) male dominance at the core of the organisation while accommodating (white) women at the

periphery. That is, men's privileged position in the operational areas of football is an "underlying assumption" that constructs core football roles as a male domain (Acker, 1990, p. 147). Consequently, when women enter core football spaces in men's football, they routinely face hostility and abuse (Fink, 2016; Forbes *et al*., 2015; Jones & Edwards, 2013).

6.3.2 Naturalising male-dominance at the organisational core

Gender pay gap reports also reveal a gendered organisational logic in men's club football. That is, a discourse analysis of gender pay gap reports reveals striking evidence of a 'naturalization discourse' (Fairclough, 1985), whereby inequalities between women and men are legitimised as being "natural" or "normal" in the context of football-related roles. Indeed, references to the "nature" of football dominated narratives on the gender pay gap:

[the club] is committed to reducing its gender pay gap, but also recognises the unique nature of the football sector.

Premier League Club

The Club is committed to the EFL [English Football League] Equality Code of Practice but the nature of the business… inevitably results in male-dominated high-earners and a large gender pay gap can be expected.

Championship Club

By presenting football organisations as unequal by nature, most men's football clubs had resigned themselves to the idea that gender inequalities were 'inevitable', with little to no interrogation of the underlying mechanisms that produce inequalities in non-playing roles.

Even clubs that acknowledged inequalities in non-playing roles, such as the lack of women in leadership, tended to justify these inequalities as being the result of men's 'natural attraction' to football:

> *Within the football industry, the historical nature of the sport means that jobs are, arguably, traditionally more attractive to males.*
>
> Premier League Club

> *The football industry traditionally attracts male employees which is why our mean gender pay gap seems high at 75% when compared to the national average rate of 18.4%.*
>
> Championship Club

Several clubs also made specific reference to football-related roles as 'typically' or 'traditionally' attracting men without offering an explanation or further critique. Although some clubs stated that they would review their recruitment policies to "attract more women" to football-related roles, overall, they presented the male-dominated *core* of football as a natural state that required no further explanation:

> *the large majority of non-playing match day roles are stewarding and security – and are currently mostly male, reflecting the traditional, predominantly male match day attendance … senior football administration roles typically attract more male applicants.*
>
> Premier League Club

Most coaching and football support staff are primarily male and this has been the normal tendency in most professional football clubs

Championship Club

Statements about football roles being more attractive to men serve to "naturalize the inequality" (Acker, 2006, p. 453) in core roles and essentialises differences between men and women by claiming that it is men rather than women who are attracted to working in football-related roles by "nature". Such statements help to perpetuate myths that football is 'naturally' a male-only space. Moreover, claims that male-dominated roles reflect the typical male match day attendance are at odds with the recent 'feminization' of football fandom, whereby women fans now form a substantial component of the crowd (Pope, 2017). These statements reveal a prevailing organisational logic – "the underlying assumptions and practices that construct most contemporary organizations" (Acker, 1990, p. 147) – that naturalises men's dominance in *core* football-related roles. However, contra to Acker's (1990) concept of organisational logic, men's football clubs do not attempt to present *core* roles as gender-neutral. Instead, the extreme gendered character of these roles is revealed and reified through their gender pay gap reports by essentialising men's claim to football. This is significant because organisations that maintain a high degree of essentialist beliefs are more likely to have a severe gender-segregated workplace (Levanon & Grusky 2016) and, as such, a higher gender pay gap (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Another common naturalising strategy was to use high male player wages to present the gender pay gap as a natural state in men's club football. Given that players at a men's football club must be male, and male professional footballers can earn enormous wages – £57,000 per week on average in the Premier League (SportingIntelligence, 2018) – the inclusion of player wages in GPG reports skews the data considerably in favour of men. However, less than half of the

clubs provided voluntary data excluding player wages for reasons of transparency. While the inclusion of player wages resulted in vast gender pay gaps favouring men, several clubs sought to use this to their advantage by justifying the organisational gender pay gap based on high male player wages. These extracts show how some clubs used male player wages to "easily" explain their gender pay gap:

Unlike most other companies, [the club], similarly to other football clubs, has a large number of more highly-paid male workers, made up of its professional footballers, and consequently the average wage … is disproportionate but also therefore easily explainable.

Championship Club

Due to our operational nature as a football club, our figures are, by definition, heavily influenced by the high salaries at the upper end of the overall pay range which correspond to the First Team players and coaching staff who are all male.

Premier League Club

Rather than acknowledging inequalities in non-playing roles, these extracts present gender inequality as natural because of male-player wages. Not only does this obscure the true extent of the gender pay gap in non-playing roles, but it also normalises unregulated and exceptionally high male player wages within the industry and thus undermines efforts to reduce pay inequality. Parallels can be drawn here with the banking sector and the normalisation of bonuses for (predominantly male) executives. As Healy and Ahamed (2019) argue, although a bonus culture fuels a considerable gender pay gap in the sector, bonuses remain discretionary and, consequently, non-negotiable when considering pay equality. These findings are

significant because wages "are a powerful form of control" (Acker, 2006, p. 545), and compliance with that control, such as accepting that the highest earners are male footballers, legitimises power differences between women and men within the organisation.

Even when clubs acknowledged high male player wages and their influence on the GPG, there was a tendency for clubs to conflate the salaries of male players and first-team coaching staff. This is notable because while players at men's football clubs must be male, there is no requirement for first-team coaching staff to be male. However, my findings show that clubs largely ignored this distinction and presented players and coaches as one of the same. For example, out of the 21 clubs that provided voluntary data excluding male players on the basis that players must be male, 11 also excluded first-team manager and coaching staff wages on the same basis. Indeed, no club addressed the absence of women in these roles. Instead, clubs discursively presented all-male coaching teams as common sense, with no room for interrogation:

there is a significant pay gap due to the disproportionate salaries and bonuses paid to the playing and coaching staff.

Championship Club

Football is a sport in which the highest earning player and management roles are almost exclusively held by men and this has a significant impact on our results

Championship Club

This gap arises because of the inclusion of the First Team Manager, the Coaching Staff and the Players in the calculations.

Championship Club

These statements again served to naturalise male dominance in core roles by failing to reveal the operational differences between male players and the hypothetically gender-neutral coaching roles. Instead, the rationalisation of inequality in one area of work – the gender-segregated playing field – is used to justify inequalities in areas with less legitimacy for gender disparity, such as coaching roles.

These findings support those of Pape (2020), who found that the gender-segregated nature of sports participation influenced women's underrepresentation in leadership roles within the International Olympic Committee (IOC). That is, the construction of women as athletically inferior to men underpinned the 'gendered logic' of the IOC. Interestingly, although men's club football has not had to accommodate women as athletes in the same ways as the IOC – women footballers play in separate leagues, competitions, and usually stadia, to men – the same gendered logic appears to have excluded women from *core* coaching roles. Therefore, without an interrogation of the gender segregated structure of football, gender equality in core leadership roles may never be achieved. As Travers (2009, p. 80) argues, "the ideology of a two sex system itself is centrally implicated in gender hierarchy and supports sexism, homophobia, and transphobia." Although The FA's Leadership Diversity Code (The FA, 2020) aims to address the underrepresentation of women coaches in football, the code only sets gender targets for new coaching hires in women's club football. The code does not currently include gender targets for new coaching hires in men's club football. This omission further reinforces the extremely gendered substructure of men's football by normalising the

segregation of women's and men's football and using this to legitimise women's absence in *core* coaching roles in men's club football.

It is also crucial to examine the implications of women's exclusion from *core* roles for women's access to senior leadership roles. Because football experience is required for certain leadership roles (Lawrence, 2018), men have a longevity advantage. That is, unlike women, men have never been excluded from football as players or coaches. As such, men are more likely than women to have a historical connection to playing and coaching football, favouring them for promotion. Because women's formal exclusion is a mark of extremely gendered institutions, this extremely gendered substructure has implications for women's access to leadership. As Sasson-Levy (2011) similarly notes, most women in the military encounter a "cement ceiling" to promotion because combat experience, which women have been historically excluded from, is required for promotion. In football, the requirement for people to have a connection to football, either as players or fans, can similarly prevent women's ascent up the organisational ladder. This highlights the importance of historical and organisational context when examining organisations and equality (Ahmed & Swan, 2006) because the historical exclusion of women can still hinder efforts to diversify in the present.

6.3.3 Women leaders as a 'threat' to the masculine core

By framing men's club football as an 'extremely gendered' organisation, we can usefully understand *core* roles as being the most symbolically important to the preservation of the organisation's masculine character. That is, extremely gendered organisations help to define hegemonic masculinity through their core function, i.e., playing football, frontline combat, fighting fires. Even if men are not enactors of these activities, association with those who are still yields benefits for men. As Connell (2005, p. 77) argues, it is the "successful claim to

authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony." In the case of football, it is proximity to footballers that is the mark of masculinity and, as such, power. Therefore, preserving the masculine *core* of football by relegating women to the peripheries upholds men's successful claim to football leadership. As such, accommodating women in peripheral leadership roles has done little to transform or disrupt the extremely masculine character of football.

Preserving this masculine character is not only beneficial for men inside of football; football's masculine character also serves an important function in the wider patriarchal order of society from which all men benefit (Connell, 2005). This is a key function of extremely gendered organisations. For example, playing football is a rite of passage for many boys in English society – especially working-class boys (Dunning, 1999). American football serves a similar function in US society as football (soccer) does in the UK (Messner, 1992). While extremely gendered organisations will vary across cultures and nations, they will still function to reproduce and maintain idealised notions of masculinity and manhood in their most core roles. How organizations justify their extremely gendered regimes may also vary but maintaining masculine dominance in core roles must be the prevailing logic upon which these organisations are based.

Therefore, when women are in positions of power in *core* roles, they present a direct threat to masculinity. That is, spaces like the training ground are active sites for the creation and reproduction of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011), and because hegemonic masculinity is necessarily superior to femininity, having women in positions of power and authority in this ideologically masculine space disrupts hegemonic gender relations (Schippers, 2007). As demonstrated by the extracts below, men in *core* roles are sometimes unwilling to accept the authority of a woman:

the kit manager at [previous club] would not accept my authority. He would not accept the authority of the female HR manager; he just wouldn't. So, whenever we were questioning how he ran his department, we would be pushed back, and then we get 'you don't understand, this is football, you do not get what you're talking about', and it was, for sure, because we were female because it was only against us.

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

Some agents won't deal with me; they'd rather deal with [the Chairman]… and the players, some are okay…at first, they'd kind of… I'd see a bit of sniggering going on, and I had to be quite hard, in the beginning, to make sure that, you know, they realise that I had to be respected.

Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

Anna and Amanda faced resistance from men in core roles who were unwilling to take orders from a woman. When they did try to impose their authority, men attempted to tip the balance of power back in their favour by ignoring or undermining women, i.e., by questioning their knowledge or by laughing at them. These findings support those of Hindman and Walker (2020) who found that men in sport organisations frequently questioned, undermined, and belittled women leaders. The authors argue that these subtle forms of sexism function to "invalidate and dismiss the contributions of women, thereby limiting their professional effectiveness" (Hindman & Walker, 2020, p. 78).

To overcome men's attempts to belittle them, women had to adapt their professional style. As Amanda explained, she had to become "hard" to get respect. However, she also explained that she found this leadership style difficult to maintain because it was not her natural approach to

management. Nonetheless, her presence threatened the power dynamics of the training ground so much so that she had to become someone she was not just to gain respect. Similarly, studies of women fans of men's football demonstrate how women adopt masculine traits to be taken seriously as fans, even if these traits conflicted with their feminine identity (Pope, 2017; Symons, 2019). These findings demonstrate the additional emotional and performative labour that women must undertake to navigate the threat they pose to the masculine *core* of football.

6.4 Protecting the heterosexual matrix

The theory of extremely gendered organisations allows us to understand the peripheral positioning of women as resulting from the need to maintain male superiority within masculine conferring institutions (Sasson-Levy, 2011). However, central to this theory is the privileging of men's sexuality. As Sasson-levy argues, men's sexuality is not only "encouraged" it is "usually linked to organisational power" within the extremely gendered organisation (Sasson-Levy, 2011, p. 402). I also found evidence of this in interviews with women leaders and data on the types of leadership roles women hold in football. However, in this section, I build on Sasson-Levy's theory by considering the peripheral positioning and treatment of women within extremely gendered organisations as a mechanism to protect the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1999). Specifically, I argue that heterosexuality serves as fundamental organising principle within men's football.

6.4.1 Heterosexuality as a central organising principle of men's football

In interviews with women leaders and through data on the types of leadership roles women hold in football, I find evidence that men's sexuality is prioritised and protected within the extremely gendered organisation of men's football. However, I argue that it is not just that

men's sexuality is privileged within extremely gendered organisations, but that their sexuality is necessarily heterosexual, and women in football are always positioned in relation to the male heterosexual norm. No more so was this evident than women's treatment at the organisational core of the training ground:

The training ground is a very very different environment... it's a professional and elite environment, but there's also a lot of bad habits that you've got there in terms of bad language, a lack of female representation over there, and then what you've also got are some clubs - neither of these two - where women aren't even allowed in the training ground because apparently, they cause a distraction.

Mia: 29, Executive Officer – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

If I recruit [women] at the training ground, it needs to be a very specific type because… the training ground's so male-dominated you can't let anybody go in there because, for sure, something will happen…It doesn't matter how old, how fat or not fat they are; they will get hit on…so you need to have a very strong personality. Somebody that doesn't get upset with comments that are being made.

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

These extracts highlight the unique function of these core roles in protecting and centralising men's bodies and men's (hetero)sexuality. As we have seen with combat roles in the military (Berkshire Consultancy, 2009), the need to control men's sexuality becomes the justification for women's exclusion (Acker, 1990). We can also understand women's exclusion from core football leadership roles as resulting from the need to control sexuality at the training ground.

As a ‘near-total institution’ (Anderson, 2009), the purpose of the training ground is to control all aspects of an athlete’s life – including their sexuality – to create a docile athletic body (Shogan, 1999). Because the goal of the training ground in men’s professional football is to control the male body, women’s bodies are deemed “disruptive” or “out of order” (Acker, 1990, p. 152). In an analysis of media and public representations of wives and girlfriends of footballers (WAGs) in Spain, Vaczi (2016, p. 307) found that WAGs were often presented as “femme fatales” who “drain male energies through sex”. This logic portrays women as a dangerous distraction from the objective of winning. As such, women pose a potential threat to the near-total institution of the training ground. Only women deemed “strong” enough to reject or not be troubled by men’s sexual advances are considered appropriate bodies.

Interview data also reveals that resistance to women’s presence at the training ground can also come from other women who question the intentions of those who work alongside male football players:

It's often the other women (laughs) that don't like another woman [at the training ground]. Never any issues with the men. ***So, what makes you say that then?*** *Some of the people who work in football, when they are women, I think [they] work in football to be around the footballers, and that can sometimes lead to a bit of ‘hang on, you’re spending time with the footballers?’*

Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

I remember one of the footballers' wives of a very famous footballer saying that she doesn't think that women should work in football, and she certainly

didn't think that women should be physios or allowed anywhere near the players in the dressing room…

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Again, these extracts demonstrate the centralising of men's (hetero)sexuality within *core* areas of the football workplace. Rather than men having to control their sexuality, women must evade it. Women who do not avoid the male players are believed to be sexually desiring them, meaning other women routinely question their intentions. In contrast, male footballers are rarely, if ever, the focus of suspicion or criticism for their sexual conduct. This was something that Leslie elaborated on later in her interview:

There's always the stories of the woman who worked here years ago and slept with half the footballers - that's the bit I think is difficult for women because there's always a story, it's never the footballer's fault.

Leslie – 38, Head of Department at a League 2 Club, Active since 2017

As this extract demonstrates, male (hetero)sexuality is taken for granted in the football workplace and women's sexuality is presented as a problem. This finding supports the work of Mewett and Toffoletti (2008), who found that female Australian Football League fans portrayed women as 'predatory' and male players as 'rogue' in their responses to allegations of sexual assault made against male footballers by other women. The authors argue that these perspectives, which absolve men of responsibility for sexual misconduct, are "predicated on a discourse of hetero-normative male sexuality" (Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008, p. 177). That is, men's sexual attraction to women is presented as innate and uncontrollable, while women's

sexuality is viewed as conscious and deliberate. As such, in the almost exclusively male environment of the training ground, women's presence is received with caution.

One of the few women who worked at the training ground was Gemma. She recalled the players and backroom staff being "wary" of her presence when she first started the role:

> *I remember the first few games that I was there, everyone was like a bit wary of the fact that I was in the dressing room and stuff like that and making like banter comments and stuff like that. But then after a few games, they just got used to it, and no one bats an eyelid now and it's just like normal. But definitely, at first, it was a bit like 'what is a girl doing in the dressing room?' I was like don't worry; I have much better things to do with my life than come in the dressing room to look at naked players…*
>
> Gemma: 30, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since

The concern from the male players and staff that Gemma wanted to "look at the naked players" again reveals how normalised and prominent (hetero)sexuality is within these spaces and presents women, rather than men, as predatory. Gemma's experience also highlights how anomalous women's bodies are in football spaces and demonstrates how their presence is viewed with anxiety and suspicion. As Vaczi (2016, p. 308) argues, women like Gemma represent a "locker room paradox" through their presence in a seemingly controlled and impenetrable space. As such, when women do enter exclusively male football spaces, such as the training ground or the dressing room, they constitute an "over-presence" (Vaczi, 2016, p. 309): a destabilising body within the homosocial preserve of men.

Interestingly, the concern about women being in proximity with men in football also came from women's male partners:

I had a relationship for over a year, and the guy broke up with me because he couldn't handle that I was constantly with men…it made me question everything because I thought, wow, do I really have to give up something that I love for somebody that I love? … I can't help that men hit on me; it's what they do.

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

I like working with players, but from a personal relationship point of view, it's really difficult for a boyfriend to go, 'have a great day working with professional footballers who are gonna be half-naked for most of the day, I'll just go to the office'. I've lost count now of the number of relationships that have broken down because of my job…it starts off as something that's really cool – 'Oh my god, that's amazing, you work in football' …then it turns into… 'why is he texting you? ... Which ones do you fancy?' … It just turns into this really negative thing quite quickly.

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

The threat Anna and Megan's male partners felt because of their partner's job can also be understood by considering the power dynamics of the heterosexual matrix. Men accept, even relish, their partner's career until it threatens their (hetero)sexuality, i.e., when their girlfriends are invariably "hit on" by men at work, it threatens their claim to masculine dominance in their relationship. As such, not only do women have to negotiate a presence in football that threatens the heterosexual matrix of the organisation, but they must also navigate the threat that their career poses to the heterosexual matrix at home. As Wright (2014, p. 995) argues, "[h]eterosexual women in male-dominated occupations may undertake negotiating labour both at home and at work to placate the threatened masculinities of husbands and coworkers."

Crucially, having women working in proximity to footballers is a double source threat to male partners. That is, the centralisation of male heterosexuality in *core* footballing roles not only marks women as sexual targets but, as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), male footballers may threaten the masculinity of male partners. As such, women may find it harder to enter or progress within *core* occupations because of resistance at home.

6.4.2 Women's leadership work as symbolically hetero-feminine

Given the difficulties women face in accessing and being accepted within masculinity conferring spaces, it is perhaps unsurprising that women have occupied a greater number of leadership roles in symbolically feminine occupations such as *Commercial & Sales* (n=129), *Club Secretary* (n=103), and *Ticketing* (n=96). These roles, which accounted for 44 percent of women's leadership work in men's football outside of the boardroom between 1988 and 2018, can be usefully conceptualised as support roles or "jobs that serve" (Acker, 1990, p. 152) in that their primary function is to provide service or support, either to the public or to other workers. In the context of men's professional football, men are nearly always the recipients of that support and service. Therefore, we can conceive of women's support or service roles as symbolic hetero-feminine roles that maintain the gendered hierarchy. In the extremely gendered domain of football, pervasive heteronormative practices can thrust men into positions of power and women into functions that support them (Ryan & Dickson, 2018; Williams, 2013). As such, even when women move into traditionally male-dominated industries, limiting their inclusion to symbolically hetero-feminine roles helps to protect hegemonic gender relations. This "exclusive inclusion" (Sasson-Levy, 2011, p. 400) of women can also be found in other sports industries (Pape, 2020), whereby women's inclusion is limited to roles that pose less of a threat to the ongoing gendered substructure.

Furthermore, the sexualisation of women can also structure the ordering of jobs within organisations (Acker, 1990; Caven *et al*., 2013; Filby, 1992). In the case of sales work, women are often preferred because of their 'sexual' appeal to men, as Caven, Lawley & Baker (2013) found in their study of construction industry recruiters. Similarly, women who work in men's football appear to have been strategically deployed into leadership roles that sell, primarily, to men. This is further evidenced in interviews with women leaders in the industry:

The only reason they employed people like me commercially, some clubs, not all of them, is because, you know, they think in their mind a woman can sell in football – it's male fans, male sponsors, male, so you can sell it better…it's more pleasing to male sponsors for a woman to sell to them than a man.

Elaine: 58, Head of Department – Championship/League 2 club, 1998-2015

This extract evidences the strategic placement of women into roles that sell to men because women are "more pleasing" to the presumed heterosexual male gaze. The finding that most women who have worked in leadership roles in football have occupied roles that complement the heterosexual binary of femininity and masculinity provides further evidence of the salient role that heterosexuality plays in the distribution of roles within football.

Furthermore, some of the women leaders I interviewed were also assigned unofficial 'mothering' responsibilities within their organisations. That is, several women provided informal support and guidance to young male players and workers that was akin to a parental role. For example, Elaine spoke at length about the advice and support she used to provide the male players:

I sort of supported a few of [the players] …When they do things, you know, dump their car at whatever time of night they ring, 'what do I do?'…or they'd come and say, 'I've got family coming down, where do you think they should stay?'. Yeah, the new [players] used to come to me.

Elaine: 58, Head of Department – Championship/League 2 club, 1998-2015

Although Elaine's support for the players was beyond her formal responsibilities, the players saw her as a mother figure that they could turn to for help, especially when they were in trouble. Sophie, who was responsible for ticketing, also spoke about unofficially "guiding" the son of the chairman, who had been given a senior leadership role despite being very young and inexperienced. Not only did Sophie have to spend her time supporting a man who was considerably underqualified for their position, but the support she provided was also beyond the scope of her paid role. These additional 'mothering' roles were expected and unquestioned.

Even when women occupy the most senior positions in football, men can still act in ways that 'motherise' women by reducing their role to that of care and emotional support provider. For example, in an interview with the Telegraph, Dame Sue Campbell, the Director of Women's football at the FA, recounted an incident whereby Phil Neville, the then England Women's First Team Manager, interrupted an important meeting she was in to request a "Campbell hug" (Kessel, 2019). Incidents like this serve to undermine the senior status of women in the workplace by repurposing women to serve the interests of men; thus, relegating them to a subordinate role in the heterosexual matrix. That is, women leaders are expected to "restore the gender order disrupted by their entrance" by "mobilising their femaleness to engage in care work" (Fitzgerald, 2018, p. 4)

Furthermore, I argue that to preserve the extremely gendered substructure of football senior women are *necessarily* positioned within supporting roles. As Schippers (2007) argues, the presence of symbolically feminine roles that provide support to invariably male workers provides the 'hegemonic scaffolding' for hierarchical gender relations. Crucially, positioning women in support roles prevents them from accessing the actual or symbolic power associated with masculine roles. As Megan explained, it was particularly difficult for women to access positions that did not have a support function:

> *Women tend to be allowed into domesticised roles. So, you know, physio and doctor, you know, looking after people if they're poorly. Nutrition – making sure everybody's well fed and watered, and psychology – giving them a cuddle and talking about their feelings…if women infiltrate into high-performance sport, it tends to be through those routes so it's very difficult, I think, to get a role in technical elements of sport.*
>
> Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Sartore and Cunningham (2007) also argue that the ideology of sport, which privileges heterosexual masculinity, reinforces gender stereotypes about the types of roles women and men should hold in sport. Notably, because women are stereotyped as communal rather than agentic, they are not viewed as the appropriate type of employee to work in leadership positions in sport. However, they also argue that women internalise this ideology and act in ways that limit their advancement. While I found some evidence of this in my interviews whereby some women had turned down promotion opportunities because they felt that they lacked the necessary skills or experience, especially concerning football experience, I argue that rather

than ‘limiting’ themselves, women were more often acting in ways that were personally and professionally beneficial.

For example, Laura, who worked in HR, argued that women, rather than opting out of masculinised occupations, opt into feminised occupations because they are more likely to offer flexible working hours, which help women to balance paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities. Notably, Laura was one of the few women I interviewed who had negotiated part-time working hours to fit her childcare responsibilities. Arguably, she would have been unable to negotiate suitable working conditions in a *core* football role because of the requirement to work match days. This demonstrates how women exercise agency in their careers, albeit within the limits of structural inequalities – a phenomenon I explore further in chapter 7. This is significant given the tendency for studies on women and leadership to position women as powerless victims of a masculine culture (Billing, 2011). However, acknowledging that some women choose to opt into feminised roles or roles with less seniority does not remove the need to critically interrogate the extremely gendered structures that limit women’s choices (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009).

6.5 An Illusion of Equality

Earlier in this thesis, I argued that discussions of gender inequalities in football leadership must go together with uncovering the hidden history of women’s leadership work. Certainly, the various data I have collected on women’s leadership work in football reveal that a significant number of women have worked in football leadership before and during the new football era. My data also shows that the number of women working in football leadership has steadily increased since the last 1980’s. What is clear from this is that women have made and continue to make a significant contribution to men’s football at leaders. However, as I will discuss in

this section, I urge caution in interpreting this as evidence of growing equality in football leadership. In this section, I demonstrate that women have been redistributed in newly created peripheral leadership roles during the new football era. I also find that women leaders are often burdened with responsibility for equality and diversity roles, even though they themselves continue to face structural inequalities. Finally, I argue that the lack of racial diversity in football leadership remains a pervasive yet hidden problem.

6.5.1 Reconfiguring gender segregation in the new football era

My findings show that the distribution of women's leadership work in men's professional football has become more varied over time. However, I find that rather than a redistribution of women into *core* leadership roles, women have been more evenly distributed across feminised and peripheral leadership roles. Table 4 shows that there have been notable changes in the distribution of leadership roles held by women across different occupational areas between 2007/08 and 2017/18[10]. In the 2007/08 season, 17.1 percent of women's leadership work in men's football was as club/company secretary. However, in 2017/18, the proportion of women in this role was just 9.1 percent. Similarly, there has been a drop in the proportion of women in commercial & sales roles, from 15.4 percent in 2007/08 to 8.0 percent in 2017/18, and customer service roles, from 10.3 percent to 4.2 percent. These changes show that women's work in the 2017/18 season was more evenly distributed across different roles at the same level than ten years previous.

[10] Data has been taken from the 2007/08 and 2017/18 seasons because the numbers of women working in leadership roles before 2007 were too low to make meaningful comparisons.

Role	**No. 2007/08**	**% 2007/08**	**No. 2017/18**	**% 2017/18**	**% Change**
Human Resources	0	0.0%	16	6.1%	6.1%
Ticketing	14	12.0%	43	16.3%	4.3%
Inclusion & Equality	0	0.0%	8	3.0%	3.0%
Marketing	4	3.4%	16	6.1%	2.6%
Community Projects	1	0.9%	8	3.0%	2.2%
Disability Liaison	3	2.6%	12	4.5%	2.0%
Safeguarding	0	0.0%	5	1.9%	1.9%
Hospitality & Events	2	1.7%	9	3.4%	1.7%
Business Development & Ops	3	2.6%	11	4.2%	1.6%
Finance & Accounts	9	7.7%	24	9.1%	1.4%
Retail & Merchandising	2	1.7%	8	3.0%	1.3%
Director of Football	**0**	**0.0%**	**2**	**0.8%**	**0.8%**
Sport Science	**0**	**0.0%**	**2**	**0.8%**	**0.8%**
Academy/Youth & Education	**0**	**0.0%**	**2**	**0.8%**	**0.8%**
Football Operations	**1**	**0.9%**	**4**	**1.5%**	**0.7%**
Legal & Governance	1	0.9%	3	1.1%	0.3%
Facilities, Safety & Security	2	1.7%	5	1.9%	0.2%
General Operations	3	2.6%	7	2.7%	0.1%
Projects	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	-0.9%
Club Doctor/Head Physio	**1**	**0.9%**	**0**	**0.0%**	**-0.9%**
Administration	2	1.7%	2	0.8%	-1.0%
General / Office Manager	3	2.6%	2	0.8%	-1.8%
Football Development	**3**	**2.6%**	**1**	**0.4%**	**-2.2%**
Communications, PR & Media	12	10.3%	18	6.8%	-3.4%
Customer/Support Services	12	10.3%	11	4.2%	-6.1%
Commercial & Sales	18	15.4%	21	8.0%	-7.4%
Secretary	20	17.1%	24	9.1%	-8.0%

Table 4: Change in distribution of women's leadership work in men's football between 2007/08 and 2017/18.

*__Core roles.__

While these findings could signal a positive change in the shape and degree of inequality in men's professional football, Acker (2006, p. 446) warns that "what appears to be a reduction in segregation may only be its reconfiguration." Women's movement into managerial jobs may have increased through a process of reclassification whereby the title 'manager' has been given to female-dominated roles previously considered non-managerial (Acker, 2009). For example, jobs in ticketing were rarely listed as managerial before 2006. While 17 percent of the sample held managerial roles in this area in 2017/18, in reality, these managerial jobs "never come close to the upward paths that lead to top positions" (Acker, 2009, p. 204). Moreover, the number of women being redistributed into core roles, such as Director of Football, Sport Science, and Football Operations has been nominal. In other core roles, such as Club Doctor/Head Physio and Football Development, the proportion of women has actually decreased. These findings suggests that women's redistribution or reclassification presents an illusion of progress rather than any real change in the distribution of power between women and men.

Where women have made the most gains, in terms of moving into previously unoccupied roles, is also notable. The most significant change was in HR, where no women in my sample held leadership roles in 2007/08 compared to 16 in 2017/18. While it is positive to see more women in leadership roles within football, it is significant that the most considerable movement has been into a female-dominated occupation (CIPD, 2018) – one that is linked to stereotypes about women being nurturing (Reichel, Brandl & Mayrhofer, 2010). These findings are supported by Bolzendahl's (2014) research on gender-segregation in the gendered organisation of legislative committees. They found that women, who make up a growing number of political leaders, are still clustered in roles that deal with internal affairs or 'soft' issues, in contrast to men who dominate instrumental policy-making leadership roles. This is significant because women's presence in 'soft' management roles allows organisations to address the growing demand for

gender diversity in leadership without "giving up the traditional classification of female and male work" (Reichel *et al.*, 2010, p. 334), a classification which is crucial in protecting the heterosexual matrix. These findings demonstrate that rather than a redistribution of women's leadership work across existing *core* roles, women have made up the numbers in new but still peripheral and arguably hetero-feminine, diversity roles.

6.5.2 Women and diversity work

In addition to their movement into new management roles, women now occupy a greater number of leadership roles in Inclusion & Equality, Safeguarding, and Disability Liaison. Before 2004/05 no women in the sample held leadership roles in these areas because such roles did not exist in football. The introduction of legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act in 2005, and the Equality Act in 2006/2010 made it a positive duty for organisations to implement diversity and inclusion policies; thus, new roles were created to lead this work. In 2017/18, these new diversity roles accounted for 10% of women's leadership work. Notably, diversity work, or the "doing of diversity", is frequently "undervalued and under-resourced in terms of pay, power, time, financing, and commitment" and rarely leads to promotional prospects (Ahmed & Swan, 2006, p. 98). Indeed, fifty-five women in my sample held diversity roles in addition to their primary job. This was especially the case in lower league clubs, which typically have less staff and fewer financial resources.

Interview respondents, many of whom were the only women working at a senior level within their organisation, also spoke about having responsibilities for inclusion & equality:

I'm on a steering group for our equality and diversity team. When I got to my current club, in fact, the head of HR said to me, oh – at [my previous club] we'd achieved an advanced standard from Kick It Out – she said, 'oh I noticed such and such, you know, would you help me?' And I said of course I will.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

It sounds like your role had a very much equality and diversity remit. *Yeah.* ***So, what kind of things were you responsible for in that respect?*** *So almost everything we did really. The relationship with Kick It Out and all of those kinds of organisations, setting up the equality standard, all of the access stuff, so I co-wrote the accessibility guide… So yeah, I would be the one that would have to push the agenda. I didn't always want to have to be the one that pushed the agenda in a way but nobody else would… they would openly say like 'I don't [get it], I think you get this and you get why people feel disadvantaged or are disadvantaged in football and why we need to change things'… for a long time I tried to resist having that as my main focus, partly because it was just never what I got into it for, you know?*

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

These extracts show how some women accumulated diversity work, despite this work being outside of their remit. As Tracey notes, such work is often passed over by others who do not see themselves as disadvantaged or claim not to understand diversity issues. As such, diversity work becomes the responsibility of those already marginalised, specifically individuals marginalised by their race and gender (Ahmed & Swan, 2006). Because women, especially Black women, are imagined to embody diversity (Ahmed, 1998), diversity work "sticks to" them (Swan & Fox, 2010, p. 568) and can divert attention away from their primary role.

I also found that leadership roles with some of the highest proportion of women workers, such as Ticket Office managers, Customer/Supporter Services managers, and Club Secretaries, were the most likely to have diversity roles on top of their primary job. Indeed, some women in these roles held up to four different diversity roles at any one time. Again, this suggests that women are more likely to be responsible for diversity roles in football. However, the women I interviewed rarely held formal diversity roles in addition to their primary role; the diversity work they delivered was mostly an additional unpaid workload. This suggests that diversity work may not always be visible or formally recognised, meaning the additional workload for women could be much greater than the data suggests. This not only signals the devaluation of diversity work; it also evidences the vast and often invisible workloads that many women are shouldering within the industry. If women are spending more time than men doing undervalued diversity work, such workload implications can help to explain why women, especially Black women, are less likely to be considered for senior leadership roles (Bird *et al*., 2004). Crucially, if Black women are more likely to be responsible for diversity work (Ahmed & Swan, 2006), it may be even harder for them to progress than white women.

6.5.3 Racial Inequalities: A Hidden Problem

The advancement of almost exclusively white women into leadership positions also presents an illusion of equality. Indeed, the substructure of football leadership is not just extremely gendered; it is also hegemonically white (Bradbury, 2013, 2020). As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that white women dominated my interview sample: ninety-one percent of interviewees described themselves as white, while only nine percent described themselves as Black. Notably, there were no women in the sample from Asian backgrounds or any other minority ethnic background. Some respondents noted this lack of racial and ethnic diversity in non-playing roles in football during the research interviews:

What is the racial diversity like at your club and in your teams? *It's terrible, it's really terrible. On the stewarding side it represents the local community but everywhere else in the club it's terrible, it's shocking.*

Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

I've never encountered a Black person on the board. There are very few Black women and Black men on boards.

Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Although limited, the data presented here suggest that the leadership of football is predominantly white. This means that the few women who have reached senior leadership roles in men's football are likely to have been privileged in other ways; thus, granting them certain access to gendered organisational class hierarchies. This is an argument I elaborate on in the following chapter. In contrast to white women, Black women face a near-impenetrable ceiling to leadership roles in football. If Black women continue to be severely underrepresented in football leadership (Bradbury *et al.*, 2014) while white women progress, we cannot claim to be moving towards gender equality. As Acker (2009, p. 202) argues, when intersecting oppressions are ignored, efforts to reduce gender inequality in positions of power are often just "efforts to make White men and White women equal in access to class power". This presents a critical issue in sport because we know from previous research that the coaching, management, and leadership of sport, including football, is a racially structured arena in which white people are privileged (Bradbury *et al.*, 2014; Rankin-Wright, Hylton & Norman, 2019).

The same can be said for the extremely gendered institution of the military. For example, in the US military, African American men are overrepresented in lower-ranking combat and administrative roles but significantly underrepresented in officer corps (Burk & Espinoza, 2012). This suggests that identification with hegemonic masculinity that playing football or active military service provides is not enough to unlock access to leadership roles for Black men. As Connell (2005) contends, the patriarchal dividend offered by a cultural identification with hegemonic masculinity differentially benefits white and Black men. For example, Black male athletes may embody a hegemonic ideal of masculinity, but "the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally" (Connell, 2005, p. 81). Crucially, access to social authority is more readily denied to Black women because the rigid gender regime of the extremely gendered organisation already marginalises them.

Furthermore, the entrenched cultural image of a leader as a white man (Acker, 2009), which functions to exclude Black women from leadership roles, may be even more culturally imprinted in football because of the severe lack of women and Black managers or coaches (Bradbury *et al*., 2014; Norman *et al*., 2018; Rankin-Wright *et al*., 2019). That is, the most publicly visible embodiment of football leadership in both the men's and women's game is a white man. Crucially, this critical lack of racial diversity in leadership roles exists despite significant numbers of Black football players. Several interview participants noted this disparity:

I don't understand how we can have so many Black football players and so few Black coaches. There's something wrong in that… that's the one that really doesn't sit well with me from a governance perspective.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

…ethnic minority players are at the bottom. Even though they are earning X amount of bucks per week or per whatever, they are really just employed to kick a ball… we don't really employ them to think…they're not really employed to steer the organisation so that's why when it comes to that strategic level, it's normally old white men.

Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Although significant numbers of Black men play football, they are rarely represented in leadership roles (Wigmore, 2022). That said, there have been recent examples of Black men taking up senior leadership roles in men's football in England, specifically the role of first team manager. For example, in 2021, Patrick Vieira took over as the First Team Manager of Crystal Palace FC while Darren Moore became the permanent First Team Manager of Sheffield Wednesday FC. Notably, these men are ex-players who possess the prized capital of having played football at an elite level. However, women's football is characterised by stark racial inequalities on the field. As Mia noted:

I think there's a real issue with race within football for women because I think participation for Black girls is low, really really low. So, our academy, our [women's] first team, we don't have Black players in our first team, our women's team… there's a cultural thing there…it's a real contrast to the men's team and I think it's because there's a legacy of successful [male] Black players, it's easy for a seven-year-old boy to say 'I wanna be like whoever', less so for a Black girl.

Mia: 29, Executive Officer – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

If Black women and girls are being deterred from playing football, this will have an impact on the numbers of Black women in the pipeline to take on leadership roles, particularly in *core* leadership roles where football experience is highly valued. Very recently, the lack of racial diversity in women's football has gained media attention (Asante, 2022), yet it remains to be seen when or if we will see any notable changes to the racial makeup of women's football in England.

While the data presented here offers a snapshot of the racial differences in women's access to leadership roles in football, the lack of intersectional data on women's patterns of involvement in football leadership hinders efforts to understand and challenge the conditions of Black women's entry into leadership roles. Crucially, addressing inequalities relating to race and gender as single, unrelated issues simultaneously renders Black women invisible whilst satisfying equal opportunities legislation (Mirza, 1997; Rankin-Wright, Hylton & Leanne, 2019). This issue is particularly pertinent in sport because of the recent introduction of 30% gender targets for Sports NGBs and the introduction of the Rooney Rule[11] in football coaching. While these programs address gender and racial inequalities in sports leadership and coaching, respectively, they fail to account for intersecting oppressions. Alyssa, a non-executive director, highlighted the ineffectiveness of affirmative action programs for non-white women during our research interview:

> *The UK boards have now got this 30%. So, in one way it's good, but the 30% is really targeted at white women and that's the real issue. So, once*

[11] Originating from the National Football League in the US, the Rooney Rule is a policy that adopted by the EFL and the FA that mandates football organisations to interview a least one Black, Asian or Minority ethnic candidate for coaching roles if an application has been received (Kilvington, 2019).

they've got their little quota or 30%, they've got one or two, that's enough then, they've made it.

Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Alyssa's concerns are echoed by hooks (2000, p. 99), who contends that "grouping white women of all classes with non-white people in affirmative-action programs" allows "employers to continue discriminating against non-white people and maintain white supremacy by hiring white women". I would also add that affirmative action policies to address racial inequalities can maintain patriarchy by only hiring Black men. As a result, Black women can easily fall into the "empty spaces" between the margins of gender and race (Mirza, 1997). As such, I call for a greater intersectional focus on affirmative action policies and programs and gender pay gap reporting. While the proposed introduction of race pay gap reporting would provide a better picture of racial inequalities within organisations in the UK (Department of Business, 2018), the intersection of gender, race, and leadership will remain a hidden problem. As a result, diversity policies and affirmative action programs will continue to ignore Black women and present white women's progress as a marker of gender equality.

6.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the implications of an extremely gendered organisational regime on women's participation in leadership roles in men's professional football in England. Analysis of women's organisational positioning in men's football between 1987/88 and 2017/18 revealed that women's access to the most powerful roles has been limited, and that progress on gender equality in the boardroom has stalled in the last decade. Crucially, I argued that limiting women's access to influential roles is a deliberate strategy to protect men's claim to power.

Analysis of interview data further revealed that even when women achieve leadership positions they are largely excluded from informal 'inner table' decision-making discussions.

Analysis of the types of leadership roles women have occupied in football also revealed a gendered substructure of 'core' and 'peripheral' roles. Through a discourse analysis of GPG reports, I found that an extremely gendered logic that naturalises male dominance in 'core' roles underpins a gendered substructure that relegates women to peripheral roles. Moreover, I find that women's peripheral leadership work preserves the symbolic hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity that supports the heterosexual matrix. This finding extends the theory of extremely gendered organisations by demonstrating how masculine heterosexuality acts as a fundamental organising principle in extremely gendered organisations like men's football.

Finally, I find women's increasing participation in football leadership in the 'new' football era presents an illusion of equality. That is, rather than disrupting the masculine core of football, women have been redistributed into new but feminised peripheral leadership roles. Furthermore, the entry of predominantly white women into leadership roles, alongside the lack of intersectional pay gap reporting, also presents an illusion of equality. As such, I argue that increasing the number of women in leadership positions, on its own, is not enough to ensure women's equal participation in decision making in football. Greater consideration must be given to the *types* of leadership roles women occupy and the intersection of race, as well as ethnicity, sexuality, and disability, with gender and leadership.

7. CONDITIONAL ENTRY INTO FOOTBALL LEADERSHIP: CULTIVATING AN IDEAL WORKER/IDEAL WOMAN IDENTITY

While the barriers to women's progression are well documented in the worlds of sport and business, less is known about how and why certain women reach the top. Even less is known about women's journeys to leadership in the extremely gendered organisation of men's professional football. Studies exploring women's routes to leadership outside of the sport industry show that success is largely dependent on how well women can navigate a labyrinth of career detours (Eagly & Carli, 2007), build social capital (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and present themselves as the right 'fit' for organisations (Brown & Kelan, 2020; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). However, the ability to achieve success in this way is heavily gendered and moderated by intersecting factors, such as race and social class. Exposing the gendered, racialised. and classed conditions of entry into football leadership for women is vital if we are to understand what it takes for women to achieve success in the industry and, crucially, identify who is excluded from football leadership and why.

As the women in this study have all held leadership positions in football ranging from middle-management to c-suite and director roles, this research provides a rare opportunity to understand how women leaders construct their success in the face of gender inequality in football leadership. These women represent a paradox. On the one hand, their presence symbolises gender equality; on the other hand, their scarcity evidences a lack of progress on gender equality. In this chapter, I explain this paradox by examining women's narratives of their journey to football leadership. In doing so, I answer the following research question:

3. How do women construct and make sense of their journey into football leadership and what has enabled or impeded their success?

In this chapter, I draw on the concept of the 'ideal worker' (Acker, 1990, 2012; Williams, 2001) to argue that women's entry into football leadership is conditional upon their ability to cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman identity. I begin by examining the condition of *insider status*, in which existing privileges have afforded a minority of women access to football leadership. Following this, I explore *the incompatibility of football leadership and motherhood*. In the final section, *being an ideal woman in the 'sportlight',* I discuss the expectations for women to perform an idealised womanhood under constant fan and media scrutiny.

7.1 Insider Status

The hiring practices of football, as described by the women I interviewed, were strikingly exclusionary. Senior positions were rarely advertised, and a culture of "who you know" rather than "what you know" dominated football recruitment. These informal hiring practices are implicitly gendered. That is, as a group that has been historically excluded from football spaces (Williams, 2003), women are less likely than men to have existing connections to football. Several studies have found similar gendered barriers to gaining a leadership position in sport (Aicher & Sagas, 2009; Burton *et al*., 2009; Piggott & Pike, 2019; Ryan & Dickson, 2018). However, contrary to this research, most of the women leaders I interviewed had benefitted from football's exclusionary and often sexist recruitment practices. This finding suggests that gender is not the only influential factor in determining the 'ideal' football leader.

The findings presented in this section suggest that the conditions of entry into football leadership are also shaped by access to *Insider Networks*, *Professional Status,* and *Intersectional Privileges*, meaning some women have been granted insider status in the

male-dominated football world. Findings also reveal the complexity of women's positions as *Outsiders on the Inside.* That is, while being candidly introspective about their insider status and the exclusionary hiring practices of football, women defended football's reliance on insiders to fill leadership positions.

7.1.1 Insider Networks

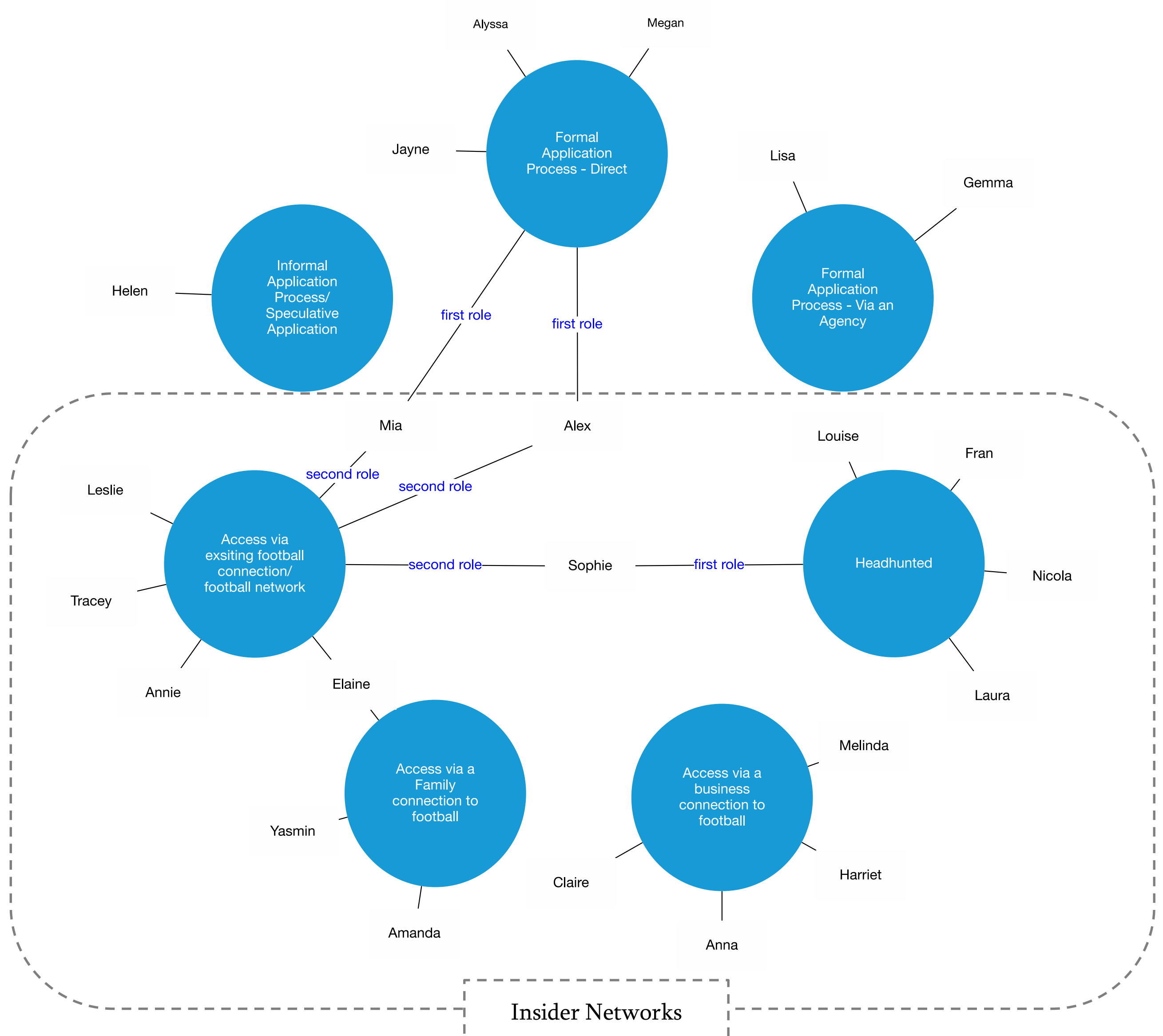


Figure 15: Situational Map of women's entry into football

Figure 15 shows that ten women accessed their first role in football via existing connections to the industry. Five others were headhunted, a notoriously exclusionary process favouring a select group – notably, white men (Dreher *et al*., 2011; Fernandez-Mateo & King, 2011). These modes of entry into football leadership can be described as 'insider networks' (Lawrence, 2018) – a system of pre-existing and often informal connections that are used to recruit workers in football. The extracts below typified women's accounts of accessing football leadership via insider networks:

My husband was a chairman of a non-league club, and I used to do stuff for them…they had a pre-season friendly with [professional club] and…one the guys at the club said, "will you come in and help?…So, I went in and just did a couple of days a week. And then it sort of moved on from there.

Elaine: 58, Head of Department – Championship/League 2 club, 1998-2015

It came about because they kept hassling me actually (laughs) and asked me to go and work there… I don't know whether if I had applied, I would have got the job… but because they just knew me and knew what I was doing they were like look, we want you to be on our side.

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

In stark contrast to the struggles that so many women have faced in their pursuit of sport leadership, Elaine and Tracey described a relatively trouble-free journey to football leadership because of their existing football connections. To make sense of these seemingly

contradictory findings, we must acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of privilege related to gender, class, and race (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). As bell hooks (2000, p. 5) reminds us, the institutionalisation of sexism has “never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in society”. While football’s reliance on insider networks to hire workers disadvantages women as a collective, not all women are disadvantaged in the same way. By virtue of their privileged insider status, most of the women I interviewed fit the ideal football worker mould.

The most recognisable privilege was a family connection to the football organisation. Because most football clubs are family-owned, senior football positions are commonly offered to family members of the owner/s (Maguire, 2021). Indeed, nepotism is an open secret in football (Lawrence, 2018), and success in the industry relies on “being familiar with the right kind of white men” (King, 2004a, p. 68). Both Amanda and Yasmin had immediate family connections to their football organisation, and several other women spoke about the prominent role of nepotism in football. For example, Claire opposed a culture of nepotism in football and felt that having women in football leadership who were related to men in the industry discredited women’s role in football:

> *Some of the women are wives of chairmen…[the owner] put his wife as CEO and you’re like, come on? I know there’s one at [football club] as well. The wife of the chairman is CEO. I mean, I don’t know what her professional background is at all… I don’t know the story exactly, but it probably doesn’t help the credibility [of women in football].*
>
> Claire: 38, Executive Officer - League 1 club, active since 2011

Interestingly, Claire does not level the same criticism at men who benefit from nepotism in the industry. Certainly, the women I interviewed who did have family connections felt they were judged more harshly than men:

> *People report or say things that would be like pretty much sexist – that I'm just here because of my husband…it's just not giving me any credit for the role that I do or my achievements….that's the kind of the casual sexism…nobody ever looked at my CV or what I've done before and compared it to other executives because when I meet some of the execs involved in football, I think how have you ever got the job (laughs) in football?"*
>
> Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

Amanda was, in fact, highly qualified and experienced – more so than her husband. However, her relationship with the chairman undoubtedly put her in an ideal position to be appointed to the role. Crucially, this is a position that few others can leverage to gain access to football leadership. Nonetheless, nepotism is rife in football, and while some women have been the beneficiaries, it continues to shut qualified and talented people out of the industry, especially Black women and men (Bradbury, 2020; King, 2004a; Lawrence, 2018).

7.1.2 Professional Status

Although not every woman had an existing family or business connection to football, most women were insiders in the world of leadership and male-dominated industries. Most women had already held senior roles in other industries before working in football, and

many of these industries were male dominated, i.e., automotive, engineering, law, construction, police, and sport. This finding is significant given that women in senior management positions, especially those who have experience of working or studying in male-dominated spaces, are better equipped to overcome the challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated workplace than women in lower status jobs (Torre, 2017a) and women who have previously worked in female-dominated industries (Torre, 2014). Having already shared professional "space" with men (Mavin & Grandy, 2016b, p. 5) in terms of seniority in male-dominated industries, it was easier for these women to traverse the divide between their previous leadership roles and a leadership role in the extremely gendered organisation of football. As Melinda argued, there are few barriers for women once they are at the very top:

There's no question [sexism] happens, but I don't think it happens…specifically at my level. I think below it happens, and that's the system at play. But I think by the time you've got there, I don't know there's too many people trying to put too many barriers in place.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

Melinda's extract demonstrates that experiences of sexism or "barriers" were relative to women's level of seniority. As Atewologun and Sealy (2014, p. 1) argue, at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and seniority, minority groups can be considered "sometimes privileged". That is seniority, or insider status, grants power and social status to people who are otherwise denied it. As a director and CEO of her own company, Melinda shared a privileged space with men that afforded her access to insider networks. As she goes on to explain, her seniority and related connections made her an ideal candidate:

I had an opportunity when I met the chairman and I built a relationship with him and therefore when he was looking to put a board role in, and I was the right level of seniority, I was an option for him…there's other options that head-hunters can present to him, but I'm kind of there…as you get to the top, one of the things that I've been flabbergasted by genuinely is the similarity between senior business, politicians, and football leaders…It's like everyone knows everyone. It's like this tiny little thing at the top.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

The evidence presented here suggests that women can be considered ideal candidates for football leadership if they meet the condition of seniority, i.e., they have held senior leadership positions in other industries. These findings are supported by Pfister and Radtke (2009), who found that the 'ideal leader' in sport was someone who already had a high level of professional status. Similarly, Kelan and Brown (2020) found that the 'ideal' board member in business was someone who already had experience of being a board member. However, women are less likely than men to have previous leadership experiences, especially at senior levels. As such, constructing the ideal leader as someone who has previous senior leadership experience expressly narrows the pool of potential candidates (Brown & Kelan, 2020). While leadership courses for women aim to address this problem by upskilling women, they are no substitute for on-the-job experience. In a sample of job descriptions for senior leadership roles in football collected by Lawrence (2018), all but two listed senior leadership experience as an essential requirement and none listed formal leadership training as an acceptable alternative. Indeed, very few women I interviewed had any formal leadership training. Those who did already held a leadership position when they decided to pursue leadership training. As King (2004a, p. 47) argues, education and

qualifications do not matter when you are “assessed by criteria that have nothing to with qualifications”.

Not every woman I interviewed entered football leadership from a position of seniority in another industry. Some women worked their way up in football from an administrative or lower managerial position to a senior leadership position. Although these women were more likely to discuss experiences of sexism or overt barriers to gaining a leadership position, they could still achieve the levels of success to which they aspired. As Louise explains, although some men had tried to undermine her along the way, she was able to work her way up to a very senior position in football:

> *I started out as a regional manager, then headed up development and then kind of went on, so there clearly wasn't a lot of barriers to women progressing because I was able to come through that…it has been over the years a male-dominated culture but…I can't complain because I've been promoted, I don't know, sort of 6 or so times…A few years ago, I had two sort of brutal moments where guys were trying to undermine me to get the job... but the people who made the decision could see through all that nonsense and they obviously appointed me.*
>
> Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

Although research has found that perceptions of gender neutrality among women leaders can be a strategy for survival rather than a reflection of reality (Baker & Kelan, 2019; Nash & Moore, 2018), like Louise, most women were adamant that their gender, in and of itself, had never stopped them progressing up the football career ladder. Once they had a foot in the door, most women in this study described being able to work their way up in the football

industry with relative ease. This finding suggests that gender, access to insider networks, and professional status are not the only factors determining access to leadership positions in football.

7.1.3 Intersectional Privileges

Notably, most of the women I interviewed shared intersectional privileges with male leaders in football. For example, the overwhelming majority of leaders in football are white (Bradbury *et al*., 2014), and all but two of the women I interviewed identified as white. White hegemonic privilege is deeply embedded within football's playing, coaching, and leadership structures (Bradbury, 2013, 2020; King, 2004b). As such, white women are more likely to fit the profile of an ideal leader than Black women or Black men (Acker, 2006). As Alyssa explained, there is an assumption that Black women lack leadership credentials:

> *the other board members who are white, they kind of dismissed my experience, because…you don't see Black women in those positions they think that you don't have that experience…a lot of white executives think that Black women don't have the qualifications and skills to do it.*
>
> Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Informal recruitment practices, which are based on "(white) insider networks" (Bradbury, 2013, p. 299), also favour white workers for leadership positions. As Bradbury (2013)

found in a study of minorities[12] in European football leadership, mechanisms of informal recruitment work against potential candidates who are outside of the prevailing (white) networks that dominate football recruitment. ‘Inner table’ conversations (see chapter 5) that centre on informal socialising present opportunities for insiders to trade information pertaining to job opportunities. These informal spaces in football are secret points “for white men and their networks to nurture particular forms of inclusion” (King, 2004a, p. 42) and exclusion. For this reason, it is unsurprising that the only women in this study who identified as Black accessed football through a direct formal recruitment process rather than (white) insider networks. That said, Alyssa, who identified as Black, knew that her success and longevity in football relied on having insider status, so she learned the rules of the game and took every opportunity to network and learn the insider tricks:

> *You have to be smart you have to know how to manoeuvre your way around… you need to understand how things are done… I went to the [football event], I was the only ethnic minority woman out of like 3 or 400 people; there was a handful of women and all the rest men. I normally keep my mouth shut but my eyes and ears are always wide open, and I like to take things in and think, this is how things are done…that's what helps me and my career, to be observant… it's about who you know in football…you hear it at these events and you see how somebody has got to their position. it's not that they’ve got the right skills or the right experience, it's about who knows who and that's how it is in football.*
>
> Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

[12] The term “minorities” is used is Bradbury’s (2013) study to refer to ethnically, culturally, religiously, and sub-nationally distinct population’s resident within nation state boundaries of Europe.

To access insider networks, you have to share intersectional privileges with those already on the inside. As Melinda argued:

> *It's too easy to go, 'it's all because the boys don't like the girls'. It's like, it's not true, is it? I don't think that's true; that's not my experience…It's how you get in…accessibility is the big race problem as well…how do you get into that if you're not in it?*
>
> Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

In answer to Melinda's question – how do you get into that if you're not in it? – I argue that outsiders can access football leadership by leveraging aspects of their identity that 'fit' with the dominant group, i.e., white, middle-class men. By virtue of their seniority, family connections, and race, some women could do this easier than others. However, for women who did not share intersectional privileges with white, middle-class men, the work of fitting in – cultivating a perception of idealness – was much harder. For example, Alyssa felt that as a Black woman in football she had to work harder than anyone else to succeed, because in her words "nothing is given to us on a plate." This extra work, that Choroszewicz and Adams (2019) refer to as 'meta-work', is unseen by those who already feel at 'home' in football spaces (King, 2004a). Yet, "for bodies to arrive in spaces where they are not already home…involves painstaking labor" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 62); as such, it is crucial to make visible the hidden work that goes into fitting in for marginalised groups.

For most women, being an insider was conditional upon fitting in – being the right type of woman (outsider) to work in a male-dominated environment.

I think there's a little pocket in football who go, 'we can't keep them all out now, we just have to accept that we're going to have to have some girls involved and so, let's just try to have the nice ones, like the good ones…I think that's really where it is. I'm not sure that they'd be choosing to have women around.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

As Melinda describes here, football's capacity and appetite for women was finite and there was a sense that the women who did work in football were specially selected based, not just on their abilities, but whether they were the type of woman who insiders, both men and women, could tolerate. In the context of an extremely gendered organisations, I argue that the women men choose to "have around" pose the least amount of threat to the white hetero-masculine cultures if football. Having people working in football who are *too* different to the norm risks destabilising the cultures and practices that serve white heterosexual men. Thus, being the ideal insider was as much about minimising the threat of difference as it was fitting in. As Megan explained:

Not only am I female, but I come with an academic background – both of those things are not welcome in football…I recognise that I can be a real threat to a lot of people. So, that means that sometimes when men are explaining things to me in a pretty condescending, patronising way, whilst everything about you wants to go, I actually know this, I've written a paper on it if you'd like to read it, you just sit there and go, 'ah, that's really interesting' because you have to preserve a relationship, because a relationship's more important than being right.

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

By not mentioning her expertise, and the fact that she is highly educated in her field, Megan works to minimise the aspects of her identity that are deemed threatening in order to preserve relationships with her colleagues. Megan knows that her educational background would be perceived as a threat to her presumably less qualified/educated male colleagues; however, she knows how relationships in football work, so she plays along. When women refuse to play along, they are penalised, as was the case when Chelsea Head Doctor, Eva Carniero, was subject to sexist abuse and had her role reduced at Chelsea FC after overriding the manager to treat an injured player on the pitch (Booth, 2016). Being a woman in a leadership position in football already threatens the status quo, but to hold that position as a Black, highly educated/qualified woman poses a multilevel threat. Thus, granting entry to women who share intersectional privileges with the dominant group ensures the equilibrium is only mildly disrupted by women's entry.

7.1.4 Outsiders on the Inside

Although some women were critical of recruitment practices favouring insiders, others defended football's insider recruitment practices. To these women, the unique and fast-paced nature of football necessitated insider recruitment even if it favoured men or white workers:

> *It's a results-driven business; you need people to come in and hit the ground running, it's fast tempo, you haven't got time for somebody to find their feet, so I think that that means you are fishing from a pool of people who are currently male-dominated.*
>
> Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

There's a perception outside of football…that you go through a normal recruitment process to recruit a manager because quite often you don't…the idea that A: you would have more than one candidate, B: you would do interviews with those candidates, and C: you would have a long kind of structured process, just isn't the reality…the reality of when you sack a football manager quite often is 'shit we are really up against here…we need somebody in straight away…ok, how about that guy because we know him...okay, is he available? Great, let's do it'. Is that the best way to recruit someone? Probably no. Is it the reality sometimes at the cutting edge?...to change the way we recruit because of the Rooney Rule for me is wrong. Now, should football clubs as businesses have a bit more of a structured process to appoint management – to appoint anyone? Yes, in general, but our circumstances in football are as such that sometimes that just isn't the reality, and you have to just make do with what you've got.

Nicola: 44, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2009

While recognising how insider recruitment can exclude women and Black people from football leadership, Harriet and Nicola defended their recruitment processes. Because the new era of football is characterised by "short-termism" and supporter demand for "instant gratification" (Lawrence, 2018, p. 12) these women construct the ideal football worker as someone with existing industry experience or someone they already know who can "hit the ground running". This focus on short term gains leaves little room for football organisations to invest in the career development of their existing workers or for them to take the time to support and train an outsider. Nicola also reproduces male bias in football management recruitment by using gendered language to describe potential recruits. Moreover, both women present football as different to other businesses and use this difference to justify inequality producing recruitment processes. As argued in the previous chapter, football

organisations legitimise gender inequalities by presenting football as a 'unique' business. The fact that women leaders use the same justification for inequalities reminds us that women leaders occupy a complex position as outsiders on the inside (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). That is, as outsiders in a male-dominated world, they recognise the organisational processes that disadvantage women, but they reproduce those inequality producing processes through their 'insider' commitment to their organisation.

The complex outsider/insider position of women leaders was also highlighted by women's acknowledgement that they had benefitted from their insider status:

"I've taken advantage of the culture of football. In any other business, you wouldn't be brought into a role like that that hadn't been advertised properly, and so I guess it did have its advantages for me."

Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

Like Leslie, several women noted how insider recruitment had helped them in their football careers. Furthermore, several women said they had never planned to work in football and would not have applied for a job in the industry if they had seen a role advertised. It took an *insider* to bring them in to realise that football offered a promising career route for them.

Did you make an active decision to move into football? *Not at all. Not at all and in fact, I think I would have been one of those people. I think if you'd said to me, 'do you want to be a non-exec of a football club?' ten years ago, I'd have been like what?...so I got into it through erm I was introduced to our chairman by one of the non-exec directors, who I know through business.*

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

The findings presented in this section show that, despite being outsiders in a male-dominated industry, women can still be considered ideal if they meet other conditions of insider status, such as seniority, family connections, and whiteness. In the absence of formal recruitment processes, these women, by virtue of existing privileges, were able to take advantage of a culture of "who you know." However, while insider networks have open doors for some women, these exclusionary practices ensure that floodgates for women have remained firmly shut. Crucially, this helps to explain why, despite their steady movement into football leadership roles since the 1980s (see chapter 5), women are still critically underrepresented in football leadership roles. These exclusionary recruitment practices also help to explain the severe underrepresentation of Black leaders in the industry. The findings presented in this section also show that once women had insider status, they were able to benefit from its privileges and work their way up in the industry. This suggests that initial access to football is one of the most significant barriers for women. However, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, women's insider status is fragile and conditional upon maintaining an ideal worker/ideal woman identity.

7.2 The Incompatibility of Football Leadership and Motherhood

Most women described their leadership work in the football industry as boundless – a 24-hour, 365 day-a-year role that required uninterrupted commitment. These women attributed their success in this high-demand industry to a willingness and ability to act as ideal workers. Namely, someone who could commit to working long and unsociable hours, unencumbered by external commitments. However, for women – a group most likely to be

responsible for unpaid caring and domestic work in the home (ONS, 2019b; Sevilla & Smith, 2020; Zamberlan, Gioachin & Gritti, 2021) – performing as the ideal worker in the football industry has gendered consequences. The findings in this section show that workers had to display a *boundaryless commitment to football*, forcing women to choose between a leadership career in football or having children. Findings also show that women leaders with children had exceptional *domestic arrangements* that enabled total dedication to the boundless work of football leadership and were invested in *minimising the impact of motherhood* on their football leadership careers.

7.2.1 Boundaryless Commitment to Football

I found that the intensity and pressure of the football industry demanded boundaryless commitment from workers, such that reducing working hours to look after children were seen as unfeasible:

My oldest child is nearly eight, and I've been working full-time ever since, probably had like three months maternity leave or whatever, and I don't know whether it's because I work here that I daren't…almost daren't ask [to take time off]. Well, I just don't see it as being feasible for the role that I do.

Claire: 38, Executive Officer - League 1 club, active since 2011

There is no way that I could do my job part-time, I mean I am literally wedded to my phone the whole time…if you commit to having kids, you want to spend time with them, and you want to do the best thing you

can do, and could I balance that with my commitment to work? Personally, I don't think I can.

Nicola: 44, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2009

Like Claire and Nicola, most women accepted that the football industry demanded excessive working hours without critique ["I just don't see it as being feasible" and "there's no way I could do my job part-time"]. Although women often acknowledged that this was not normal in relation to other industries, they discursively constructed it as normal for football. This taken for granted norm was often used to justify the demand for ideal workers. For example, Sophie described hiring a new member of staff who, despite not yet starting in his role, was expected to make himself available:

…he doesn't start until October, but let me tell you, he's interviewing with me on Wednesday, he's interviewing with me on Monday, he's coming to the game on Sunday, he's coming to the game on Wednesday, he's coming to the game on Saturday. He doesn't start until October, but that's the commitment that he needs to have…I said, you will see your wife and your two boys, you will have a life, but you will work really hard.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

The subtext of Sophie's extract is that someone who cannot be completely available (even if they have yet to start the role) is not committed or hard-working enough to work in football. This perception has consequences for workers who are bounded by external commitments. Presumably, this worker's wife was a primary carer for his children, and so was he able to meet the required "commitment". However, when hard work and

commitment are measured in hours spent at work, women lose out more so than men because they are more likely to have external commitments that mean they cannot completely dedicate themselves to paid work (Benard & Correll, 2010; Thébaud & Taylor, 2021; Williams, 2001). Thus, performing as the ideal worker in the boundaryless football industry has gendered consequences.

The most notable consequence for performing the ideal worker norm for women was the trade-off women had to make between paid work and having children:

Had I had children, I can't imagine I would still be in sport…I don't know how readily high-performance sport will tolerate a maternity leave and a phased return to work and flexible working hours.

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Like Megan, childfree women presented their roles in the football industry as incompatible with family life, especially taking time off to have a baby or having flexible working hours to look after children. While men also had to negotiate family life with long and unsociable working hours, the pressures differed for women because of the gendered expectation that women should be primary carers for children and the pressures of "intensive mothering" (Edgley, 2021). As Megan went on to explain, women are judged for taking time away from their children for work:

"Loads of people like live fricking miles away, so come up on either a Sunday night or Monday morning, work three days and then go home on a Wednesday night and then either go to a club on Thursday or

Friday or they'll work from home…loads of men do that, and they've got young children. Now, imagine the narrative that would surround a female if she'd had a baby or like she had a two-year-old child or a one-year-old child and she leaves home on a Monday morning, comes to work for three days and doesn't go back till Wednesday. The way that people would talk about her would be horrific, and yet, it's absolutely fine for men to do that."

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Alongside different social expectations for mothers and fathers, the physical and emotional impact of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding means that women need to take more time off work than men when they have a baby. The physical impact of having a baby worried Gemma because she knew she would have to take more time off than her male colleagues had taken when they had a baby:

…it's challenging in football because I'm the only female, so I'm the only person in this environment that has this problem. Everyone else is men, and they take three days off after their kid has been born and then they're back at work…for me, obviously it's very different…it's not set up for people who are like a primary caregiver to a child…so I don't know like what we are going to be like in terms of the flexibility that they give us. There is no precedent for it at the club. No one has ever been a female member of the backroom staff, let alone had a child as a female member of the backroom staff…the main reason why I see myself needing to move out of football is if they don't provide me with the flexibility that I need, I won't have a choice basically.

Gemma: 30, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2016

As Gemma illustrates, the need to take an extended period off work to have a child was never considered in her department because it had never happened. Although the men she worked with had children, they had only taken a few days off work when they were born. Tellingly, Gemma frames her need to take time off to have a baby as a "problem" for her employer, demonstrating the organisations' negative attitudes towards parental leave. Moreover, the masculine norm within core football departments reinforced the ideal worker standard of total availability and thus fuelled Gemma's concerns that continuing in her job and desire to have children were incompatible. These findings echo those of Hardin and Whiteside (2009, p. 642), who found that women in the masculine sport media industry had to pursue the masculine ideal of an "almost total devotion" to the job. However, for women, this meant that the prospect of having children brought the viability of their careers into question. Indeed, Gemma knew that she would have no choice but to leave football if she had a child unless her employer could offer flexible working. However, there was no "precedent" for flexible working in her position because she was the only woman in a core role.

These findings show how the ideal worker standard of total availability is magnified in a male-dominated industry because the norm is male, and men are less likely than women to be primary carers (Centre for Progressive Policy, 2022). When women are the exception as they are in the extremely gendered organisation of football, especially in core roles, the ideal worker norm is harder to challenge. For these women, the "specter of motherhood" (Thébaud & Taylor, 2021) looms over their careers as they reconcile their desire to have children with the realities of working in a male-dominated industry that looks unfavourably at workers who take extended periods of leave. Crucially, the rigidity of the male norm in core roles might help to explain why there are so few women leaders in those roles. Recently published research by Culvin and Bowes (2021) also found that the work of

professional women's football is incompatible with motherhood, suggesting that the extremely gendered male norm within core roles extends beyond the men's game into the broader football/sporting context.

It is also important to note that the male norm, and the hypermasculinity associated with core footballing roles, also prevents men from asking for flexible hours to look after children. When male footballer, Ryan Colcough, rushed off to hospital during a match after learning his wife had gone into labour, his assistant manager, Liam Richardson, seemed unhappy with the player's decision. In his post-match commentary, Richardson said, "[w]e're all men, we're all individuals. Some of the players wouldn't have gone – they'd be still in the dressing room now" (Upal, 2017). The suggestion being that Ryan, as a man, should have stayed until the end of the match. Similarly, in 2019, Newport County men's goalkeeper played in a FA cup tie while his wife was in labour. Commenting after the match, his manager reassured fans that the goalkeeper was a "professional" who had "turned his phone off" before the game and was fully focused on his job (Tuckey, 2019). These comments reinforce the stereotype that men are not responsible for children and that wanting to be at the birth of your child and supporting your partner over playing in a football match is somehow emasculating. These stereotypes underpin the ideal worker norm by devaluing care work and prioritising paid work for men (Williams, 2001).

In an industry that, to paraphrase Bill Shankly[13], is seen as more important than life and death, it may be even harder for workers, especially core workers (including players), to take time off to look after or spend time with their families. However, as football historian

[13] Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC manager 1959-1974, is misquoted as saying, "some people think football is a matter of life and death…it's more important than that." Despite Shankly never saying those exact words, the quote is a widely used and much-loved football adage.

Moore (2021, p. 43) recently argued, "football is currently given a significance that it just does not deserve", and the COVID-19 pandemic should open opportunities to reflect on what is really important. This should include prioritising the physical and mental health of workers, providing opportunities for flexible working, and creating sufficient parental leave policies.

7.2.2 Domestic Arrangements

Although the ideal worker norm can be damaging for both women and men, women are usually forced to *choose* between having children and having a career. Unlike most men, unequal domestic responsibilities often prevent women from having a demanding career and having children. As Alex explains, her choice to not have a child and focus on her career was influenced by the fact that her husband did not want to be a primary carer:

> *"When I met my husband, it was a discussion that we had, it wasn't a very long discussion to be fair (laughs), but he wasn't hugely keen… he knew that he was going to have to take the primary parenting role…because of the hours I worked, and he actually said at the time that whilst he'd be quite happy to do it and me just come home at evenings and weekends, he didn't want to do it on a more significant basis. So that was sort of pretty much decision made."*
>
> Alex: 46, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2008

The decision to not have children is all too familiar for women in professional and managerial careers. In a UK study of elite women leaders from various industries, Tutchell and Edmonds (2015) found that most did not have children and openly said that their

careers would not have been possible if they had been mothers. However, as Alex demonstrates, it is not just the requirements of a leadership role that influences women's decisions to have children; it is whether their (usually male) partners are prepared to take on a primary care role. As Williams (2001) argues, the 'force field' of domesticity that underpins the ideal worker norm prevents men from being primary carers and forces women to make the trade-off between their career and having children. Indeed, several childfree women like Megan stated that it would only be possible to do their jobs and have children if they had a partner who was willing to be a primary carer, but that men were not always willing to play the "traditional role of a female":

> ***… if you had young children, do you think you could do this job? Would it be possible to do this job?*** *Err I think yes, it would be possible to do this job erm but only with a partner who played a traditional role of a female in a parenting perspective. So, I think if you had a husband who was willing to do flexible working hours and do all of the house duties, then absolutely, yeah. But those men aren't too common (laughs).*
>
> Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Mothers who managed to balance their careers with having children had supportive partners willing to take on a large proportion of childcare. Claire, who worked full-time with two young children, said that her husband did "50 percent" of the childcare "sometimes more" because he could be flexible with his working hours. Similarly, Harriet attributed her ability to work full-time and have a child to the fact that her husband was prepared to support her career and take on most of the responsibility for childcare in their marriage:

I'm very lucky because my husband is so supportive he is amazingly supportive…I'd always drop [our child] off in the morning, but he'd pick them up in the evening after playing football after school, so he will take care of all of that…I am the main breadwinner in our family, so there's a bit of role reversal in that respect, but it's a partnership…in a real equal way…Lucky, because if I had somebody who was a go-getting kind of ambitious – like some of the guys I witness in here – it would just be a disaster.

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

Tellingly, Harriet considers herself "lucky" to have a husband who takes on a traditional care role. This statement indicates how uncommon it still is for men to have primary caring responsibilities. Indeed, research on the uptake of parental leave by men in the UK suggests that financial barriers, poor policy communication, and gender stereotypes about caregiving prevent men from taking their full parental leave entitlements (Birkett & Forbes, 2019). Moreover, these findings suggest that it is difficult if not impossible to have two 'ideal workers' in a relationship. If a couple decides to have children, one of them has to reduce their commitment to paid work but, in a mixed-gender family, it is invariably the woman who reduces her hours or leaves paid work entirely. When men reduce their hours, it is seen as an exception rather than a norm.

These findings show that women with children were able to perform as ideal workers in the football industry by committing themselves to long and unsociable working hours because the gender arrangements in their homes were an exception to the norm. However, for most women, the "unbending" gender arrangements of family life (Williams, 2001) prevent them from acting as ideal workers and accessing male-dominated professions, especially leadership roles that require uninterrupted commitment. Worryingly, in the wake

of the COVID-19 pandemic, the burden of childcare responsibilities has increased for women (Power, 2020; Xue & McMunn, 2021; Zamberlan *et al*., 2021). That is, the removal of institutional support for childcare and education during the national lockdown forced more women than men to reduce their hours of paid work or leave paid work altogether to look after children (Power, 2020; Zamberlan *et al*., 2021).

However, the solution to gender inequality does not just lie in changing gender arrangements in the home. As Williams (2001, p. 39) argues, employers' "entitlement…to hire ideal workers" sustains gender inequalities in the workplace. Crucially, while workers in most industries struggle to meet the demands of the new economy (Neely, 2020; Williams *et al*., 2012) the football industry is an extreme microcosm that demands total dedication from workers. Without a fundamental shift in social and organisational attitudes towards caregiving, and the provision of sufficient parental leave, women will be shut out of leadership roles in football and men will be shut out of primary caregiving roles.

7.2.3 Minimising the Impact of Motherhood

I found that women who did have family commitments worked tirelessly to cultivate a perception that they were unbounded by minimising the impact of pregnancy and motherhood on their careers. For example, Harriet recalled having to 'battle through' bad morning sickness during pregnancy to avoid being seen as weak for being a working mum:

> *I suffered quite badly from morning sickness, but I battled through…I remember being at this event with fans on my feet for a long time. You're heavily pregnant and having fans shouting at you…because they were upset because they didn't get the season ticket in the place that*

they wanted, and I remember feeling just this sort of real having to be really strong but going home feeling quite broken by it…In terms of my peers … I don't feel that they were necessarily seeing any weakness in me being a mum, but I again did put pressure on myself about being a working mum.

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

Harriet's experience highlights how the football workplace is unaccommodating to the pregnant body. Harriet had to act as if she was not pregnant and not suffering from morning sickness during a stressful event, even though it left her feeling "broken". In a study of elite women leaders in the UK, Tutchell and Edmonds (2015) also found that women with children had to behave as if they were childfree to succeed in the male-dominated world of corporate leadership. Because the ideal worker is constructed in the image of a man - an assumed unreproductive subject – the pregnant body marks women out as less-than-ideal workers, and so they must work hard to hide the impact of pregnancy. The anxiety Harriet felt not to be seen as 'weak' intensified the pressure to minimise the impact of her pregnancy. As Harriet went on to explain, the negative ways people in football spoke about women who took time off to have children had an impact on her and her approach to work and family life:

I had a female boss…she was on maternity leave, and I can remember people talking, you know, 'oh she's never in the business'…I remember how much that sort of impacted on me…I remember feeling that I don't want people to think because I've got a child or that I'm a working mum that I'm not able to perform. So I've probably overcompensated…to try and make sure that [being a mother] wasn't going to be perceived as a weakness.

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

Because the football industry does not facilitate boundary management, especially when it comes to caring responsibilities, women with young children or those who planned on having children had to develop strategies to cultivate an ideal worker identity. One such strategy was not taking sufficient leave after they gave birth. For example, Claire, an Executive Officer for a League 1 club, only took 3-months maternity leave after her first child was born. Similarly, Karren Brady famously returned to work at Birmingham City FC just three days after giving birth through fear that she would lose her job if she took an extended period of leave (King, 2012). Although Karren Brady now feels the football workplace has changed since she had her first child in the early 1990s, and that women can ask for more time off when they have children (ibid), this sentiment was not echoed by the women I interviewed. Gemma, who wanted to have children, knew that her club would not facilitate flexible working, so she had to manufacture a space to look after her child and keep her job by working on a proposal for onsite childcare.

Tellingly, when women were asked about the provision of parental leave and flexible working within their organisations, most acknowledged that their policies were insufficient. In fact, some senior women admitted that parental leave was not something they knew a lot about or had even discussed as a senior leadership team:

we only have statutory, so we don't have anything additional after that. Yeah, to be fair, it's not something we've ever really debated, which we probably should've done; it's just we've just not got there.

Alex: 46, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2008

What are the maternity policies or paternity policies like here? *We had someone take paternity leave recently…but our standards here are quite low, so it's bare minimum. So, people would drop to a £120 per week if they want to have paternity leave, so they were not happy with that, so it's something we should look to increase. Maternity leave? I should know that, but I've forgot cause we haven't had anybody take it (laughs).*

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

The lack of sufficient infrastructure and policies for flexible working, parental leave, and childcare is a critical issue in the UK. As Tutchell and Edmonds (2015, p. 136) argue, "the biggest failure in western society is to have developed systems of work and power structures that do not take adequate account of the need for women to have babies and bring up their children." That said, several industries are now offering sufficient flexible working and parental leave policies that are helping to make the workplace more equal for those with caring responsibilities (Baxter-Wright & Sutton, 2021; Working Families, 2020). If the football industry remains unbending its approach to flexible working and continues to provide insufficient parental leave, then women collectively will never have an equal footing in the industry.

7.3 Being an ideal woman in the 'sportlight'

Not only do women leaders in football have to cultivate an ideal worker identity, but they must also present as ideal women. As the findings in this section show, ideal women must exercise *emotional restraint* and perform a *'respectable business femininity'* to succeed in football leadership. Deviations from idealness are highly scrutinised and threaten women's careers. These findings support existing literature that shows women leaders face greater

scrutiny than their male counterparts (Glass & Cook, 2016; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015) and must downplay their femininity in the workplace to succeed (Fernando & Cohen, 2014; Mavin & Grandy, 2016b). However, my findings show that the expectation of idealness for women leaders in football intensifies under *the 'sportlight'* (a concept I explain in later in this section) and this not only threatens women's careers but can also pose a risk to their safety.

7.3.1 Emotional Restraint

Most women felt that success in football was contingent on performing a carefully controlled femininity. For example, several women noted how important it was for women to moderate their emotions in the football workplace. They recognised that women were judged by men as being overly emotional and so rectified this by regulating or suppressing their emotions:

> *I got terribly bullied by one particular person, and it was really visceral the kind of abuse I got, and that was something that I never want to go through in my career again. It was a particularly horrible time and it made me quite ill. But...I wasn't going to play the kind of the female card of being emotionally upset about it.*
>
> Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Although Helen was experiencing a highly emotional situation at work – being bullied by a colleague – she was careful not to respond emotionally to the abuse. She saw this as

"playing the female card" and recognised that women's emotions were received negatively in the workplace. As Megan noted:

> *there is a pressure to not show emotion because it's expected that you'll come in and burst into tears every five minutes or at least once a month when…I think that can make you quite hard if you're not careful…it's quite difficult not to become erm a bitch…to remain compassionate whilst being taken seriously and not being written off as someone who's just cuddly and, you know, the mum of the group.*
>
> Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Most women did not want to be seen as emotional women because emotional women were seen as less-than-ideal leaders in football and reduced to informal mothering roles. In this sense, to be the ideal woman leader was to become less human, and, as Megan noted, this could make women "hard." However, being "hard" or being a "bitch" also made them less-than-ideal women. Therefore, women had to tread a fine line between showing enough emotion to be liked as women but not too much that they lost respect as leaders. This dilemma is captured in the concept of the 'double-bind' (Hall Jamieson, 1995), whereby women's competency as leaders is measured against masculine leadership norms, such as toughness and assertiveness. Nevertheless, their appropriateness as women is measured against oppositional feminine norms of care and compassion. Thus, women leaders in football face a near-impossible task of maintaining an ideal leader/ideal woman norm. Furthermore, constant negotiation of these two opposing styles can prevent women from developing an authentic leadership identity (Eagly, 2005), which is linked to career success and satisfaction for women in sport leadership (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

However, some women refused to display an unemotional ideal. These women believed that a feminine and emotionally sensitive leadership style was useful and helped to balance out masculine leadership traits in the football workplace:

If we're in a business meeting with women, it would be totally different to the way a male business meeting would be led…we're different in our approach…that's why it's important to have that balance really because perhaps women are probably sometimes more emotional but equally, we've got a broader aspect of things.

Yasmin: 44, Executive Director – Championship/non-league club, active since 1997

I come with different emotional intelligence…I bring difference to the table…I bring the happiness and the jovialness to it, but when I'm ready to be strategic, I'll be strategic…you don't have to be serious all the time.

Alyssa: 50, Non-Executive Director – Governing body, active since 2013

Recently, scholars have argued that compassion and emotional intelligence in leadership are needed if industries are to respond effectively to the complex economic, social, and political issues of our time (Haskins *et al*., 2018; Hillage *et al*., 2002; Villiers, 2019). In this sense, feminine leadership styles may be seen as 'ideal'. However, some interviewees felt that masculine leadership traits were still preferred in football and sport:

because most senior roles in sport have been held by men there is a feeling that there is a certain way to do things, which is more associated with what I would call male behaviours. There's nothing wrong with that, but if you are defining what success looks like in a manager and you are looking at male norms, you are going to look at someone like me and go she doesn't fit. Because you know she is too emotionally sensitive…I would be accused occasionally of being emotional, which I am thank God, I'm a human being.

Fran: 70, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2016

Here, Fran explains that male dominance in sport leadership has set a precedent for masculine leadership styles. Although Fran refuses the masculine norm in her leadership style, she was very established in her career and could afford to go against the grain. For women lower down the career ladder, it may harder to challenge the status quo. Furthermore, when Fran spoke about other women's lack of progress in sport, she judged women against a masculine standard by suggesting that women needed to toughen up to succeed:

A lot of women's lack of progress is women – their lack of confidence to step forward and the feeling that they're going to have their toes trodden on. Well you are, so get used to it. Stop moaning. I always say that if you want to be at the cutting edge of change, then you are going to get cut.

Fran: 70, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2016

Fran compares herself to other women who 'lack confidence' or who 'moan' about things to make sense of her success. In doing so, she constructs the ideal woman leader in sport as one who does not complain. In fact, not complaining was a common theme in women's sense making of success in football:

> *I haven't really experienced anything that I would sort of talk of as particularly noteworthy. I don't have any really bad stories to tell…it also depends what type of woman you are and how you're wired. I'm a pragmatist…I've sort of got a pretty good sense of humour…I tend to take a whole dose of common sense to these things. There's a discussion about whether it's appropriate to call someone 'darling' in the world of sport…some people would say that offends them; some people would say it doesn't…Does it offend me? No. Would I still greet them with a smile on my face? Yes, I would.*
>
> Laura: 48, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 2016

Like Fran, Laura makes sense of her success by distinguishing herself from other 'types' of women who complain about sexism. In this regard, they are separating themselves from feminists or what Fran referred to as the "bra-burning brigade". These constructions reflect the negative stereotypes levelled at feminists, such as the belief that feminists are overly sensitive, emotional, and complain too much (Ahmed, 2017). Of course, these constructions of feminists, or women in general, function to prevent women from calling out discriminatory practices. Women who complain about unfair treatment become a problem for their organisations. As Ahmed (2021, p. ii) argues, "to become a complainer is to become the location of a problem." Thus, the ideal woman in a male-dominated

environment is unproblematic – a non-feminist – and her success is contingent on not complaining. Although some scholars criticise this approach, labelling women leaders as 'cogs in the machine' for not calling out sexism (Rhoton, 2011; Stainback *et al*., 2016), as Helen – who was the target of inappropriate comments about her sexuality – explained, complaining as a woman in football can be complex, ineffective, and risky:

> *I was torn between wanting to report him for sexual misconduct or harassment and knowing nothing will happen. They'll all just be more careful around me, and where is that going to get me? So, you became immune to a certain type of language and behaviour on the basis that I knew that doing anything to try and combat that was not going to help me progress. I don't advise that…I don't think that's a good way to be, but I did know that I would be limiting my own career if I suddenly started saying, 'I find this offensive.'*
>
> Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Like Helen, the women I interviewed knew all too well that their senior positions were conditional; that as women, they were not accepted automatically into the extremely gendered world of football leadership. They had to work to cultivate a perception of idealness. Complaining would have exposed them as outsiders, as less-than-ideal, and thus threatened their position. Similarly, Hindman and Walker (2020) found that women leaders in male-team sports were afraid to speak out about sexism through fear that it would negatively affect their careers. Thus, even when women are encouraged to report sexism, doing so can destabilise their already precarious positions.

As a researcher with access to the male-domain of football, I too felt the need to cultivate a perception if idealness by not complaining. During fieldwork at a football club, a man whom I had never met squeezed my shoulders as he tried to get past me. It was inappropriate and infantilising, but I smiled and said nothing. During her fieldwork in a sports organisation, Shaw (2006) recalled being teased by male employees who would deliberately make sexist comments in her presence. Shaw notes that reacting 'wrongly' to the comments could have jeopardised her credibility in the organisation, so she did not actively challenge the behaviour. Like Shaw and Helen, I did not want to jeopardise my access to the club. I did not want to expose myself as an outsider and lose valuable data by letting this man know his behaviour made me uncomfortable. As women, we learn to manage our discomfort quietly, but this is additional emotional labour that dominant groups do not see or recognise as work. As such, it is vital to expose the invisible "work" that goes into cultivating idealness or fit (Ahmed, 2006, p. 100).

7.3.2 Respectable Business Femininity

In football, the ideal woman was also presented as someone who controlled their femininity by downplaying their sexuality, moderating their appearance, and holding themselves to higher standards than men. For example, Nicola felt that women in the football workplace had to make "adjustments" to suppress their sexuality:

> *…we had a female in the marketing department who came on tour with us…but she dressed in a way that led to an incident because she was dressed relatively provocatively and because she was a woman she felt as if she'd been treated differently and…the guy involved should have*

had equal responsibility…I said, 'yes he does, but you have got to understand that you are a professional in an environment that is very male-dominated. Therefore, you need to be aware of that, and I'm not saying that you can't be yourself and you can't be a woman, but you need to just think about not getting yourself in difficult situations when you don't need to…because you are a woman in a predominantly male environment you just need to maybe make certain adjustments for that and for me that's just the reality of the situation…you have to make an effort to kind of fit in…if you make a thing of your gender, then other people are more likely to make a thing of your gender.

Nicola: 44, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2009

In criticising another woman's appearance, Nicola makes sense of her success in the extremely gendered organisation of football as being the result of fitting in – that is, not revealing her sexuality through dress. Mavin & Grandy (2016b) refer to this disciplining of self and others among elite women leaders as the performance of 'respectable business femininity'. They argue that the privilege of being an elite woman leader is so fragile that doing femininity wrong, i.e., by dressing too feminine or sexy, destabilises women's privileged positions by undermining their respectability as leaders. Furthermore, Mavin and Grandy (2016a) argue that women create rules for themselves and other women in the workplace in the absence of norms for women leaders. As demonstrated by Nicola, when women break these rules, i.e., by dressing sexy or having a sexual encounter with a colleague, they can encounter "disgust" from other women (Mavin & Grandy, 2016a, p. 1107). These findings support those of Hindman and Walker (2020) who found that women leaders working in men's ice hockey police each other's appearance especially when women's attire was deemed provocative. Like Nicola, the women in this study felt that working around men, especially male athletes, meant that women should not draw attention

to their sexuality through their clothes. Notably, the expectation is on women to avoid men's sexual advances, rather than policing men's behaviours.

Although everyone did not share Nicola's views, most women agreed that they were held to different standards than men regarding their sexuality. Megan, for example, never socialised with her colleagues, most of whom were male, through fear of losing her job if she made a "drunken mistake":

> *If you're a woman, you have to be incredibly careful in that because, you know, one drunken mistake and that's, you know, your career is over. And yet of course, [men] will be out making drunken mistakes left right and centre with random women…but no one loses their career from it. In however many years it is now of being in high-performance sport, whenever there has been that kind of error in judgement made, I have never seen a man lose his job…we talk about sacrifice a lot, don't we?...I can't socialise, and that's an incredibly isolated place to put yourself.*
>
> Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

The "drunken mistake" Megan is referring to is a sexual encounter with a male colleague. Notably, she recognises that women are subjected to different conditions than men when it comes to the performance of sexuality and so voluntarily isolates herself from social situations where her sexuality or femininity might be revealed through a "drunken mistake". Megan's experience of voluntary isolation illustrates the 'fragility' of privilege for women leaders in male-dominated organisations (Mavin & Grandy, 2016b). Megan knows that her senior position is not guaranteed, and that one "mistake" could cost her the

job. Crucially Megan recognises that men are free to have sex with female colleagues with few, if any, consequences. Indeed, men in football are free to have affairs (Huxford, 2013) and even host sex parties during a national lockdown (Kampmark, 2021) without derailing their careers. Even when found guilty of the most reprehensible crimes, such as rape (Royal, 2019) and domestic abuse (Smith, 2020), men's football careers and 'hero' status continue unhindered. In contrast, women are judged harshly for the slightest of indiscretions. As Helen recounted, women can be afraid to spend time with male colleagues, especially footballers, through fear of being judged:

One young girl, who I took out of university…her car had broken down…so she was walking along the road, and one of the [players] picked her up and drove her to the training ground. She got out his car and came into the office and she was completely red and in an absolute state and I was like, 'god what happened?' and she just felt so bad because she'd been dropped off by this footballer and she thought that everybody would be talking about her and it would just be too awful.

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Spending time alone with male athletes can be detrimental to women's careers in sport because they are questioned constantly about their motives for working in sport. As Hindman and Walker (2020) found, people assume that women who work in male-team sports are looking for an athlete husband. Simultaneously, women are positioned as objects of sexual desire within sport and therefore face double standards when it comes to socialising with male colleagues (ibid).

Crucially, double standards for women have material consequences for their career advancement. In a study of professional women in Sri Lanka, Fernando and Cohen (2014) found that the pressure to perform 'respectable femininity' – sexual modesty, spending time with family, not being alone with male colleagues – was inconsistent with the conditions for career advancement, such as building social capital through after-hours socialising. Although there are cultural differences in what constitutes 'respectable femininity' between the Sri Lankan and English contexts, there are notable similarities that illustrate the ubiquitous pressures women face to perform culturally acceptable femininity in the workplace. Like some of the women I interviewed, the women in Fernando and Cohen's study limited their interactions with male acquaintances through fear of how such interactions might be perceived by other colleagues. However, by limiting interactions with male colleagues, women in male-dominated professions risk cutting themselves off from the 'inner table' by missing opportunities to socialise and build professional relationships with colleagues. Given football's reliance on personal connections to secure jobs and promotions (Lawrence, 2018; Parnell *et al*., 2018; Waddington, Roderick & Naik, 2001), these missed opportunities could seriously hinder women's football careers.

Acceptance for women also depends on performing a carefully orchestrated display of femininity to fit the ideal worker/ideal woman mould. This orchestration was highlighted by Anna, who on the one hand had been told to dress more feminine in the workplace but on the other hand, felt that certain feminine clothes set the wrong "tone":

> *I've been told that I should wear more dresses in the office (laughs) And also had comments that – I used to always have my hair in a ponytail – I should wear it loose because it's much more feminine. And I've been told that I can't be so emotional, so yeah (laughs), I guess they have certain expectations…I do feel sometimes, going to meetings;*

you don't want to dress like 'look at me' because it just has the wrong effect and you shouldn't think like that, but you do because it sets a different kind of tone of the meeting. ***So, what would you avoid wearing then or what would make you stand out?*** *I think err a tight dress or something is something you have to think about if you go into meetings with certain people.*

Anna: 34, Executive Director – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014\

Here, Anna is grappling with a complex negotiation of ideal femininity and ideal professionalism in a male-dominated world. Similarly, in a study of female football fans, Pope (2017) found that women had to balance their performance of authentic fandom, which was associated with masculinity, and performing a socially acceptable femininity. As Pope (2017, p. 228) argues women in football, be that fans or leaders, are "'performing' their gender in the mirror of a male-dominated world" and so must think about how they will be perceived, not just by men, but by other women who have worked hard to cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman identity in football.

It is perhaps worth noting that as a young female student going to interview elite women leaders, I too felt the need to navigate a performance of respectable business femininity to cultivate an ideal identity. I chose clothes that were professional but not too corporate. I borrowed a handbag instead of using my usual backpack. I wore makeup, which I never usually do, but I was careful not to wear too much or wear bright lipstick. Like elite women leaders, I knew that my position was fragile; that the 'wrong' presentation could undermine my respectability and ruin the interview. In short, I could empathise with the women I interviewed. I knew how to the play the game of fitting in and what I would risk if I deviated.

However, Amanda, one of the youngest women I interviewed, contested the idea that women had to present themselves in a certain way in the football industry:

> *Why should I have to, you know, conform, or wear a power dressing suit? What? Would I tie my hair back? I like fashion…you can still like fashion, you know, you're not a dumb person just because you like fashion.*
>
> Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

Although Amanda was steadfast in her commitment to wearing what she wanted, she also faced backlash because of it, especially on social media, where people routinely questioned her credibility because of how she looked. That said, Amanda also did not have to worry too much about the stability of her position because she had a strong family connection to the club where she worked. Perhaps the risk of revealing her femininity was offset by the safety of her position. As Weitz (2001) argues, women in powerful positions need not worry about a loss of power that might result from a non-normative appearance. That said, women like Amanda also have the power to set new, less restrictive norms for women leaders in football, and this should be celebrated.

7.3.3 The Sportlight

Although several studies find that women leaders face greater scrutiny than their male colleagues (Glass & Cook, 2016; Mavin & Grandy, 2016b; Watts, 2009), my findings show that an extreme media and fan interest in football intensified the pressure for women leaders to fit the ideal leader/ideal woman mould. That is, as the most popular sport in the world,

football receives unparalleled public attention and scrutiny (Bridgewater, 2010; Fenton & Helleu, 2019):

It can be quite stressful…your work is in the public spotlight…it's highly visible, you know, you make the slightest error, and it can turn up in the newspapers.

Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

You get drawn into the limelight in terms of how you make decisions, the judgement you use, the process by which you look at things, is always under scrutiny. And if you are the senior leader, then your name is above the door, then it gets used in the media.

Laura: 48, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 2016

Here I introduce the concept of the *sportlight* to understand the unique pressures of working under constant fan, media, and political scrutiny. I define the sportlight as an intense public interest in the performance and business of sport that manifests through relentless fan-led scrutiny and a media-driven preoccupation with the lives of athletes, coaches, and sport leaders. As the most popular sport in the world, the sportlight shines brighter on football than any other sport industry. Football clubs, especially those in the Premier League, are global brands and attract unprecedented global followers in an era of social media (Fenton & Helleu, 2019).

The global fascination with football is often fuelled by negativity and a remorseless criticism of players and sport leaders (Bridgewater, 2010; Parnell *et al*., 2020). The considerable success of fan-led media channels, such as Arsenal Fan TV, where viewers voyeuristically watch fans criticising their team's performance after every match, demonstrates the public's appetite for negative football content. Although writing specifically about the role of the first team manager, Bridgewater (2010, p. 7) aptly describes football management as "life in a goldfish bowl", explaining that "[f]ootball management is now a profession acted out under the spotlight, judged – often harshly – in the short-term based on highly public performances" (ibid. p. 4). In this regard, the sportlight is inherently critical; as such, living in its relentless glow can have harmful consequences for those involved in elite sport.

Significantly, working under the sportlight has specific consequences for women leaders in football because their scarcity makes them highly visible:

[the] media created this story about me…horrible stories…cause there were no women at that time [in my position]…I'd just worked in a normal industry before…not in this entertainment, football circus…it was quite disturbing.

Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

Tellingly, Amanda describes football as an unusual industry *because* of the sportlight, or as Amanda describes it, the "football circus". Because so few women had ever held her position, the media were voraciously captivated by Amanda's appointment. However, as a

‘token’ woman (Kanter, 1977b), Amanda was exposed to cruel and disproportionate scrutiny because of her gender.

Not only are women in football highly visible, but, as I have argued in this section, they are also held to different standards than men. Of course, men are not immune to criticism or scrutiny in sport. However, when women are criticised, it is often *because* they are women (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2011). In this regard, the sportlight is not only implicitly critical, but also characteristically gendered. It is a light that shines disproportionally brighter on women, highlighting women’s gender and sexuality above all else. In an recent article in the *Daily Mail* (Johnston, 2021), Amanda Staveley, the business executive who orchestrated the takeover of Newcastle United by PIF and who now sits on the board at the club, is described first and foremost as a “glamorous…willowy blonde”, and has her portfolio of business connections described as “her little black book”, a reference that likens her business associates to sexual partners. These overtly gendered and sexualised references highlight the sportlight’s fixation on women’s gender and sexuality.

Yet, when women do not fit the glamourous look expected of women in football, the media is quick to forget about them. For example, although Karren Brady has long been dubbed the “first lady of football” (Brady, 2012, p. 119), I discovered that she was not the first woman to manage a men’s professional football club. In fact, she was not the first woman to manage Birmingham City FC or be given the title ‘first lady of football’ by the media (see Figure 16). Just three years prior to Brady’s appointment, Annie Bassett became the Managing Director of Birmingham FC after previously working as a Marketing Executive for Reading FC. I had the privilege of meeting Annie, who gave me permission to use her real name, and I asked her why she thought the media, and the history books, had forgotten about her historic role in football. Annie simply replied, “Karren Brady was young and

beautiful. I was neither of those things." Annie's comment speaks to the sportlight's obsession with women's appearance. It also reveals an explanation for women's forgotten contribution to football. That is, unlike men, women's value in football is often measured by looks rather than ability. Relatedly, recent research suggests that body image concerns are now prevalent among professional women footballers because of the intense scrutiny that has come with the professionalisation of women's football (Culvin & Bowes, 2021).

DAILY MIRROR, Wednesday, June 20, 1990 PAGE 19

Mirror Woman

The First Lady of football

BASSETT GROUND: Annie hopes to revolutionise facilities at Birmingham City Picture: DOREEN SPOONER

ANNIE IS AIMING FOR DIVISION ONE

WHILE Robbo and the lads battle it out in Italy, Annie Bassett is getting a kick out of ruling in a man's world *nearer home.*

Mother-of-four Annie is the first-ever woman chief executive of a Football League club. She took over the purse strings at Birmingham City last week.

The directors sent her flowers. And not unnaturally in the all-male world of soccer – no vase could be found on the ground.

Item No 1 for supremo Bassett: buy a vase.

But her task won't be all roses. Like Cherie Lunghi in Channel Four's *The Manageress* she is guiding the dreams of an unsuccessful football club.

LEAGUE APART: Cherie Lunghi

There the comparison ends – Annie's brief is the general welfare of the club. Not for her the on-field crises or steamy dressing-room conflicts of the fictional Gabriella Benson.

By CHRISTINE GARBUTT

But neither can she fall back on the script-writers for success. It's down to her own 'housekeeping' skills.

"Women have much to offer football," says Annie, 47, sitting behind her large wooden executive desk and fingering her pearls. "The image of the game is poor.

FOOTBALL needs to clean up its act by having safe grounds, creating an environment where supporters want to go back.

"I want Birmingham City FC to have a higher profile in the community. I want the players to go out to the schools and youth clubs.

"My job is to motivate the staff, look after budgets, set standards, see to the day-to-day running of the club.

"With this sort of professional back-up I would like to see Birmingham promoted from the Third Division to the Second. Stabilise a bit. Then move into the First."

High-powered words from a lady who has only been involved with football for the past four years. Previously, she ran a promotions company, worked in the motor trade, and was a cabaret singer.

In fact, if this church organist's daughter hadn't gone out singing Christmas carols in Reading five years ago, she might not have been in football today.

"I had to sing the solo Good King Wenceslas at some function. A Reading director got talking and said I would be good at promoting the club. So I joined them as a marketing executive."

From there she was promoted to general manager, then head-hunted for the top job at Birmingham.

Not bad for a girl who left school at the age of 16 with few qualifications and no sporting ability.

"But I did love football and was a great supporter, often going on my own to watch Reading," says Annie.

An early marriage took her to Australia where she had four children in five years.

"And that was the greatest asset I bring to football. Bringing up a family gave me all the qualifications I needed... love, understanding, motivation, communication, housekeeping and budgets.

"I was a very loving mum, but also strict. We rented a telly and I warned the children that if they didn't stop playing me up the telly would go.

"The next day when they were coming home from school, the telly was going down the garden path. You should have seen their faces."

IT IS this same attitude that Annie brings to football. A hooligan will not just be thrown out of the club – but banned for life.

"But I don't believe in rules for the sake of them – you need to explain things," says Annie, now single.

"Football needs to be more responsible to its customers. Give them a better deal – in seating, in catering, loos and generally looking after them."

The words flow fast from Annie as her deep set blue eyes gaze intently upon you. But there all similarity to the Brian Cloughs and Ron Atkinsons ends.

For soccer's first female boss is no macho woman in her white pastel-flowered two-piece with shoulder pads and white high-heel shoes.

"I never wear trousers," she admits. "I like to be feminine at all times, even on the terraces."

Her slim, 5ft 7in figure keeps in trim with the Rosemary Conley hip-and-thigh diet, and for many years Annie set aside 20 minutes a day for punishing Canadian Air Force 5 BX exercises – even when she was pregnant.

Joan Collins is the woman Annie greatly admires, because "she's an achiever." And with her dark curly hair and high cheekbones, she offers a touch of La Collins.

Yet Annie dismisses the idea that men may make the odd naughty comment, or treat her differently, because she is a woman.

"Look, I was chosen for this job because clearly the directors thought I would be the best for it. Not because I am a woman.

AS FOR the players, I hope they will treat me as their friend. Come and tell me their moans. Besides, many of them will be younger than my own children."

Annie's children, whose ages range from 22-28, were fully in favour of her becoming a soccer boss.

Ironically, only five years ago when her son Robert used to train twice a week as a soccer apprentice at Reading she daren't step into the club's male echelons. "It was too far to drive home and return and collect him," she recalls.

"So I would sit outside in the car and wait. I would not have dreamt of getting up and going inside, there was such a male aura."

Annie doesn't feel out of place now. As she looks around the empty Birmingham football stadium which can hold up to 28,000, but these days has gates sometimes as low as 4,000.

She feels she is in the right place to restore football's appeal and bring it into the 20th century with new marketing ideas and computer technology.

"Football is a very exciting product," she says with the zeal Mrs Perfect on a TV commercial might tell us about a new biodegradable washing powder.

With battling Annie Bassett at the helm, this is one football club that's going to clean up its act.

'I will ban hooligans for life'

Figure 16: Newspaper article on Annie Bassett's Appointment as Managing Director of Birmingham City FC (Garbutt, 1990)

I also found that the overtly gendered way that the sportlight shines on women meant that women leaders in football felt unable to make mistakes through fear that the media would attribute their mistakes to their gender:

I feel a responsibility to other women because I just think if I fuck this up (laughs), I mean, that's just it isn't it? You can read the press headlines now of '[organisation] puts woman…into a job and surprise surprise it all goes to shit.' And that's it…they can't employ another woman, or at least not until that press headline has been forgotten.

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Under the conditions of sportlight, the ideal woman in football has to be faultless – she cannot afford to "fuck up". As McRobbie (2015) argues, women have to pursue 'complete perfection' in neoliberal times. If women in football deviate from perfection, the likelihood is that it will be made public, and this undermines their position. This was illustrated in an extract from Helen, who described a "career-ending" incident for a woman she line-managed after she had an affair with a footballer:

It ended badly for her because it just got to a point where it couldn't carry on, and I couldn't view her in the same way…I told her very honestly and openly, 'you cannot continue to do this. Not only is he married, which is one moral bastion that you are climbing over, but he's got a high profile. You are going to end up on the front pages, not the back.'

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Although frowned upon, affairs with colleagues would rarely end someone's career in a low-profile industry. In football, especially the Premier League, the fear that such affairs would end up in the newspapers threatened people's careers. However, it was only the woman whose career "ended badly" not the married male footballer. Again, this highlights the double standards for women in the football industry and how the sportlight amplifies these double standards.

Most concerning of all were threats to women's safety as a result of working in the sportlight. Both Helen and Sophie describe incidents where their public profile posed a risk to their safety:

I ended up getting followed home after a work party…I was in a cab, and the cab driver said we're being followed…he was about to drop me off, and at the time I lived at this house in a quiet little street, so I was frightened. I had no idea who was following me. Then the next day, there was a knock at my door, and there was a woman on the doorstep who'd said something along the lines of, 'you were out last night with the football club and the manager blah blah blah', and there was a photographer behind her... this girl had been shagging in the toilet the night at the place we were but we were both blonde, so I was the one that got followed [by the media], and I was the one with the profile, so it was a better story if it was me not the girl that worked for me. Those are the things that I find really unsavoury and distasteful.

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

When I worked for [previous club] and I was as close to the chairman and chief executive as I was – I was very much known as one of their right-hand people…that was quite challenging. I had to change car; we had extra security, you know, you would read that I had a bodyguard at the club at the very late stages of getting relegated for protection, I didn't, I had a security person that was able to you know, contain issues.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

As Helen and Sophie describe, being known to the public as a high-profile figure in football brought undue attention that posed a risk to their safety. Although men working in football are also subjected to threats to their safety, for women, the threats are frequently gendered. That is, they are often threats of sexual violence (Aarons, 2018; Amfo, 2020) – a way for men to reassert their power over women by using the threat of sexual violence as a mechanism to disempower women and make them feel unsafe in male-dominated spaces (Mantilla, 2013). Indeed, Karren Brady recently revealed that she received abuse, including threats of rape, on a daily basis, stating "there isn't a name I haven't been called, a threat that hasn't been made towards me, just for being a woman" (Brady, 2021). As Megan explained, the specific gendered threats that women receive in football can prevent women from pursuing high-profile roles in football:

How do you make sense of women's underrepresentation in senior roles specifically? *I think the biggest factor probably in football, and particularly on the technical side, is probably the media…they obviously appointed Phil Neville as the [England] women's head coach, who's doing a brilliant job, but they wanted a woman…and no*

one would do it because of the media in this country and the way that they treat women. You know, in the last two weeks, the threats that [women's footballer] has received just because she missed a penalty. You know, death threats and rape threats…why would you put yourself through that?

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Here Megan reveals a pivotal barrier to women's access to football leadership – the fear of heightened public scrutiny and threats to their safety. In "core" roles, where workers have more of a public profile, the scrutiny and threats can be even more uncompromising. For Black women in football, they must also deal with the intersecting and compounding effects of sexism and racism from fans and the media. For example, Alex Scott MBE, a former Arsenal and England player and now frequent football pundit, has spoken publicly about how "constant" sexist and racist abuse left her feeling "exhausted" (Govan, 2021).

As Sasson-Levy (2011) argues in the case of military, where the sexual harassment of women is considered "an epidemic" (Enloe, 2007, p. 85), women's presence in high profile roles in extremely gendered organisations may not be desirable – especially if those organisations operate under an intense public gaze as football does. In other words, if equality, in the guise of women's leadership in extremely gendered organisations, comes at the price of women's safety, then championing gender equality in leadership roles without first fundamentally challenging and dismantling the systems that put women under undue pressure, scrutiny, and risk may not be a worthwhile pursuit. That said, these two options are not mutually exclusive; women working within extremely gendered systems can and do challenge discrimination from within. Furthermore, women choose to work in high-profile and male-dominated domains because doing so can be enormously

advantageous for their careers. As I will discuss in the final findings chapter, women leaders exercise agency to stay in and challenge football. However, doing so requires cautious navigation and can ultimately prove to be futile.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I applied the concept of the ideal worker to examine the conditional acceptance of women leaders in the extremely gendered organisation of men's professional football. Analysis of interview data revealed that women's entry into leadership roles depended on insider status, i.e., having access to insider networks and sharing professional status and intersectional privileges with men in football. These findings help to explain why women, especially Black women, are critically underrepresented in leadership positions in football. This analysis also reveals the complexity of women's positions as outsiders on the inside. That is while being candidly introspective about their insider status and the exclusionary hiring practices of football, women defended football's reliance on insiders to fill leadership positions. This suggests that an insider commitment to their organisation limits women's ability to transform exclusionary practices from within.

Analysis of interview data further revealed the incompatibility of football leadership and motherhood. Namely, women's success in football leadership was predicated on their ability and willingness to cultivate an ideal perception of total availability. Although men also had to display a boundaryless commitment to football, it was more often women who had to choose between having children and pursuing a career in football leadership. Men were able to do both. Women with children were able to succeed in football leadership because they had exceptional domestic arrangements and worked hard to minimise the impact of motherhood on their careers. These findings show how women are penalised in

the football workplace for having children and demonstrates a severe lack of infrastructure for parents and carers in the industry.

Finally, my findings show that women performed as 'ideal women' by exercising emotional restraint and performing a 'respectable business femininity.' This involved regulating their emotions, not complaining about poor treatment, and carefully stage-managing their femininity. Crucially, the expectations to be 'ideal women' intensified under the 'sportlight'. That is, as high-profile figures in an industry that receives immense public and media attention, football leaders were subject to intense public scrutiny. However, unlike men, women were specifically targeted because of their gender. As a result, women had to hold themselves to impossibly high standards. Being less than ideal under the sportlight posed a risk to women's careers and, most alarming of all, it posed a risk to their safety. These findings highlight the double standards women must navigate in leadership and show how the football sportlight intensifies the expectation of idealness for women.

8. TEMPERED RADICALISM: DEFENDING, CHALLENGING, AND LEAVING FOOTBALL

Although the findings presented so far in this thesis show that women leaders in football continue to face restrictions and challenges 'above the glass ceiling', such as occupying peripheral leadership positions (see chapter 6) and working under the restrictive conditions of the ideal worker/ideal woman norm (see chapter 7), this only tells a partial story of women's lived experiences. Women's narratives of working in football leadership also reveal the ways women exercise agency to defend, challenge, and leave the extremely gendered organisation of football. However, very few studies of gendered organisations have attempted to understand or theorise women's acts of agency (Billing, 2011; Morabito & Shelley, 2018). Instead, they tend to present women as mere victims of gendered organisations and the ideal worker norm (for examples see: Hovden, 2010; Rhoton, 2011; Sasson-Levy, 2011; Williams *et al*., 2012). Conversely, studies that present women leaders as hyper-agentic subjects who are able to challenge and change their organisations from within (for examples see: Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015) ignore the powerful mandates of structural inequalities that limit women's opportunity for agentive action (Mavin, 2006).

This chapter enhances our understanding of the complex space in-between these dichotomous bodies of literature by examining how women leaders exercise agency within the limits of an extremely gendered organisation. By exploring the possibilities and limitations for women leaders to change football cultures from within through agentive action, the findings in this chapter bring us closer to addressing gender inequalities in football leadership. Thus, the findings in this chapter make an original contribution to

knowledge on extremely gendered organisations by answering the following research question:

> 4. How do women leaders exercise agency within an extremely gendered organisation, and what factors influence women's choice to stay in, challenge, or leave football leadership?

This chapter is framed by the concept of agency as a social practice (Herndl & Licona, 2017). Specifically, I examine acts of *tempered radicalism* (Meyerson, 2008) in women's experiences of staying in, challenging and leaving football leadership. I demonstrate that women use their positions of power to challenge the extremely gendered culture of football through discreet, strategic, and incremental changes. This includes reclaiming negative narratives about women in football, quietly resisting gendered cultures, and seeking ways to help women and girls in football. However, these finding also reveal the additional emotional and physical work that women must shoulder to try and change extremely gendered cultures from within. Finally, I use the Kaleidoscope Career Model to explore how the pursuit of balance, challenge, and autonomy shapes women's motivations to leave football leadership, moving us beyond 'chilly climates' and the 'opt out' revolution as explanations for women's attrition from leadership.

8.1 Defending Football: Reclaiming the Narrative

Despite the challenges of working in an extremely gendered organisation (see chapter 5), and the expectation for women leaders to cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman identity (see chapter 6), I found that most women were keen to defend the football industry and its

treatment of women. I identified several discursive strategies through which women reclaimed negative narratives of women and football. These included strategically downplaying sexism, expressing love for the game, and employing a rhetoric of no regrets to narrate their journey into football leadership. By considering the role of agency, I argue that these discursive strategies are not just a postfeminist strategy of survival within an extremely gendered organisation but are purposefully crafted by women leaders to encourage more women to work in football.

8.1.1 Downplaying Sexism

Issues of sexism in football are well documented (Aarons, 2018; Jones & Edwards, 2013; Jones, 2008; Women in Football, 2016); however, several women leaders defended the football industry by expressing positive views about the football workplace and its treatment of women. For example, Nicola, one of the most senior women working in the football industry, and Melinda, a non-executive director of a Premier League club, used the research interviews as an opportunity to challenge the perception that football was sexist or unwelcoming to women:

> *It's almost a lazy perception for people to assume that football is sexist. And look, I have worked with managers who are sexist… but you shouldn't therefore say that every manager is sexist, and that's the lazy perception that I think some people historically have had with football.*

Nicola: 44, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2009

Do you have to take a bit of flack occasionally? Yeah, but that's life…you can't blame a sport or a business for a societal problem…is football a bit sexist sometimes? Yeah, but only in the way that society is a bit sexist sometimes.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

Although the women I interviewed rarely denied the existence of sexism in football, most, like Nicola and Melinda, fervently challenged the "lazy" view that football was inherently sexist or that the industry had a problem with women. Even when women acknowledged sexism in football, most were keen to distance themselves or their organisation from the "horror stories":

I heard some real horror stories about women who had worked in football…things that were just inconceivable…and I thought, 'I will never work in that sport' and then actually, I've come here, and I'm not sure if it's because my expectations were so low (laughs), but now I just think it's the best place I've worked in terms of gender.

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

I know someone in football in a similar position who was banned from going down the tunnel because she was a woman. I've never experienced that…I think if your function and your role and yourself are taken seriously then it doesn't matter if you are a woman or a man.

Lisa: 51, Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2011

Previous research suggests that women leaders defend their organisation's poor treatment of women because a neoliberal postfeminist sensibility forces women to internalise structural inequalities (Chapple & Ziebland, 2018; Rhoton, 2011; Rottenberg, 2014) and invest "in the perceived fairness of their own organizations" (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010, p. 392). Other researchers have suggested that women leaders' denial of organisational sexism is a strategy to survive male-dominated workplaces (Baker & Kelan, 2019; Nash & Moore, 2018), including sport organisations (Hindman & Walker, 2020). Indeed, I too found that not complaining about poor treatment in football was a strategy to cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman norm (see chapter 6). However, the problem with these strategies is that they remove the need for a critique of the organisation. Individualising or ignoring experiences of sexism or insisting that football is no different to the rest of society absolves the football industry of responsibility to change and ignores powerful influence that football has on society. Nonetheless, framing women's defence of sexist organisations as nothing more than a strategy of self-preservation fails to account for the role of agency in women leaders' narratives.

By viewing agency as social practice, I argue that women's defence of the football industry can also be read as an "agentive act" – an act "that intervene[s] in the world with something in mind (or heart)" (Ortner, 2006, p. 136). That is, I found that the interview provided the opportunity for women leaders to intentionally and prudently shape their narratives in ways that encouraged other women to work in the football industry:

I make big things about encouraging women into the industry, so I don't want to cover up what was happening, I don't want to gloss over stuff,

but again it's striking that right balance between being honest about the experience but also encouraging more people to come in.

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

We're in these positions and we've got a voice… I think it's unlikely that I would be able to single handedly change a 12-year old's view, but what I can absolutely do though is put them off…which is why when I do talk about things, I'm not trying to minimise the experience of being a woman, I'm just trying not to demonise it so that somebody says, 'I don't want to do that'…I can tell you twenty horror stories but what's the point?...everyone's got twenty horror stories.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

Whilst acknowledging the negative aspects of football, Tracey and Melinda did not want their experiences to put other women off from working in football. Crucially, they recognised that the sharing of 'horror stories' functioned to discourage other women from working in football. Therefore, these women actively constructed a "balanced" story of being a woman in football. Notably, these women came to the interview with the intention of reclaiming negative narratives about women and football in the hope that other women would see football leadership as a viable career option. I argue that reclaiming negative narratives about football are acts of 'tempered radicalism' (Meyerson, 2008; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). That is, within the constraints of the extremely gendered organisation, in which women's access to power and influence is severely limited (see chapter 5), the one power women have is the ability to encourage or discourage other women from working in

the industry. The women I interviewed chose to actively *encourage* other women to see football leadership as a career by presenting football in a positive light.

Moreover, several women expressed frustration at the negative framing of women's experiences of working in football. No more so was this evident than in women's views on Women in Football – a network for women working in football:

A lot of women working in football were really frustrated with Women in Football…I think the main reason was that…it was largely women that didn't work in football. They would say they worked in football, but to us they worked in the media…it seemed like they were trying to characterise [football] like it was all a Benny Hill sketch.

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

When Women in Football first started…I was asked about it whether or not I was going to join and…I said I don't want to be a woman who talks about how hard it is being in a male dominated industry. I want to be a woman that works in a male dominated industry and does a good job and I want more women to work in that industry and do a good job not sit in a room banging on about how hard it is. I don't see the point in doing that. I do see the point in challenging stereotypes, and I do see the point in challenging what happens in boardrooms, but I genuinely don't think that sitting around moaning about stuff that you have to go through or put up with is going to change anything.

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Of course, Women in Football exists to support women in the industry and actively challenges the damaging stereotypes and sexist behaviours that Helen speaks of. This necessarily involves highlighting issues in the industry. Nonetheless, as well as feeling misrepresented by Women in Football, many of the women I interviewed were concerned that an overly negative focus on women's experiences of football would fail to change problematic cultures and practices. Once again, women's desire to downplay experiences of sexism in football and to not focus on the negative aspects of the industry, while giving the impression of indifference, is entrenched in a desire to change football for the better (Jones, 2008). Crucially, this evidences how women enact agency within the sociocultural limits of the extremely gendered organisation to reclaim negative narratives about women in football.

Moreover, I found that women's motivation for reclaiming the narrative is rooted in communal responsibility, rather than self-preservation (Baker & Kelan, 2019). That is, women saw it as part of their job, as women leaders in football, to support the next generation of women leaders. In this regard, women's defence of the football industry can also be viewed as a collective feminist act. As Louise explained:

> *Part of my role…is to try and encourage and support other women to come through…because we want women to come through in the future. I'm not one of those…that would sort of...pull the ladder up.*
>
> Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

I do personal mentoring as well as group mentoring…I sponsor a couple of people in here and just meet with them to kind of help guide them through some issues that they are experiencing on a monthly basis... all the people that I sponsor are women, which I think is important…I think as a role model in here, it's important that I do that.

Lisa: 51, Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2011

Significantly, women leaders' narratives of responsibility to act for the betterment of other women counters neoliberal and postfeminist ideals of individualism – ideals that successful women in football and business have been accused of supporting (Adamson, 2017; Rottenberg, 2014; Wilkes, 2015). These findings support those of Shaw and Leberman (2015) who found that women CEO's of sport organisations were invested in changing their organisations to support the development of other women. However, as I argued in chapter 5, the burden of responsibility for development of women as leaders often falls on the shoulders of women. In fact, half of the women I interviewed had both formal and informal responsibilities for equality, diversity, and inclusion within their organisations. Given the boundaryless nature of football and the strain that long working hours puts on workers, especially women (see chapter 6), it is vital to acknowledge the extra work that women assume in the industry to lift other women up. This is crucial given that the FA's new EDI strategy includes a commitment to delivering mentoring programmes, inclusion education, and leadership programmes for employees (The FA, 2021c). The concern is that those already marginalised will be expected to assume responsibility for delivering these commitments. Indeed, it is notable that the strategy was produced by the HR Director and Director of International and Corporate Affairs – both of whom are women.

Although women leaders were passionate about supporting other women, it is difficult to separate women's ostensibly feminist actions from their ambassadorial responsibilities to their organisation. That is, even in a confidential setting, senior figures are unlikely to criticise an organisation they are accountable for, especially if they are the ones responsible for diversity and inclusion work. Unsurprisingly, women who had left football were more likely to criticise the industry. In fact, the confidential interview setting provided a safe outlet for some women to speak out about unfair treatment. However, while remaining critical of the football industry, women who had left football still spoke about how much they enjoyed working in it. These women's motivations were not tied to an ambassadorial responsibility to an organisation – they simply wanted to express how much they enjoyed working in football.

8.1.2 The Love of the Game

One of the most dominant narratives in the research interviews was women's love of working in football. In fact, for some women, their love of working in football was akin to an addiction:

> *It's drug like. When I travelled and represented my previous club's board, it was like a drug… it'd be like electric. And when we won, wow!*
>
> Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

> *It was just this life that I absolutely wanted... it was intoxicating. I just wanted to be part of something that brings so much joy – unparalleled*

unbridled kind of joy when you win a football match…it's ludicrous really, you know, it's 90 minutes, but it gives you such a lift and you don't get that in normal jobs.

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

I got bitten by the [football] bug and it's quite a hard industry to then, once you're in it, to sort of leave. ***Oh okay, so why do you say that?****…it's high energy, high tempo. It's got an exciting element to it, obviously slightly unpredictable as well, but that can be quite sort of compelling.*

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

Women's love of and desire to work in the football industry flooded their career narratives. Crucially, these women felt that the football industry was unique in this function. Although a principal factor in women's career choices, the desire to work for enjoyment and fulfilment is frequently overlooked in favour of a victim paradigm that views women's need to work as a financial necessity rather than a choice (Alakeson, 2012; Shashikant, 2019). In contrast, men's need to work is frequently linked to a sense of self (Berdahl, Cooper, Glick, Livingston & Williams, 2018), such that the loss of employment is seen to result in a 'crisis of masculinity' (Morgan, 2006). However, women challenged this view by expressing how important their work was to their lives. Crucially, this narrative challenged the often-negative accounts about being a woman in football. Moreover, the overwhelming enjoyment that women derived from working in football challenged *my* preconceptions about what it was like for women in football.

The women I interviewed did not see themselves as victims of a gendered organisation, they chose a career in football because the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. Elaine, for example, owned her own business and spoke about not needing the money from her football job. The enjoyment of working in football was the reason she worked so hard for the club and stayed for so long (17 years), despite experiencing discriminatory treatment along the way:

> ***It's interesting that you say that you didn't necessarily need to do that job…a six-day-a-week job****… I enjoyed it.* **Is that why you did it?** *I enjoyed coming up with new ideas…when they're successful and they're going up and they're winning trophies and they're winning titles and one thing and another, it's really good… and I got to do things what I really wanted to do. So, I did enjoy it…*
>
> Elaine: 58, Head of Department – Championship/League 2 club, 1998-2015

Although not every woman had the safety net of owning a business, as senior figures, they arguably had the financial stability to leave their jobs if they needed. Crucially, they *chose* to stay because they enjoyed the work. In fact, I found that women's criticism of the football industry was moderated by the enjoyment they got from working in it:

> *I never really got much pleasure out a standard 9 to 5 office job, the trade-off that I have is that my job and football totally takes over my life…so you trade the excitement of not being stuck in an office working 9 to 5 with the fact that it's all-encompassing.*

Nicola: 44, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2009

Football provided an outlet for women to do exciting and interesting work. Crucially, women felt that the "trade-offs" they had to make to work in football were worth it for the excitement. These narratives demonstrate how women, within the constraints of an extremely gendered organisation, enacted agency by choosing to stay in football even though their socioeconomic position would have allowed them to walk away with relative ease.

Feminist scholars have criticised choice rhetoric in women's career narratives for individualising structural inequalities. As Williams (2001, p. 38) argues "[c]hoice rhetoric serves to veil the powerful mandates of domesticity in the language of self-fulfilment". This critique views women's choice narrative as an extension of the patriarchal structures that limit women's material choices. However, while problematising a rhetoric of choice remains important for feminist critiques of neoliberalism and postfeminism, I argue that women's narratives of enjoyment and choice can also be read as an agentive act. That is, by viewing agency as social practice, I suggest that the interview setting provided the opportunity for women to reclaim the often-negative narrative around women's choice to pursue a boundaryless career. For example, Alex and Sophie spoke about the boundaryless nature of football leadership complimenting the energy and commitment they had for paid work:

You live and breathe it. And for seven years, [the club] was everything…it almost becomes a lifestyle rather than just a job and that's actually what I loved. It was why I made the decision to stay in

football because actually, that suits me fine. I tend to throw myself into any job that I do so fully anyway, that actually, to throw myself into a job that is as much fun as it is to be around a football club it just kinda brings the two things together.

Alex: 46, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2008

do you ever switch off? *No and I don't want to. I'm happy with the balance of where I am. I have a great life…I thoroughly feed off it…I've got that level of commitment and energy and in this job, you have that forum if you are that type of person... people will say, 'you haven't got a life' – I think I have.*

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Alex and Sophie's love of working in a demanding and all-encompassing industry offers a critical counter-narrative to the ideal worker norm. These women did not feel constrained by their jobs; they thrived in them. That said, it must be noted that neither woman had young children. Alex was childfree and Sophie's children were grown-up. Arguably, they were able to thrive in a boundaryless industry as women because they were unencumbered (Acker, 1990). Nonetheless, their passion and commitment to their work in football challenged the narrative that women can only be happy or fulfilled if they have children to look after – a narrative rarely directed at men. Similarly, they challenged the view that women who dedicate themselves to paid work "haven't got a life". Work was their life, and they were very happy with that.

8.1.3 No Regrets

Several women also employed a rhetoric of "no regrets" to discuss the trade-off between work and family. Helen and Fran, both of whom were single and childfree, were content with the choices they had made to prioritise their careers and were keen to convey this during the interviews:

> *[work] wasn't conducive to long-term relationships, which is my choice. I chose the career over doing that at the time. Do I regret it? Not particularly…you have to work really hard to be highly regarded.*
>
> Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

> *I've been as unsuccessful with my personal life as I have been successful in my professional life…and that's a choice in the end that you make I'm afraid…Would I choose differently? I don't think so. I've had such a privileged journey; I wouldn't change it…I still want to come to work every morning.*
>
> Fran: 70, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2016

Of course, if women could choose a successful and fulfilling career *and* a partner with children, they would probably choose both; "[a] system that allows only these two alternatives is one that discriminates against women" (Williams, 2001, p. 38). That said, it does not mean that women like Helen and Fran have not made autonomous choices. What it does mean is that they have acted freely within the limits of the extremely gendered

organisation. As Williams (2001, p. 37) argues, “choice and discrimination are not mutually exclusive”. For example, Glass and Cook (2016) found that women chose ‘glass cliff’ (Ryan & Haslam, 2005) positions that they knew were ‘risky’ because they offered them the best opportunities to get ahead within the limits of structural gender inequalities. The women in their study knew that they might never reach the top if they held out for a safe leadership position, so they *chose* the risky leadership roles that the men did not want rather than staying where they were. Similarly, several women I interviewed *chose* their work over having a family because they knew that having a family would have impacted negatively on a career that they loved. Without losing sight of sociocultural constraints that limit women’s options, it is important to acknowledge the power of choosing a career over having a family, especially in a society that places greater value on women as mothers and wives (McCutcheon, 2018; Verniers, 2020).

Although the ideal worker norm placed additional pressures on women with young children, they too spoke about how much they enjoyed working in football. Claire, for example, spoke at length about the challenges she faced as a mother to two young children working in the football industry. Nonetheless, she found it hard to imagine herself working anywhere else:

> *It is quite exciting on certain days. So, it’d be difficult to go back to nuts and bolts, do you know what I mean? Where just every day is the same. I’m not sure I could do that.*
>
> Claire: 38, Executive Officer - League 1 club, active since 2011

Like Claire, most women stated that they were happy with their choices. Despite the demands and sacrifices they had made, women loved working in football and derived a great sense of joy, pride, and fulfilment from it. As Meyerson (2008) notes, tempered radicals often love their jobs. It is why they stay within organisations that compromise their identities. Without a love of the job, tempered radicals have no reason to stay and challenge the system. Of course, Meyerson acknowledges that there is a fine line between hypocrisy and the duality of a tempered radical existence. Many women loved their jobs, not just for the sake of the job, but because of the social and financial benefits it yielded. Would these women be as keen to stay in and challenge an extremely gendered industry in which they were paid significantly less than they are in football? Perhaps not. But in a society where women, on average, are paid less than men, I cannot begrudge women for enjoying financial success. In fact, if football offers a well-paid career for women, it is all the more reason for women leaders to stay in the industry and encourage other women to choose the same career path.

By reclaiming negative narratives about women in football, I have argued that women leaders are engaging in acts of tempered radicalism. However, these narratives were designed to change the mindset of people outside the organisation. As I will discuss in the following section, changing cultures within football required different tempered radical strategies.

8.2 Challenging Football: Resisting an Extremely Gendered Organisational Regime

Another way that women enacted agency within their football organisation was to challenge cultures and practices that discriminated against women *within* their

organisations. However, given their peripheral (see chapter 5) and conditional inclusion (see chapter 6) in the extremely gendered organisation of football, women had to tread a fine line between rebellion and conformity. Nonetheless, I found that women still engaged in small, incremental acts of tempered radicalism that allowed them to challenge the dominant culture without threatening their organisational position. I start by exploring *strategies of resistance* and argue that to change extreme cultures from within, women leaders must navigate a complex middle ground between acting as 'cogs in the machine' and 'agents of change'. I move on to examine the emotional and physical *burden of resistance* that falls on the shoulders of organisational outsiders before revealing women's *motivations for resistance*.

8.2.1 Strategies of Resistance

My findings show that, despite facing challenges and restrictions within the extremely gendered organisation of football, when given the opportunity, women leaders can and do challenge inequalities through acts of quiet resistance. To challenge and change their organisations from within, the women I interviewed choose from a spectrum of tempered radical strategies, which ranged from resisting quietly, turning personal threats into opportunities, and broadening impact through negotiation (Meyerson, 2008). For example, Louise, a senior executive, was careful not to engage in 'bad' working habits, such as working late in the office, because she did not want her staff, especially women, to think that it was expected of a leader:

> *You wouldn't see me, even if I was working late, I wouldn't get into a habit of sitting [in the office] until late because I think that's sending*

the message that it's expected and it's not. You know, I want…for us all to work hard in the day and go home in the evening.

Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

This quiet act of resistance demonstrates an acute awareness of the ways that workplace cultures can disproportionately disadvantage certain workers. Not only was Louise aware of this, she also actively tried to make a small change to her workplace culture by setting a different example. Similarly, Megan, who was the first woman to hold her position, spoke about making 'little rules' for herself when it came to her treatment of women and men in her department:

…I won't let any women make tea in the building and I know that sounds really daft and such a pathetic thing, but I don't ever want it to get to a place where the woman gets the food or she makes the tea or she types up the notes or, you know, if there is someone who needs to take notes, then it will be an equal share

Megan: 37, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2018

Megan recognised that domestic tasks, such as taking notes or making the tea, were often assigned to women, as such she intentionally delegated these tasks to the men in her team or ensured that those tasks are equally shared between women and men. Megan recognised that this as a small act of resistance ("I know that sounds really daft") but she also knew the limitations of her position as a woman in male-dominated profession. Indeed, she spoke at length about how her appointment was a "brave" decision for the organisation. To come into a role that no woman has ever held and start pushing for radical transformation in an

environment that is resistant to change could have put Megan in riskier position than she was already in. As Williams (2001, p. 38) argues, “what we need to do to function in the world as we know it is very different from what we need to do to change it”. Women like Megan, first and foremost, needed to survive in the football industry and this moderated the extent to which they can challenge it. Crucially, Megan’s act of quiet resistance posed little to threat to her position as an organisational outsider because nobody knew what she was doing. Nonetheless, her actions meaningfully challenged the status quo from within.

Quiet, incremental, and individualised strategies for change are subject to intense criticism, and their ability to change unequal power structures is questionable (Foster, 2015; Rottenberg, 2019). Yet, these strategies may be the only ones available to women leaders under the conditions of an extremely gendered regime, or the only ones that pose the least threat to their organisational position. Like the tempered radicals Meyerson and Scully (1995) describe, several of the women I interviewed found ways to rock the boat without putting themselves at risk of being labelled a “troublemaker” (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000, p. 136). While this strategy may seem self-interested, without these women pushing for change on the inside, however slow that change may be, there might be far fewer opportunities for women and girls to participate in football.

Another strategy of tempered radicalism is turning personal threats into opportunities for action. This was demonstrated by Gemma, who knew how difficult it would be for her to keep her all-consuming job if she had children. Rather than leave a job she loved or risk her professional position by complaining about the situation for working mothers, she decided to advocate for onsite childcare facilities:

… something that I am sort of working on in the background is trying to push to have childcare on site because it's something that we've never done as a club and it's something that not many other clubs do… I don't have it all quite mapped out yet, but I want to try and talk to clubs that do it…my proposal would potentially be that like you have a paid for service, it's not free, but 5 days a week you pay for it and then if you are required to work over and above 5 days a week the other two days free … it's really difficult to put a business case together because you don't know how much people would use it that's the thing.

Gemma: 30, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2016

Despite working for a wealthy club, Gemma knew that she needed to put a "business case" together. She knew that the only way to push for the changes she wanted to see was to use existing structures and cultures and make them work to her advantage. Proposing an onsite childcare facility that would financially benefit the club gave Gemma a chance of success. However, Meyerson warns that couching gender equality efforts in the language of existing cultures is a "double-edged sword" (2008, p. 150). On the one hand, using language and tactics that insiders know and trust can help a tempered radical gain the credibility they need to make changes. On the other hand, using insider language risks overlooking the real issue.

Unlike Gemma, Fran, a head of department for a football governing body, maintained an outsider frame when advocating for more resources for the women's team. Although Fran was steadfast in her commitment to gender equality and made this clear to the people she worked with, she was tempered in her approach:

I'm a great believer that in culture revolution doesn't work, it needs to be evolution. Now, I will die, literally, on the hillside for things I believe in, but in culture I've learnt that it's an evolutionary process and the way that you really affect change in a culture which is very male-dominated is credibility. …we are always having to compromise because we just can't get the support that we want…I just have to be patient and keep building…every time I get the opportunity, I go in front of the board and do my thing, but I know that there is some resentment still to the sort of whole notion that we are spending a lot of money on the women's game… it is a big mountain, I'm nowhere near the top of it and I probably won't get to the top of it before I have to retire.

Fran: 70, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2016

Fran knew that pushing for too much change too soon would aggravate those who, despite being unsupportive of women's football, Fran needed to keep onside. Therefore, she broadened her impact through "patient" negotiation with the board – what she called "nudging the culture" – and leveraged small wins along the way. Nonetheless, she knew that this approach was a marathon, not a sprint, and that she may never see the changes she wants to see in her career.

These findings offer a critical perspective on how women leaders navigate their positions as outsiders on the inside by revealing the ways that women challenge extremely gendered football cultures without threatening their organisational position. This perspective bridges the gap between the 'cogs in machine' literature that criticises women leaders for showing solidarity with patriarchal structures (Baker & Kelan, 2019; Derks *et al*., 2011; Kaiser & Spalding, 2015) and 'agents of change' literature that celebrates women leaders as hyper-agentic change makers (Adamson & Kelan, 2019). Unlike these opposing bodies of

literature, my findings show that women leaders occupy a complex middle ground in between ‘cogs in the machine’ and ‘agents of change’. In this space, women leaders must act in ways that help them fit into the system whilst simultaneously finding opportunities to challenge it. Moreover, these findings demonstrate that women’s ability to challenge and change football cultures from within are limited. As such, we must question the effectiveness of ‘add women in’ approaches to tackling gendered equality, such as gender targets, that are premised on the idea that women leaders can and will create positive changes for women and girls in sport.

8.2.2 The burden of resistance

Add women in approaches also place a disproportionate burden on women to challenge organisational cultures from within. My findings also reveal that tempered radicalism was additional work for women. That is, challenging extremely gendered organisations takes time and careful planning. In addition to the formal diversity work that is expected of women (see chapter 5), acts of tempered radicalism also ate into women’s already limited personal time. For example, several women mentored other women in football and business, but this was often done in their free time:

> *I have always gone over and above … and football gives you that forum, you know, so if my mentee has got an advisory board meeting, I'll be sat by her side ... I'm mentoring on Saturday; most people doing the job I'm doing wouldn't be bothered.*
>
> Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Although Sophie frames this additional work in a positive light, pushing an equality agenda is physically and emotionally demanding for women leaders, especially if this work is expected of them. Women leaders, more so than male leaders, are expected to push for gender equality within their organisations. Moreover, women leaders are heavily critisised if they are not seen to be actively challenging structural inequalities (Foster, 2015). Because of this, women may feel obligated to help other women through fear of being characterised as bad feminists. In fact, I argue that in a neoliberal world, our preoccupation with women's business success as a marker of gender equality has placed a disproportionate pressure on women leaders to use their success to help other women. For example, Melinda recalled her reservations in doing an interview for national newspaper about being a "woman in football":

> *"I've got a friend whose doing research into online abuse of women specifically, and every time I'm with her I'm like, 'oh god I'm deleting everything!'. So, there was a bit of me just thinking do I really want to do that? Do I really want to go in the [newspaper] with this banner… I'm just not sure I want to get shot down… I felt quite exposed by it, and like I say, nervous of it… I can kind of roll my eyes at the 'why don't you go and make a cup of tea' comments, you know, 'shouldn't you be at home?' and 'what do you know about football?' and all that kind of stuff…But yeah, it was just kind of like, ooo I've just literally put a picture of myself with my name and a big [woman in football] label"*
>
> Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

Melinda's reluctance to publicise the fact that she was a "woman in football" speaks to the pressures of being a woman in the sportlight (see chapter 6). Indeed, it may be riskier for women in football to use their platform to speak out about inequalities because they are

already subjected to intense gendered scrutiny for being women an extremely gendered organisation. Thus, the burden of resistance goes beyond additional labour for women in football, it exposes them to undue public scrutiny and abuse.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that asking women leaders to take part in research on their experiences is yet another burden. Although my reasons for only interviewing women were grounded in a desire to center women's leadership experiences, in some ways, I have let men off the hook. That is, men do not have to carry the burden of responsibility for gender equality even though they are equally as responsible than women, if not more so, for challenging workplace inequalities given that they often occupy secure positions as organistional insiders. Moreover, as researchers, we must be mindful of the burden of representation – in asking women and minority groups to take part in time consuming research that often prompts them to revisit traumatic and emotional events in their lives. That said, women often told me that they turned down a lot of research requests but that they wanted to take part in this particular research project. The promise of anonymity and the explicit focus on women's experiences provided an opportunity for women to tell their stories in relative safety.

8.2.3 Motivations for Tempered Radicalism

Although women may have experienced the burden of resistance, the women I interviewed were highly motivated to challenge gender equalities, even if this meant working extra hours. Crucially, football itself seemed to be the catalyst for women to want to make a difference. That is, most women felt a profound sense of injustice that women and girls could not play football on equal terms with men and boys. In fact, this injustice was deeply personal for some. For example, Claire, whose brother was a professional footballer,

always had an interest in playing football but she never had access to play it at an organised level:

I did play [football]. I mean, I didn't play for a team because there just wasn't that kind of setup back then … I wish there had been the kind of setup there is now cause' I would have… I'm sure I would've got involved.

Claire: 38, Executive Officer – League 1 club, active since 2011

For Louise, the fact that she could not play football when she was younger because she was a girl had driven her to create more opportunities for women and girls to play football through her job:

… what drove me, it still drives me, is that I wasn't allowed to play football until I was 18 when I was at university. All I wanted to do was play football, cause I was massively passionate about football and if I couldn't play football I wanted to play the other sports that I watched with my family, cricket, rugby, etc. but I couldn't play any of those, it was netball, hockey – It drove me mad. So, that's my kind of real driver behind it. So, to just come in and be able to start to work on creating more opportunities for girls and women etc. I just found it so so exciting

Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

Fran, who worked for a football governing body, also spoke very passionately about creating opportunities for women and girls through sport and admitted that, despite wanting to retire, this was the motivating factor for taking on the job:

I want to use sport to change the lives of particularly girls and women and to empower girls and women through Sport. Now, I've never joined the revolutionary you know burning my bra thing ... but every job I've done I've become very conscious of how I can make things better for girls and women in society… so when I was asked to do this job…I said that the only reason that I'm going to do this is that I believe that the organisation is the most powerful sport brand in the country and if I can get that brand to speak to girls and women…I believe we can change the lives of girls and women and that's why I'm going to do it and that's the truth of it.

Fran: 70, Head of Department – Governing body, active since 2016

What is telling about these extracts is that the women recognised that football or sport provided unique opportunities to enact positive changes for women and girls. Ultimately, the opportunity to improve women's access to football served as a motivating factor in several women's decisions to stay in football. As Tracey noted:

I thought actually being full-time for [football governing body] was sort of that classic thing of working change from the inside, and actually having the chance to make that real change was appealing.

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

Tracey's motivation for working in football once again evidences how women enact agency to choose a career path, despite its challenges, that gives them an outlet to challenge inequalities from within.

These findings support those of Shaw and Leberman (2015) who found that women who worked as CEOs in sports organisations were motivated by the opportunity to improve the lives of women and girls. Despite working in a gendered environment, the women in their study used their CEO position to engineer changes from within. That said, women who hold the role of CEO will have much more power and influence to make large scale changes than women in middle management or non-executive director roles. Women lower down the leadership ranks may find it harder to challenge the system because their positions are less stable and less influential (Kelan & Wratil, 2018). Nonetheless, most of the women I interviewed, regardless of their position in the organisational hierarchy, found ways to improve gender equality within their organisations. As Meyerson (2008) argues, organisational outsiders, depending on their professional and personal position, must choose from a spectrum of strategies to influence change from within organisations. Some women I interviewed 'quietly resisted' the culture (not working late in the office), some 'turned personal threats into opportunities' (setting up a day-care center), and others 'broadened their impact through negotiation' (asking for more resources for the women's team) (Meyerson, 2008). Like the women in Shaw and Leberman's (2015, p. 511) study, women leaders in football "did not necessarily choose their challenges but they had a choice in how they responded to challenges". As such, more research is needed to understand how women leaders in sport and other male-dominated industries enact agency to respond to the challenges they face as women. Crucially, this work needs to acknowledge often unseen additional work that women leaders do within their organisations to quietly push for gender equality.

Crucially, these findings show that resistance is possible from within extremely gendered organisations; however, it is limited to small, incremental acts that, while meaningful, may never lead to a culture change. Moreover, tempered radicalism takes its toll on those who are constantly fighting against a system that is unwilling to change. While some stay and keep fighting, others choose a path less emotionally taxing. This may include fully assimilating into the culture rather than challenging it. As Meyerson (2008) argues, the higher up the organisational ladder an outsider gets, the more invested they become in the organisation's values, and the more they have to lose by challenging the system. The other path, well-trodden by women, is the one that leads to the exit.

8.3 Leaving Football: The Pursuit of Authenticity

Although most women enjoyed working in football and, in some cases, saw football as an opportunity to improve the lives of women and girls, several had left or planned to leave football leadership at the time of the interview. Rates of attrition from leadership roles in male-dominated industries, which is much higher for women than men, significantly contributes to gender inequalities in leadership (Torre, 2017a). Yet, while a great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to the barriers women face in achieving leadership positions in sport (Burton, 2015), very little is known about why women leave sport leadership. In this section, I address this gap in the literature by using the Kaleidoscope Career Model to examine women's narratives of leaving football leadership.

In line with the Kaleidoscope Career Model, I find that women leave or think about leaving football leadership to find balance, challenge, and authenticity at different points in their careers. These findings demonstrate how women exercise agency to leave the extremely gendered organisation of football when their lives and values no longer align with the

industry. As Meyerson (2008, p. 155) notes, "when our values or identities are so deeply misaligned with those in the dominant culture…there is no way to live a life that feels authentic." Thus, tempered radicals must know when the right choice for them is to leave. In this sense, I argue that leaving football to pursue an authentic life is the ultimate act of agency. Crucially, these findings make an original contribution to knowledge by showing how wider cultural issues in football, such as corruption and player and fan misconduct, act as catalysts for women to choose a different career or life path. This moves us away from only attributing women's attrition from leadership roles to deterministic push/pull factors.

8.3.1 Balance

The boundaryless nature of football motivated some women to leave the industry for a better work life balance. The common narrative that surrounds women's motivation for balance is the need or desire to raise children (Belkin, 2003; Stone, 2007). However, while I found some evidence of this reasoning in women's narratives of leaving football leadership, women's motivations to find a better work life balance often transcended the work/family dilemma. Table 5 shows women's status in football leadership at the time of the interviews in 2018-2019 and now and shows the reasons women gave for leaving or thinking about leaving football.

Participant	Age at time of interview	Active at time of interview	Age they left football if not active at time of interview	Reason/s for leaving	Post interview status
Alex	46	yes	n/a	None given	Left the football industry in 2020
Alyssa	50	yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Amanda	36	yes	n/a	None given	Left her executive role in 2020 and now holds a non-executive director role in football
Anna	34	yes	n/a	None given	Left the football industry in 2020
Annie	75	No	60	Wanted a new challenge / retirement	Still Retired
Claire	38	yes	n/a	To find a new challenge	Still active in football leadership (promoted)
Elaine	58	no	55	Did not like the new CEO	Continues to work outside of the football industry
Fran	70	yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership
Gemma	30	yes	n/a	Work/family balance	Still active in football leadership
Harriet	48	Yes	n/a	To pursue personal interests	Left the football industry in 2020
Helen	Not disclosed	no	Not disclosed	To do something ‘good’	Continues work outside of football
Jayne	61	no	51	Did not agree with the way the chair(man) wanted do things	Continues to work in leadership outside of the football industry
Lisa	51	yes	n/a	Wants to do something good and ‘give back’	Still active in football leadership
Laura	48	yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Leslie	38	Yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership (promoted)

Louise	50	Yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Megan	37	Yes	n/a	Balance	Left the football industry in 2021
Melinda	44	Yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Nicola	44	Yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in a different role
Mia	29	Yes	n/a	None given	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Sophie	50	Yes	n/a	Balance	Still active in football leadership in the same role
Tracey	53	no	50	Wanted a new challenge	Works in football as an external consultant
Yasmin	44	Yes	n/a	Challenge	Still active in football leadership (works for a different club)

Table 5: Women's attrition from football and reasons for leaving.

Women also spoke about leaving football leadership to pursue interests outside of work and family. Harriet, for example, longed to find more time to pursue her favourite hobbies – hobbies she had given up because of long working hours:

I was in a choir, but I had to give that up because it fell on nights when we were playing in Europe…I'm not a great singer or anything, but I used to enjoy meeting up with some girlfriends and having a good old sing song…and there's other things I enjoy – there's all sorts of reading I want to do, loads of art galleries I want to go to…even just going out and riding my bike.

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

Although pursuing personal interests was important to Harriet and her primary motivation to leave football leadership, existing research on women's decision to leave leadership roles overlook the influence of interests outside of work and family (Zimmerman & Clark, 2016).

Certainly, as women approached the latter stages of their careers, the pursuit of interests outside of paid work and family responsibilities was at the forefront of their minds. Sophie, who was fifty-one and whose children were grown-up, spoke about wanting more time to focus on her own health and happiness:

what is next for me?...short-term, is continuation of what I'm doing, staying fit and healthy, a work-life balance that suits me… and when I'm home just trying to enjoy that more… staying fit enough to travel and see places…helping my daughter with her life and children… they are a big

part of my life…spending time with my mum my dad…having time to ski. Staying healthy is probably a really big objective of mine.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Although Sophie had no immediate plans to leave football, she spoke at length about "slowing down" and stepping away from her main leadership role to find a better work life balance. Crucially, Sophie had ample time to climb the football career ladder before she retired but this was not part of her plan. Instead, Sophie wanted more time to engage in leisure activities that brought her pleasure. This is significant because women's need and desire for leisure time has been historically ignored by scholars (Pope, 2017). However, my findings suggests that as women approach the latter stages of their careers – a career that has given them the financial stability to "slow down" – they take the opportunity to pursue their own interests. In this regard, women are not seeking balance because they are being 'pulled' towards the domestic sphere; they are exercising agency to go out of the home and the workplace and enjoy themselves. As Holland (2017, p. 59) argues, "women's lives need not be measured only in terms of constraint", women can and do find the time for independent leisure activities and we must recognise this as an important part of women's lives that sustains their health, happiness, and sense of self.

Because football was so consuming, women found it difficult to carve out time for activities they enjoyed, unless that activity was watching football. While several participants described themselves as football fans, the expectations to perform a "respectable business femininity" in the *sportlight* (see chapter 6) meant that women never fully enjoyed watching football – they were always working.

"On a match day I am on that crisis sheet, if I've got alcohol in my system and there's a [crisis] I would fully expect to have to give a blood test at some point…and I'd have no problem doing that. Things like that that are just maybe small things that don't matter to some people but to me they do matter. If I want to go out with my friends and have a few drinks I'll do that, but they are my friends, I'm not working…when we are wearing the club suit, you've got the badge on, then I am representing this place so I would behave in the same way as I do [in the office]...you can make that transition into being quite a sociable person but equally you're not participating in some of the other stuff that goes on."

Lisa: 51, Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2011

I go back to [previous club] tomorrow as a season ticket holder, it's quite a challenge, because there it's almost like everybody is looking at me…and part of me thinks well why do you go, cos you know, I support the team… but I always still feel I'm very much and ambassador…that's probably the most difficult side of the job.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Women felt that they could not enjoy watching football in the same way as their male colleagues. Unlike these women, men were able to integrate their work and the enjoyment of watching football with ease because there were fewer expectations on men to behave a certain way. For example, men could drink alcohol and socialise with their colleagues without judgement. When women participated in these activities, they were judged as being inappropriate (see chapter 6). Therefore, the inability for women to fully incorporate the

pleasure of watching football into their working lives may be one reason why women are more likely than men to leave football leadership.

Although several women spoke about juggling their leadership work in the boundaryless football industry and having or spending time with children (see chapter 6), resolving the work/family dilemma was not the primary reason women gave for leaving the football industry. Only two women, both of whom were in their thirties, spoke about needing to leave football to have children because their jobs did not offer them flexibility. While these experiences fit the "opt out" revolution thesis (Belkin, 2003) – the idea that women leave successful careers spend more time with their families – Laura, who worked 3.5 days a week, argued that women do not opt out of work when they have children. Rather, she explained how she opted into a career that aligned with her desire to spend time with her children:

I went into the selection process, from the beginning, saying that I get the fact that it's a big job, it needs a lot of care and attention, but I don't physically want to do it based in one location 5 days a week because I will never see my children…[having children] definitely made me sort of be much much clearer on my conditions for sort of success and sort of happiness in the broader sense of the word, it's a bit like when you sort of said to me if the job had of been 4 days a week would I have taken it? Probably no. You know you sort of think would half a day really make that much difference. Yeah, when your children are 5 and 4 it does. It made me much more focused on those sorts of decisions and trying to get them right at each stage of my children's sort of development because it does change… For me [success] is about having the balance that I wanted so having an interesting job that I find fulfilling that I can do well…but at the same time being a mum enough of the week that I feel integrated into my children's world.

Laura: 48, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 2016

Laura's narrative of *choosing* a part-time role to suit her needs offers a counter narrative to the idea that women are pushed out of inflexible jobs and pulled towards domesticity. These findings support those of Biese and Choroszewicz (2019) who found that professional women enacted 'reflexive agency' to opt into alternative career solutions that suited their lives. The authors go onto argue that opting in strategies are 'redefining career success' in a way that values balance over climbing the corporate ladder. In fact, Biese and McKie (2016) argue that women's desire to do work that helps them balance their lives with paid work can be better described as 'opting-in'. Of course, there would be more women in leadership roles if there were more opportunities for women to work flexibly; however, a lack of flexible working does not mean that women do not exercise agency to stay in or leave inflexible work to suit their needs and desires.

8.3.2 Challenge

As women approached the latter stages of their careers, they were also motivated to find new challenges. Certainly, some women no longer felt challenged by their work in football. As Tracey, who left her football leadership role in 2016 but who now does consultancy work in football explained, working in football for so long had left her feeling trapped:

> *I felt like I wasn't learning anything new in football…I was internally screaming that I wanted to learn new things from new people and I really came to that point where I thought I could stay here another 15 years and that would be me basically and I wouldn't have to think about getting another job…but if I don't go soon it's going to get harder and harder to move into something else…I was feeling like a bit of a caged bird and needed to go explore everything.*

Tracey: 53, Head of Department – Governing body/Premier League club, active since 2001

The repetition of her job and the lack of opportunity to learn and explore new areas of work contributed to Tracey's dissatisfaction with a job she once loved. Despite feeling passionate about her work in football, Tracey's need to feel challenged at work ultimately motivated her to leave a senior leadership role in football. In a study of women sport coaches, Allen and Shaw (2013) found that women who worked in environments that encouraged autonomy and opportunities to create and address challenges found their organisations more supportive and enjoyable to work in than women who worked for sport organisations with fewer opportunities for autonomous working.

However, women working in peripheral leadership roles, many of which are administrative rather than operational, may be starved of opportunities to learn new things and take on new challenges. That said, there was evidence that women working in lower league football had more opportunities to learn about new areas of work than women who worked for large Premier League teams or football governing bodies. Moreover, women who worked for clubs with few resources relished the opportunity to work across multiple areas. As Leslie, who worked across multiple areas for a League 2 club, stated "I can't ever get bored." In fact, staving off boredom and stagnation were primary factors in women's pursuit of new challenges.

> *As long as I feel that I'm continuing to learn and continuing to build skills then I'm, you know, I'm happy. I got to the point at [previous club] where I didn't feel that. I felt I was treading water, I felt I was just doing the same thing, you know, round and round in circles and didn't feel that I had anything else to learn… or any further to grow there. Which is why I left…In more recent years I've kinda realised that actually I'm now sort of… director level I kinda think right okay, well I've done that now, where do I go from here?*

Alex: 46, Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, active since 2008

I don't really like standing still and so I'm always looking for what's the next thing that's gonna challenge me that I'm gonna learn from…I quite like putting myself in situations where I'm not really sure what I'm gonna do and, you know, kind of the pressure increases a little bit.

Melinda: 44, Non-Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2016

Both Alex and Melinda discussed leaving jobs to pursue the next challenge. Crucially, these women talked about leaving their jobs as a good thing because they saw it as moving onto the next challenge rather than stepping back from football leadership. There was also a sense that in the new economy, workers had to move around to be successful:

if you want to succeed or achieve you've got to get out of your comfort zone. I've always known that.

Louise: 50, Executive Officer – Governing body, active since 1998

you don't know where your career path's gonna go to. I mean, you've got to be fluid, I think, to be successful. You can't just stay in one mindset.

Amanda: 36, Executive Director – League 2 club, active since 2011

Of course, moving around different jobs in different industries can be exciting, but you also have to have a homelife that can facilitate it. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the expectation to relocate and spend time away from the home is implicitly gendered because it penalises people who have primary caring responsibilities, most of whom are women. Thus, women may find themselves having to choose between a job that will challenge them or a less

challenging job that suits their personal circumstances. However, Leslie spoke about finding both challenge and balance in football. In fact, she took a significant pay cut to work for the club she supported:

> *I was really really successful in my [previous] career and never dreamt that I'd want to change careers. It was just I think life-changing you know with having a kid... and then just being presented with the opportunity to be here, even voluntarily, was just a dream come true… it's just nice because I get to make a difference to my club, so maybe I wouldn't enjoy it as much elsewhere. It would be a big big decision if I ever left. I can't even imagine going back to [previous career]. I just can't imagine it, it's like it never existed.*
>
> Leslie: 38, Head of Department – League1/League 2 club, active since 2017

For Leslie, her decision to leave a successful and well-paid career in a different industry was based on a passion for her football club. To take on the challenge of running a football club that meant so much to her and her family was too good to turn down even if, as she joked, her husband "was going to have to work another 5 years before he can retire now." Certainly, in an industry where women have been historically marginalised, it was enormously refreshing to hear how much joy football brought to women's lives. Moreover, a desire to do challenging and exciting work does not always mean climbing a career ladder. Taking a step back in terms of seniority and financial reward can facilitate a leap forward into one's "dream job." In fact, I argue that we need not just measure gender equality by pay and seniority, we should consider job satisfaction as a meaningful measure of workplace equality.

8.3.3 Authenticity

Women in the latter stages of their career were also motivated by a pursuit of authenticity – desire to do work that aligned with their values and identity. For several women, their decision to leave football was influenced by a desire to stay true to themselves. For example, after 21 years of working in football, Jayne decided to leave because her values no longer aligned with those of the new chair(man):

The new chairman wanted to do things very differently, I tried to give him my advice and say if you follow that way you will start to drop down through the leagues. It's his club it was his decision, so I said to him, 'look, I'm going to be honest with you, I want to come out while I'm at the top. I want to keep my integrity intact.'

Jayne: 61, Executive Officer – Championship/non-league club, 1988-2009

For Jayne, keeping her "integrity intact" was a primary driver for leaving football. Crucially, Jayne did not describe a pull towards domesticity, nor did she feel pushed out of football. In fact, the chair(man) went to great lengths to persuade her stay. Instead, Jayne made a purely professional decision to leave in order to pursue a career that aligned with her values. Harriet, who had worked for two high profile Premier League clubs, also spoke about no longer wanting to be defined by football or the brands that she worked for:

When I started at my previous club it used to be quite defining… I'm working for this club that's in the media every week, it's high profile…it sort of had this halo effect on me as a person…I used to thrive on that…

sort of almost feeding the ego. I suppose now that doesn't interest me…I'm more into things that really make me happy that aren't necessarily all about football and feeding the ego. ***So, in an ideal world, what would you do next?*** *I'd perhaps do something on my terms a bit more…I'm probably looking at trying to find things that are going to fill my soul and spirit.*

Harriet: 48, Head of Department – Premier League/League 1 club, active since 1997

For Harriet, moving out of football was a chance to break out of the football box. In fact, she went on to explain that she no longer told people that she worked in football unless they specifically asked. The excitement of football that motivated so many women to stay in the industry (see section 7.1.2) no longer excited Harriet. Instead, she was motivated to find a career that she could pursue "on her own terms" that filled her "soul and spirit". Similarly, others have found that women leave corporate leadership to pursue entrepreneurial interests or careers in charity sector (Cabrera, 2007; Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021). These women were no longer interested in climbing the corporate career ladder; instead, they wanted careers that allowed them to be true to themselves. This demonstrates that women's attrition from leadership roles in male-dominated industries is as much about wanting to find more spiritually fulfilling careers than it is about feeling pushed out by the 'old boys' or pulled towards domesticity.

Moreover, I found evidence of women turning down promotion opportunities. Rather than limiting themselves, as some researchers have argued (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), I found that turning down a promotion was agentive act that benefitted women personally and professionally. For example, Mia explained how she had twice turned down her most recent leadership role before finally accepting because she feared that the job, despite being more senior than her previous role, would not offer her the job security she had in her previous role:

…there had been a lot going on here in terms of senior members of staff because of the new ownership…and I know how ruthless football can be…and actually they could turn around and say we don't need your services anymore.

Mia: 29, Executive Officer – Championship/League 1 club, active since 2014

Given football's "endemic stability problem" (Parnell *et al*., 2018, p. 243) and evidence that women are more likely than men to be promoted into 'glass cliff' jobs (Ryan & Haslam, 2005), Mia was right to act with caution and make a decision to not take a promotion at the first opportunity. In fact, we must acknowledge that the pursuit of senior leadership is not always the right choice for women. Yet, if we continue to measure gender equality by numbers of women in leadership roles, rather more meaningful measures of success such as access to and influence over organisational resources, job satisfaction, flexible working, and job security, we will be in danger of pressuring women into pursuing unstable and unfulfilling leadership roles.

When discussing their motivations to leave football leadership, some women also cited a desire to "give back" as a reason for pursuing a different career path:

I do have to start thinking about some sort of retirement plan at some point, but my work in the foundation I love…So, I could probably see myself doing something to help others…I'm 51 now, but I do remember not having enough food in our house and food poverty is a real issue out there. So, we have food banks, food collections every match day now, we do food collections in here, the players get involved… it's just that very basic giving back.

Lisa: 51, Executive Director – Premier League Club, active since 2011

I'd like to get more involved with our women's stuff and leave the men's world in a really good stable place…I'm probably going to take another couple of non-executive director roles and give back. So, in a more charitable way, not necessarily paid exec roles.

Sophie: 50, Head of Department – Premier League club, active since 2008

Lisa and Sophie were both happy in their roles, but both had considered stepping away from the football business to focus on charitable work before retirement. For Lisa this meant working for the club's foundation and for Sophie this meant taking on voluntary NED roles and doing more work with the women's team. Crucially, both women, who were only in their early fifties, could have climbed the football career ladder further before retirement. However, instead of chasing a higher position in football, they were thinking about pursuing roles that were more professionally and personally fulfilling. In this regard, leaving their leadership role was the ultimate act of agency.

I also found that, despite providing an exciting career option for women, some women felt that they had had to compromise too much of themselves along the way. Helen, who had left the football industry but who still worked in sport, was motivated to pursue a career in the charity sector to counter the decadence and immorality of football:

I also wanted to try and get into the charity sector because I kind of got to a point where all the vanity and the money that is spent in football is so kind of distasteful to a point where you do think my god, I've got to do something that makes my soul feel better.

Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Although Helen spoke at length about how much she loved working in football, after 17 years, the love story had turned sour. For Helen, moving into the charity sector was a way for her to regain moral equilibrium – something she felt she had lost having worked in football for so long. Similarly, Jayne left football partly because she had become disillusioned with underhanded financial dealings in football:

> *The game was changing, the whole concept of the game. There was a lot of news coming out about funds being embezzled and money laundering and it didn't have nice feel about it - a lot of the women I know that I worked with they didn't like what was going on whereas men somehow seem to dig their heels in because they are desperate to stay in the game. As a woman, you are happy to come out as I did, and you can change.*
>
> Jayne: 61, Executive Officer – Championship/non-league club, 1988-2009

These findings suggest that the corruption and decadence that has come to define men's football also influences women's decisions to leave the industry. This is significant because it moves us beyond critiquing sexism as a barrier to women's participation, into a critique of the wider culture of men's football. However, it is not clear why men appear to "dig their heels in" while women choose to leave. In fact, several women noted that men are reluctant to leave football. Perhaps the rewards for staying in a morally compromising industry are greater for men than women. Or perhaps women are more exposed to moral dilemmas in football than men. That is, most women, by virtue of their work in peripheral roles such as communications, HR, marketing, and finance, were responsible for reputational management within their football organisations (see chapter 5) – which included covering up drug use, drink driving,

violent conduct, financial mismanagement, sexual misconduct, and blackmail. As Helen explained, working in communications was a particularly challenging role in football:

> *if you have any kind of sensibility of what is right and what is wrong ethically and morally, it's not a great industry to be in…especially in my role…those phone calls that come thick and fast, especially in the Premier League, are not things that you want to have to be dealing with, you know, drug abuse or alcohol abuse or even worse, so it's you know it takes its toll.*
>
> Helen: Executive Director – Premier League/Championship club, 2000-2017

Being at the coalface of football's unsavoury side provided the ultimate motivation for women to pursue careers where they no longer felt morally compromised. Similarly, Cabrera (2007) found that some women were motivated to leave corporate leadership roles because they found the culture of 'greed' and 'schmoozing' distasteful and unethical. Like women leaving corporate leadership, women's exodus from football leadership is not a simple case of women being squeezed out by sexist cultures or lured into "mommy track" jobs (Williams, 2001). Women also choose to leave because they want to pursue more meaningful and ethical careers and interests.

The evidence presented here shows that successful women leaders have choices when it comes to staying or leaving football – choices that women with less social and economic capital do not have. In the absence of a wholesale cultural shift towards a more ethical running of football and towards a culture that values workers personal time, talented and forward-thinking women, as well as men, will choose to leave to pursue more authentic careers and interests. In fact, a third of the women who were active in football at the time of the interview have since left the football industry. While it is not known why some of these women left football, my findings

suggest that their reasons for leaving will transcend the oft cited push/pull factors. However, more targeted research is needed to understand the rates of women's attrition sport leadership and the reasons why women chose to leave.

8.4 Chapter Summary

By considering the function of agency, this chapter advances our understanding of women leaders' experiences and motivations to work in, change, and leave extremely gendered organisations, moving the theory of extremely gendered organisations away from a victim paradigm. Specifically, I have drawn on the concepts of *tempered radicalism* and the *kaleidoscope career model* to understand how women navigate and make choices within the limitations of an extremely gendered organisational regime. First, I have shown how women leaders defended football's treatment of women by downplaying experiences of sexism, expressing a love of football, and narrating their career journey using a rhetoric of 'no regrets'. I have argued that rather than being a strategy of survival in football, reclaiming negative narratives of women in football was a deliberate strategy to encourage more women to work in football. In this sense, women's defence of football can be viewed as a collective feminist action.

My findings also demonstrate how women enact agency to challenge extremely gendered cultures from within their organisations. Specifically, I found that women engage in subtle strategies of resistance that quietly disrupt the status quo without threatening their organisational position. However, I argue that these strategies are limited in their ability to change extremely gendered organisational cultures. Thus, we must seek ways to address inequalities hat moves us beyond 'add women in' approaches. Moreover, I found that the burden of resistance rested on the shoulders of women, and this was extra, unpaid work for

women. However, I found that most women were deeply motivated by a desire to improve the lives of women and girls by opening up more opportunities for them to play and work in football.

Finally, the findings in this section add to a growing body of literature which finds that women’s reasons for leaving leadership positions are not primarily driven by deterministic social factors. Specifically, women cite desires to do meaningful and challenging work as reasons for leaving football leadership. Interestingly, the desire to do meaningful and challenging work not only motivated some women to stay in football but it also motivated women to leave the industry altogether. This was especially the case when women felt that the culture of the football organisation no longer aligned with their personal values. This suggests that finding meaning in one’s work, being true to one’s values, and feeling challenged are at the forefront of women football leaders’ careers decisions. My findings show that more attention needs to be paid to the types of work women leaders in sport are assigned or have available to them to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to do meaningful and challenging work and make valuable contributions towards the running of sport organisations.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This thesis examined the critical underrepresentation of women in sport leadership from the rarely considered perspective of women who, against the odds, have made it to the top of the industry. While a substantial body of research explores the barriers to sport leadership for women (Burton, 2015), little is known about women's experiences above the glass ceiling in sport. Moreover, despite being the most popular sport in world, no studies to date have examined women's leadership in men's football. Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to examine women's access to and experiences of leadership in men's professional club football and football governing bodies in England. This examination focussed on the 'new' football era (Williams, 2006) – a period of rapid modernisation and commercialisation of English football following the Hillsborough Stadium disaster of 1989 that Pope (2017) argues has created a more welcoming environment for women. This thesis was informed by Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations and the related concept of the ideal abstract worker. Specifically, this thesis positioned men's football in England as an 'extremely gendered' organisation – an organisation that exists to produce and maintain notions of masculine superiority in society (Sasson-Levy, 2011) – to understand and explain why so few women have reached and remained in football leadership.

This thesis has made several novel empirical and theoretical contributions to existing research. Firstly, by foregrounding the views and experiences of women above the glass ceiling in sport, this thesis offered a critical alternative to barriers-based approaches to understanding gender inequalities in sport leadership. Secondly, as the first study to examine women's leadership in men's professional football in England during the 'new' football era, this thesis uncovered the hidden history of women's work in football

administration. In examining women's leadership experiences in the context of sport, this thesis introduces the novel concept of the *sportlight* to describe the intense media and fan scrutiny that workers in sport must endure. Crucially, I have argued that the sportlight is gendered and the pressure to perform under its glow harms women. Finally, as one of only three studies to conceptualise an organisation as 'extremely gendered' (see also: Sasson-Levy, 2011; Tyler *et al*., 2019), and the first to consider a sport organisation in this way, this thesis advances emergent understandings of how extremely gendered organisations function to exclude and include women. Crucially, in challenging the contention that the military is a unique example of an extremely gendered organisation, this thesis opens avenues to consider other institutions as de facto masculine. In a political and social climate where inequalities and discrimination in football, and the wider sporting world, are being brought to the fore, these contributions to knowledge can help to advance research and policy agendas that aim to address inequalities in sport leadership.

Empirical data for this thesis originated from archival documents, gender pay gap reports, and biographic interviews with women who have worked in leadership in the 'new' football era. Through the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2008a) with Situational Analysis (Clarke, 2005; Clarke & Friese, 2007) to analyse document and interview data, and to develop new theoretical concepts, this thesis answered the following research questions:

1. What is the gender makeup of football leadership in men's professional football clubs and football governing bodies in England, and how has this changed in the new football era (from the late 1980's onwards)?

2. How has the gendering of football organisations influenced women's access to, and experiences of, leadership?

3. How do women construct and make sense of their journey into football leadership, and what has enabled or impeded their success?

4. How do women leaders exercise agency within an extremely gendered organisation, and what factors influence women's choice to stay in, challenge or leave football leadership?

The central argument of this thesis is that an extremely gendered regime, while steadily granting women access to leadership roles in football during the 'new' football era, has successfully curtailed women's access to power and influence. It has done so by limiting women's leadership work to peripheral occupations and accepting women under strict gendered conditions. Although women loved their work in football leadership and were motivated to challenge gender inequalities from within, the restrictive nature of their inclusion prompted several women to leave men's football to pursue more fulfilling careers and interests. As such, I have argued that research and policy on gender inequalities in football leadership must focus on women's access to power rather than leadership and move away from the numbers of women in leadership roles as a stand-alone measure of gender inequality.

In this concluding chapter, I summarise my three main findings in relation to the research questions and discuss their empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions. I further consider the practical implications of these findings and make recommendations that I believe offer opportunities to challenge football's exclusionary culture. Following

this, I offer my concluding thoughts on gender equality in football and reflect on the impact this research has had on me as a football fan.

9.2 On the Periphery: Women Leaders in the 'Extremely Gendered' Organisation of Men's Football

In chapter 5, I explored the implications of an extremely gendered organisational regime on women's participation in leadership roles in men's professional football in the 'new' era of football. In answering the first research question, findings showed that the gender make-up of football leadership heavily favoured men despite women's significant presence as workers in football governing bodies and men's professional club football. Furthermore, analysis of gender pay gap data revealed significant differences in pay between women and men within football, signalling a critical underrepresentation of women in the most senior and well-paid positions in football. I argued that, in the absence of external interventions, men's professional football clubs especially have failed to address stark gender inequalities in senior leadership roles. That is, while the introduction of gender targets for boards of NGBs in 2016 resulted in a greater proportion of women in board positions in the FA, progress on gender equality in boardroom roles in men's club football has stalled. Therefore, football governing bodies must step in to monitor and challenge gender inequalities in club football. The FA's recent introduction of the Leadership Diversity Code for football clubs is a step in the right direction, but as a voluntary code, it remains limited in its ability to meaningfully address inequalities in club football leadership.

In answering research question two, my findings offered new empirical insights by showing that even when women access leadership roles in football the extremely gendered regime limits their access to power and influence. Original data on women's leadership work in

football revealed that women leaders are excluded from influential *inner table* discussions that centre on male-only socialising and are confined to *peripheral* leadership roles that have little to no influence over the *core* function of the organisation i.e., football play. Although other studies have demonstrated women's exclusion from playing and coaching roles in football (Fielding-Lloyd & Meân, 2016; Welford & Kay, 2007; Williams, 2003) this is the first study to show that women's access to administrative leadership work in men's football is dictated by their proximity to male players and the playing of football. This is significant because while women are publicly making progress in football, as demonstrated by the growing popularity in women's football (Wrack, 2021b) and the appointment of women to high-profile football media roles (Scott, 2021; Tapper, 2021), women continue to be excluded from decision making roles behind the scenes, especially those that relate to football play.

Applying the theory of extremely gendered organisations, I argued that proximity to male athletes and the field of play underpins a gendered substructure that distances women from *core* leadership roles by limiting their inclusion to roles that are *peripheral* to the organisational *core.* In her writings on women in the "extremely gendered" organisation of the military, Sasson-Levy (2003, 459) argued that women's involvement has followed a pattern of "limited inclusion", meaning that their involvement has been "partial and curtailed" (Sasson-Levy 2011, 400) to maintain the masculinist cultures of the military. While I also found that women's inclusion in football has been limited and restricted to preserve male-dominance, my findings offer new theoretical insights by suggesting that women's inclusion has been limited in a very specific way. This is significant because it suggests that women's entry into *peripheral* football leadership roles is not enough to disrupt the extremely gendered regime of football. To change gendered football cultures from within the industry needs to support women to assume *core* leadership roles.

Critically, I extend the theory of 'extremely gendered' organisations by considering *core* roles as the most symbolically important to the preservation of the organisation's masculine character. That is, 'extremely gendered' organisations help to define hegemonic masculinity through their core function, e.g., playing football, frontline combat, fighting fires. Even if men are not enactors of these activities, association with those who are still yields benefits for men (Connell, 2005). In the case of football, it is proximity to footballers that is the mark of masculinity and, as such, power. Therefore, preserving the masculine *core* of football by relegating women to the peripheries upholds men's successful claim to football leadership. Crucially, I have argued that applying concepts of *core* and *peripheral* roles to other male-dominated industries could offer new insights into persistent gender inequalities in organisational leadership.

Through an original discourse analysis of GPG supporting statements, this thesis is the first to show that football organisations *naturalise* men's dominance in core roles. This analysis revealed an organisational logic that legitimises inequalities between women and men as a natural state. Crucially, this suggests that football organisations have little motivation to challenge their gendered substructures. These findings support the work of Pape (2020) who found that the gendered substructure of the IOC was underpinned by a belief in male athletic superiority, and this functioned to legitimise women's underrepresentation in key leadership roles. Therefore, efforts to address gender inequalities in leadership positions in football should include a reimagining of organised football and indeed other sports that fundamentally disrupts the assumption of male athletic superiority that underpins the organisational logic of masculine dominance in core roles. This might include, for example, mandating sports clubs to provide equal resources for female and male athletes (Travers, 2009), something non-league club Lewes FC voluntarily introduced in 2017 (Foster, 2019). It might also include gender-collaborative training sessions (Ogilvie & McCormack, 2020)

or the inclusion of mixed-gender teams and competitions (Channon, 2014). Although I recognise that the introduction of mixed-gender sports is a complex proposal and one that could harm women's access to sport (Travers, 2009), whilst retaining single-sex sport spaces, which are fundamental in safeguarding women's access to sport (Lenneis, Agergaard & Evans, 2022), there is also potential for mixed-gender teams and competitions to help deconstruct dominant essentialist and hierarchical constructions of gender difference in sport organisations. Indeed, there are sports, such as Mixed-Marital Arts (Channon, 2014) and Roller Derby (Pavlidis & Connor, 2016), that successfully balance the provision of same-gender and mixed-gender training and competitions.

I further extended the theory of extremely gendered organisations by integrating theories of hegemonic gender relations (Schippers, 2007) and the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1999) to show that (hetero)sexuality is a central organising principle in the division of labour in football. That is, women's exclusion from core roles results from the need to control male (hetero)sexuality in the training ground and is not just related to a belief in male athletic superiority. This finding supports previous literature on women as a destabilising presence in male team sports (Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008; Vaczi, 2016). However, my findings also showed that when women do hold leadership roles, their responsibilities restore and preserve the heterosexual order. That is, women's leadership work is positioned in relation to men's and this position is frequently subordinate, i.e., work that provides a service to men. This unequal positioning between symbolically feminine and masculine roles provides the hegemonic scaffolding for an extremely gendered regime that excludes women from *core* 'masculine' leadership roles.

Furthermore, I found that the redistribution of women's leadership work across different occupational areas since 2010 has done little to disrupt the extremely gendered regime of

football because women made up the numbers in newly created diversity roles and 'feminised' support roles such as Equality & Diversity and Human Resources. Interview data further confirmed that the extremely gendered regime of football thrusts women into formal and informal support roles, such as 'mothering roles', that rarely lead to upward progression and that maintain the gendered division of power in football.

My findings also contribute to the theory of extremely gendered organisations by considering the intersection of gender with other bases of inequalities, such as race and sexuality. That is, the extremely gendered organisation of football is not just hegemonically male, it is hegemonically white and hetero-masculine, and this functions to exclude Black people and gay men from football from leadership roles. It also presents Black women with a near impenetrable ceiling to leadership roles in football. Crucially, evidence of rampant racism and homophobia in football (Burdsey, 2020; Cleland, Cashmore, Dixon & MacDonald; Kassimeris, 2021) and the military (Britton & Williams, 1995; Burks, 2011) suggests that severe racial inequalities and entrenched homophobia may also be defining features of extremely gendered organisations.

As a hub for the production and reproduction of masculinity; something Anderson (2009, p. 7) refers to as "a perfectly integrated, self-reinforcing system", football maintains heterosexual, male dominance in society. However, as we have seen in the case of the military (Sasson-Levy, 2011) and the fire service (Tyler *et al*., 2019), football is not unique in this function. It is part of a broader category of atypical organisations that maintain strong (hetero)masculinist and (white) male-dominated cultures in the face of wider social shifts towards equality. Crucially, these extremely gendered organisations help to maintain patriarchal notions of gender in society. Therefore, I encourage others to consider the role

of extremely gendered organisations, beyond sport and the military, in the maintenance of organisational and societal inequalities.

9.3 Conditional Entry into Football Leadership: Cultivating an Ideal Worker/Ideal Woman Identity

In chapter 6, I examined women's narratives of success through the lens of the ideal worker norm (Acker, 2012; Williams, 2001). In answer to research question 3, I found that women make sense of their success as being the result of cultivating an ideal worker/ideal woman identity. This included leveraging *insider status*; demonstrating total dedication to football at the cost of family life; and performing a carefully orchestrated femininity. These conditions of success in football are heavily gendered and thus have particular consequences for women. However, I argued that women who can cultivate an ideal worker/ideal woman identity – an identity that the dominant group finds palatable – can achieve success in the extremely gendered organisation of football. Although Sasson-Levy's theory of extremely gendered organisations is influenced by the work of Acker, she does not specifically reference the ideal worker norm. By applying the concept of the ideal worker, these findings make an original contribution to theorising on extremely gendered organisations by revealing how and why certain women reach leadership positions under extreme gendered conditions.

While gendered conditions of entry have been found in other sport industries (Hedenborg & Norberg, 2019; Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003) and businesses (Charles & Bradley, 2009; Gray, De Haan & Bonneywell, 2019; Hardin & Whiteside, 2009), I argued that men's football, as an extreme case, imposes exceptionally gendered conditions of entry to ensure that access is granted only to those women who pose the least threat to football's white

hetero-masculine cultures. In support of Lawrence's (2018) findings on the management structures of English football, I find that football recruitment is inherently biased and favours 'insiders', i.e., white men with a pre-existing connection to football. However, I found that women who do have access to insider networks, be that through existing business or family connections, or through racial privileges, can be considered ideal candidates. These women are able to take advantage of football's informal and exclusionary recruitment practices by leveraging the aspects of their identity that 'fit' the dominant group and maintain the status quo.

While my findings showed that insider recruitment has benefitted *some* women, football's reliance on personal connections to recruitment leaders continues to exclude women collectively. That is, as a group that has been historically excluded from football spaces (Caudwell, 2011; Williams, 2003), women are less likely than men to have insider connections that they can leverage to gain access to football leadership. These findings have implications for sport management research. For example, while acknowledging the limitations of recruiting close associates, Parnell *et al*. (2018, p. 252) advocate for Sporting Directors in football to "exploit" the networked nature of football to recruit core football staff. However, the authors do not consider the implications of a social networked approach to recruitment for groups who have historically lacked access to social networks, such as women and Black people (King, 2004a; McGuire, 2002). As my findings suggest, without an interrogation of the implicit biases underpinning these recruitment process, researchers in sport management risk reinforcing exclusionary cultures.

I have also argued that women leaders, as *outsiders on the inside*, uphold football's entitlement to ideal workers by defending their organisation's recruitment practices, even if they recognise that these processes implicitly exclude women. These findings reveal the

complexity of women's positions as outsiders on the inside and show that women's ability and willingness to challenge and change exclusionary recruitment process from within may be limited by their insider commitment to the football industry. Therefore, researchers interested in gender equality in sport leadership should continually look beyond numerical equality to consider the complex and often contradictory reality of being a woman leader in sport.

The women I interviewed discursively constructed football as a boundaryless industry that required total dedication. However, because women are more likely than men to be primary carers for children and elderly parents, it is harder for women to meet this ideal. As such, I found that women leaders credited being childfree and being able or willing to sacrifice family life as facilitators of their success in football. Moreover, I found that women with children often had exceptional domestic arrangements that allowed them to dedicate themselves fully to their football career. Significantly, I argued that the ideal worker standard of total availability is magnified in core roles where workers are expected to work matchdays, which included evening and weekend work. Moreover, I found that core roles were especially unaccommodating to mothers and the pregnant body because the norm is overwhelmingly male and thus centralises the needs of the ostensibly unreproductive male body. Crucially, this finding can help to explain why there are so few women in core leadership roles. However, I also argued that the ideal worker norm affects men in core roles, especially athletes who are expected to dedicate themselves completely and put their bodies on the line for football. These men are judged against a hyper-masculine norm that views parenthood as secondary to paid work, especially playing football.

Furthermore, I find that women have to perform as ideal women, i.e., displaying emotional restraint, not complaining, and performing an 'acceptable business femininity' to be

successful in football. Within an extremely gendered regime, deviations from idealness, such as complaining about unfair treatment, having sexual relations with male colleagues, dressing too feminine, or spending time with male footballers, can result in severe penalties for women. Crucially, these extremely gendered conditions that limit women's access to opportunities for building social capital, such as informal socialising with colleagues, may help to explain why women are severely underrepresented in the most powerful and influential roles in football. Recently published findings on women's experiences as mangers in the men's American Hockey League, reveal striking similarities in women's experiences of performing idealness, such as avoiding contact with male athletes, being judged on their appearance, and not complaining about sexism (Hindman & Walker, 2020). These findings suggest that male team sports warrant particular attention as gendered organisations to understand how they function to exclude women from leadership roles.

Finally, I introduced the concept of the *sportlight* to describe the inherently critical and gendered scrutiny that workers in sport, particularly football, must endure. Although Bridgewater (2010) has previously considered the impact of intense scrutiny on first team football managers, my findings show that the sportlight also shines on administrative leadership roles in football, especially those with a public profile. Critically, analysis of interview data reveals the gendered consequences of managing in the sportlight. Namely, women are highly visible because of their scarcity and so face disproportionate criticism (Kanter, 1977b). Significantly, this criticism is often specific to women's gender and sexuality. That is, while men are criticised for their performance, women are criticised because they are women.

Although previous research has found that women athletes and journalists endure very public sexist commentary and sexual harassment in sport because of their gender (Clavio

& Eagleman, 2011; Fink, 2016; Harrison, 2018), this thesis provides new insights by demonstrating that women behind the scenes in sport leadership also feel the burn of the sportlight. This has implications for understanding women's reluctance to assume leadership positions in sport, especially high-profile roles in football. Furthermore, my findings suggest that the sportlight can also pose a risk to women's safety because their presence in extremely gendered organisations threatens men's claim to superiority. Especially in the Premier League, where the sportlight of world media shines the brightest, women are uniquely exposed to threats, including death and rape threats, from fans and the wider public. Black women and men in football also endure severe racist abuse both online and in the stands. As players continue to take a knee in support of antiracism following the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, the chorus of boos and political backlash they receive each time demonstrates how far we have to go before discrimination is no longer a part of football.

9.4 Tempered Radicalism: Defending, Challenging, and Leaving Football

In chapter 8, I argued that despite having limited access to power in football, women leaders are by no means powerless. In answer to research question four I found that women leaders exercised agency within the constraints of an extremely gendered regime to defend, challenge, and leave the football industry. To explain this, I drew on the theory of agency as a social practice to show that, despite holding peripheral positions within football and working under the restrictive conditions of the ideal worker/ideal woman norm, women leaders had a platform, as well as a socioeconomic position, that gave them a voice and enabled them to make choices that women lower down the career ladder were unable to make. Notably, I found that women use the power they have to help and encourage more women to work in the industry and contest dominant ideas about women and work.

However, women also used this power to leave football and pursue a fulfilling and authentic work-life. Given the fact that women leave leadership positions in male-dominated industries at a higher rate than men (Torre, 2017a), these findings make an important contribution to knowledge by revealing the factors that influence women's decisions to stay in, challenge, and leave the football industry. Crucially, these findings also offer an alternative narrative to that of women as victims of gendered organisations (Billing, 2011).

I found that, despite facing challenges and restrictions above the glass ceiling, women leaders in football were keen to reclaim negative narratives about women in football, such as the perception that football was unwelcoming to women. Specifically, women strategically downplayed their experiences of sexism and distanced themselves from 'horror stories' to frame their experience of being a woman in football in a positive light. Crucially, I argued that the positive framing of being a woman in football was an "agentive act" (Ortner, 2006, p. 136), the purpose of which was to encourage more women to work in the football industry. I found strong evidence that women leaders in football felt a sense of responsibility to other women and so used the research interview as an opportunity to present a positive narrative in the hope that other women would see football leadership as a viable career option. This finding provides a critical counter argument to the contention that women leaders deny organisational sexism to survive the male-dominated workplace (Baker & Kelan, 2019; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Nash & Moore, 2018) and offers a new empirical insight by showing how, within the limits of an extremely gendered organisation, women exercised agency to actively encourage women to work in football. Moreover, while it is important to highlight and challenge sexism in sport, these findings remind us that an overly negative framing of the sport industry can function as a barrier to

participation. In this regard, we have a responsibility as scholars to tell the whole story in all its horror, joy, and mundanity.

Women also reclaimed negative narratives of women in football by articulating how much they loved working in the industry. Crucially, women felt that the trade-offs that they made to succeed in the industry, such as not having children, were worth it for the joy and excitement that they derived from working in football. Despite its flaws, football offered women opportunities to do exciting work and be part of an industry that brought joy to millions. Notably, these women felt that they would have been unable to find the same excitement in a different industry. Furthermore, the love women had for working in football ignited their enthusiasm for encouraging other women to work in the industry. Several women also contested normative ideas of womanhood by committing themselves to a career in football rather than a family life. These women were content with their choice to work in a boundaryless industry and derived a profound sense of pride and self-fulfilment from their work. These findings offer a valuable contribution to research on women and work by shifting the focus from women's work as oppressive or as a distraction from family life, and spotlighting women's work as enjoyable and fulfilling. That said, the choice to work for enjoyment and fulfilment is a privilege that these women were afforded because of their socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, enjoyment from work – necessitous or optional – is often overlooked in literature on women and work. In the case of sport, where women's experiences are frequently discussed in overtly negative terms, these findings are a crucial reminder of the importance of sport and work in women's lives.

My findings also help to bridge the gap between 'cogs in the machine' (Derks *et al*., 2011; Kaiser & Spalding, 2015; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015) and 'agents of change' literature (Adamson & Kelan, 2019; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015) by evidencing the small yet

significant ways in which women leaders used their positions to challenge inequalities in the football workplace. Drawing on Meyerson and Scully's (1995) concept of tempered radicalism, I argued that women leaders occupy a complex middle ground in between 'cogs in the machine' and 'agents of change'. In this space, women leaders must act in ways that help them fit into the system whilst simultaneously finding opportunities to challenge it. Crucially, I found that women leaders used the limited power they had to quietly resist the extremely gendered culture of football and create a level playing field for women without 'rocking the boat' (Meyerson, 2008).

The women I interviewed were invested emotionally and physically in efforts to get more women into football, and they assumed a great deal of responsibility for 'doing a good job' and 'not pulling the ladder up' so that other women had an easier time than they did in breaking through the glass ceiling. Several women also spoke about their desire to create more opportunities for women in football. Moreover, football itself seemed to provide women with a unique motivation and opportunity to enact positive changes in ways that other industries do not. That is, women felt a deep sense of injustice that women and girls could not play football on equal terms with men and boys, but they believed that football or sport provided unique opportunities to enact positive changes for women and girls. Ultimately, this provided the motivation for women to stay in football leadership and challenge longstanding inequalities between women and men in the game.

However, I argued that small and individualised acts of resistance, while meaningful, are limited in their ability to radically change football cultures from within. Therefore, 'add women approaches' to tackling gendered equality, which are premised on the idea that women leaders can and will create positive changes for women and girls in sport, may fail without external pressures to drastically change the extremely gendered culture of football.

I also argued that these approaches place a disproportionate burden on women to challenge organisational cultures from within, a phenomenon I termed the ‘burden of resistance’. That is, while inspiring, tempered radicalism was an additional burden for women. I found that women were not only expected to push an equality agenda and actively support other women in the workplace through additional and unpaid labour, but they were also heavily criticised if they were seen to not be supporting other women. Crucially, men seldom shouldered these additional workloads and pressures.

These findings also forced me to consider the burden that my research placed on women. As researchers in gender inequality, we often focus our research efforts on women without considering the time burden and emotional stress that this places on women, especially when asking women to recount experiences of sexism. Indeed, after the recorder was switched off, one woman told me that the interview had forced her to rethink her career in football, despite having worked in industry for over 20 years. That woman has since left the football industry, and while I will never really know whether this research influenced her decision to leave, it certainly prompted her to think about her career and what she wanted for the future. As such, we should consider not just what our participants contribute to our research, but the impact that our research has on participants.

In the final findings section, I considered the factors that influence women’s decisions to leave football leadership. Using the Kaleidoscope Career Model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) to understanding the complex and shifting reasons women leave their careers, I found that women leaders leave or consider leaving football to pursue balance, challenge, and authenticity. These findings contest popular discourse on women’s reasons for leaving leadership, which include the notion that women “opt out” to raise children (Belkin, 2003) or that they are pushed out by sexist cultures (Torre, 2017b). In doing so, these findings

add to a growing body of research which finds that women's reasons for leaving leadership positions are not primarily driven by deterministic social factors (Cabrera, 2007; Frkal & Criscione-Naylor, 2021; Zimmerman & Clark, 2016).

I found that women's reasons for leaving football leadership were driven by agentive decisions to pursue a more fulfilling career and personal life. While younger women spoke about wanting to dedicate more time to their families, women in the later stages of their careers wanted a better work/life balance so they could pursue leisure activities. This is significant because women's needs and desires for leisure time away from work and family commitments have been historically overlooked (Pope, 2017; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2017). Crucially, I found that women were unable to fully enjoy social or leisure time at work, such as watching football matches, because of the expectations to display a respectable femininity. In contrast, men are free to drink and socialise on match days without judgement. Therefore, I argued that the inability for women to fully incorporate the pleasure of watching football into their working lives may be one reason women are more likely than men to leave football leadership.

I also found that women left or thought about leaving football to pursue more challenging careers. Although football was an interesting and exciting industry to work in, I argued that women exercise agency to leave football if they no longer find the work stimulating. Crucially I found that the nature of women's peripheral inclusion meant they could be easily pigeonholed into routine administrative roles that had little influence over the running of the organisation. This was especially the case in resource rich Premier League clubs and football governing bodies where workers were confined to specific roles. In contrast, workers in lower league football with fewer staff resources, found more opportunities to take on new challenges. To paraphrase on interviewee football left some

women feeling like ‘caged birds’. This is significant because it offers an alternative explanation for women’s attrition from leadership.

Finally, I found that women in the latter stages of their career were also motivated by a desire to do work that aligned with their values and identity. This included doing charity work and ‘giving back’ to the community. Crucially, I found that this desire for authenticity was a response to the wealth and corruption of football. That is, being confined to roles where they had to ‘clean up’ after men and sweep scandals under the carpet, took its toll on women’s moral conscience. Significantly, these findings move us beyond critiquing sexism and inflexible working as barriers to women’s participation, into a wider critique of unethical football cultures. Specifically, these findings make an original contribution to knowledge by showing how the extravagant wealth, corruption, and commercialism that has come to define ‘new’ football is a catalyst for women leaders to leave football and pursue more authentic careers and interests. Put simply, some women are not pushed out of football, they just fall out of love with it.

I too have fallen out of love with football during the course of writing this thesis. Like the women I interviewed, have I been working on the coalface of football’s dark side, reading day in and day out about sexism, harassment, racism, and corruption in football. What is more, recent scandals have unsettled me to the point that I no longer take pleasure in watching men’s professional football. As a gay woman, it is hard to support an industry that has so little regard for the rights of women and LGBT people that it is willing to host a men’s world cup in Qatar or allow companies with links to the Saudi Arabian state to take ownership of a Premier League Club – countries where women have minimal rights and where same-sex relations are punishable by imprisonment, flogging, or death (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The illegal and morally reprehensible actions of certain male players

in the last few years, which include rape allegations (Sabin, 2021; The Independent, 2021), and the hosting of "sex parties" during the national lockdown (Steinberg, 2020), have hammered the final nails in the coffin for my love of men's professional football.

Most men will undoubtedly be as disgusted as I am with these scandals and allegations; however, these incidents send a strong message that the football industry does not care about women – it does not care about me. My research into women's experiences of working in football has done very little to convince me otherwise. What I have found is the presence of an extremely gendered regime that limits women's access to power and places restrictive conditions of acceptance on women leaders. Along with the exodus of women from leadership positions, these findings suggest that gender equality is far from being realised. There are small pockets of people doing important work to make football a better place for women and girls. However, I fear that it will never be enough to make football a good place for women and girls. A place where they can feel safe, where they can thrive, and where they are treated as equals.

9.5 Practical Implications & Recommendations

After 4 years conducting doctoral research into gender inequalities in football, and 13 years as a football fan, I have come to realise that nothing short of dismantling football governance as we know it and rebuilding it with an entirely different blueprint will result in true gender equality. Indeed, I have found little evidence to suggest that fundamental change is possible from within football organisations. The structures of football are, by design, unyielding to the inclusion of women on equal terms with men. I also want to be clear that these structures harm *both* women and men. As I argued in chapter 6, the male norm, and the hypermasculinity associated with core footballing roles, prevents men from

asking for flexible hours to look after children. The sportlight also harms men in football, especially high-profile players, managers and officials, who are frequently subjected to verbal abuse (Vidgen & Williams, 2022), death threats (Taylor, 2010), and sometimes physical abuse (Ingle, 2019), from so-called football fans. So, while I remain doubtful that football can ever provide an equal, safe, and supportive playing field for women and men, it would be remiss for us to stop trying to make football a better – albeit imperfect – place. As such, in this section I discuss the practical implications of my doctoral research and offer recommendations for football organisations to improve women's access to and experiences of football leadership.

This doctoral research shows that leadership roles in men's football, certainly at the organisational core, have remained almost impermeable to women. The presence of women leaders in men's football, even in the boardroom, might look like progress, but if women leaders are removed from the players and major footballing decisions, the world of football will remain characteristically masculine. As such, external efforts to increase women leaders in male-dominated organisations, such as gender targets for boardroom roles, will fail without a closer examination of the types of leadership roles women are appointed to. Indeed, the introduction of gender targets at the national level of football governance may have resulted in more women on the board, but most women have been appointed to non-executive leadership roles, meaning they are not involved in the day-to-day running of the Football Association. Crucially, my findings also showed that even women involved at the highest levels of football leadership are not necessarily involved in decisions about the players and field of play.

These findings have practical implications for football organisations. Notably, these findings tell us that equality policies and initiatives need to focus less on numerical equality

and more on the *types* of leadership roles women hold and how much access to power and influence they have over the core function of the organisation. To do this, industry leaders, scholars, and policy makers must make a distinction between leadership and power. For example, while gender targets for board of directors in NGBs focus on increasing women's access to leadership, there are no gender targets for executive director roles or the role of chair – the most powerful position on the board. Introducing policies and practices that centre on increasing women's access to power rather than leadership will ensure we are making genuine progress on gender equality in sport leadership.

Findings also indicate that informal socialising and networking events can exclude women and prevent them from gaining invaluable social capital. Male only socialising and networking events organised around strip clubs, golf days or men's football tournaments explicitly exclude women but late evening and weekend events, or events organised around alcohol can also implicitly exclude women, as well as some faith groups. Therefore, football organisations should encourage inclusive social and networking events that take place in regular business hours and that do not centre on essentially 'male' only events or on alcohol consumption.

Football organisations should also consider the impact of women's exclusion from *core* roles on their access to senior leadership in their recruitment strategies. That is, if women have been excluded from *core* roles, they are less likely than men to have football related experience that is required for most senior leadership roles in football (Lawrence, 2018). Therefore, football organisations should consider the gendered impact of listing 'core' experience as an essential or desirable criteria for potential leaders. Alongside this, football organisations should do more to target underrepresented groups when advertising jobs in core roles at all levels. While the FA recognises and has taken steps to address the

underrepresentation of women and Black people in football leadership through the Football Leadership Diversity Code (The FA, 2020), the code does not go far enough in addressing the critical absence of women, especially Black women, in core leadership roles in men's club football. Furthermore, gender equality efforts must also recognise the intersection of gender with other bases of inequality such as race. The progression of exclusively white women into leadership roles is far from equality for women as a collective.

Analysis of gender pay gap data also revealed significant omissions and ambiguities in the reporting of pay gap data. Namely, football clubs used the inclusion of male footballers' wages to obscure or rationalise gender pay inequalities in football. Furthermore, in the absence of a mandate to report athlete wages separately, the true extent of the gender pay gap in administrative roles and athlete roles remains unclear. This is significant given that the purpose of gender pay reporting is to expose and address gender inequalities within organisations. Moreover, football clubs that provided voluntary data excluding male player wages also excluded coaching staff wages on the same basis. This evidences the assumption of masculinity in core football roles and further functions to obscure the true extent of gender inequalities in football. To interrogate and challenge these assumptions, sport organisations should be mandated to report athlete wages separately from administrative and coaching roles.

My findings also add to a growing body of literature that suggests ideal leaders in sport and business must have existing leadership experiences. However, as Baker and Kelan (2019) argue, constructing the ideal leader as someone with existing senior leadership experience implicitly excludes women, who are less likely than men to have leadership experiences. Notably, most of the women leaders I interviewed accessed football at a senior level, rather than working their way up, and most of these women already held a senior role in a male-

dominated industry. Moreover, my findings suggest that leadership training for women is no substitute for on-the-job experience. These findings suggest that previous experiences of ‘sharing space’ with men can facilitate entry into football leadership for women. However, because women are `significantly less likely than men to work in male-dominated professions, especially at a senior level, most women are unlikely to meet the conditions of the ideal football leader. Therefore, football organisations should reconsider listing previous leadership experience as an essential criterion for mid-level leadership positions and consider alternative criteria, i.e., leadership training.

While the women I interviewed were able to dedicate themselves, unencumbered to the football industry, the incompatibility of motherhood with football leadership is likely a key factor in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, especially core roles. Options for flexible working, part-time hours or job sharing must be meaningfully considered by football organisations if they are serious about gender equality. These options will benefit all workers by challenging a culture of long working hours and total dedication at the expense of family life. My interviews with women leaders also revealed that parental leave policies differ from club to club and that some were offering bare minimum pay during periods of parental leave. Therefore, I recommend that the FA conduct a review of parental leave policies in English football.

My findings also made it clear that living in the sportlight brought additional pressures for those working in football, especially women. While the FA, in their latest EDI strategy, commit to delivering effective sanctions against those found guilty of discrimination in the game, I argue that these sanctions do not send a strong enough message. For example, the FA commits to delivering mandatory educational programmes if individuals are found guilty of a discriminatory offence. However, it is not clear who will deliver these

educational programmes or what they will entail. Furthermore, there is limited evidence to suggest that educational programmes work. I argue that a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination will send a strong message that the football industry will no longer tolerate hate.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. To show a commitment to reducing gender inequalities in *core* leadership roles in men's football, The FA's Leadership Diversity Code should include gender diversity targets for coaching roles in men's club football. In line with targets set for women's club football, 50% of new coaching in men's club football hires should be women.
2. To acknowledge the critical lack of women in *core* leadership roles compared to *peripheral* leadership roles, The FA's Leadership Diversity Code should set separate gender diversity targets for senior leadership roles and team operations roles.
3. To redress the extremely gendered substructure of football the FA should explore options for mixed-gender training and matches beyond 18 years old[14].
4. To eliminate exclusionary networking and social events, football clubs should evaluate their formal and informal socialising and networking events to ensure equality of access for workers.
5. To eliminate "inner table" decisions – in line with Tier 3, Principle 1, Requirement 1.14 of the Code for Sport Governance – football club boards and its committee shall: meet sufficiently regularly; and maintain a proper record of meetings and decisions.
6. To ensure transparency in GPG reporting, sports organisations should be mandated to report GPG data including AND excluding athlete wages. Coaching staff wages should NOT be included in athlete data.

[14] The FA (2021b) currently permits the fielding of both male and female players in Under 7 to Under 18 (inclusive) matches as well as in disability football at all ages. Subject to prior approval, "flexible football" matches may field male and female players as a "pilot project" (ibid, pg. 610). Flexible football is separate from the normal football pyramid.

7.	To gain a true picture of inequalities in pay within organisations, gender pay gap reporting should include intersectional elements showing how the gender pay gap cross cuts with other bases of inequalities, including race, class, disability, and sexuality.
8.	In line with recent recommendations made by The Fawcett Society and The Global Institute for Women's Leadership (2021) organisations should include action plans, with "time-bound and measurable goals for narrowing the gender pay gap" (ibid: pg. 15). For sports organisations, this should include an action plan for decreasing the gender pay gap in *core* roles such as coaching and athlete management.
9.	Currently, only organisations with 250 or more employees are mandated to report their GPG in the UK, as such most football organisations were not eligible to report their gender pay gap. To increase the effectiveness of gender pay gap reporting, the UK should reduce the employer size required to report their GPG. This would bring the UK in line with other European countries such as France and Spain where the threshold is 50+ employees, and Sweden whose threshold is 10+ (The Fawcett Society & The Global Institute for Women's Leadership, 2021).
10.	The FA should conduct a review of parental leave policies across professional club football and set minimum standards for the provision of parental leave for players and non-playing staff.

9.6 Future Directions

Although this thesis has considered the intersection of gender with other bases of inequality in football, such as race, the lack of data on racial inequalities in football meant that any analysis of gender as it relates to race was limited. There is also a distinct lack of scholarship on the intersection of disability and sport leadership. Indeed, I have argued that one-directional measures of inequality, such as gender pay gap reporting, fail to account for multiple, and compounding inequalities. Therefore, there is a pressing need for intersectional reporting and analysis of football leadership. As Colins and Bilge (2020, p. 5) argue, football offers rich site for intersectional analysis, not least because of its global reach but because of how "intersecting power relations of race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality organize" professional football. I hope that the recent media attention directed at the lack of Black players in England women's team, and the Black Lives Matter movement will at the very least inspire more scholarship on racial inequalities in football leadership.

Moreover, existing studies on "extremely gendered" organisations have not considered the intersection of gender, with other bases of inequality within these organisations. Yet, I suggest that homophobia and racism are also defining features of extremely gendered organisations. Therefore, future applications of the theory of extremely gendered organisations should also consider the intersection of gender with other bases of inequality. I further extend Tyler *et al*'s (2019) appeal for scholars to apply the theory of extremely gendered organisations to other highly-masculinised organisational contexts.

Future research also needs to better understand the ways that women leaders affect change from within football, as well as other male-dominated industries, that acknowledges the complexities of women's lived experiences. This is not to say that incremental changes from within are enough on their own to achieve equality, but to move forward as feminist researchers

future research needs to reconcile moderate and radical approaches to gender equality with organisations. Researchers and practitioners also need to find ways to support women and men to advance equality agendas in football. It is simply not enough to hope that having more women in leadership will inevitably lead to a positive cultural shift. We must acknowledge that placing the burden of responsibility for changing workplace cultures on the shoulders of women leaders is an unstainable project.

Finally, much has changed in the UK since I began this doctoral research. Notably the COVID 19 pandemic has radically changed working practices and people's attitudes towards paid employment (Deole, Deter & Huang, 2021). The football industry also suffered financially because of the pandemic, having lost significant revenue from ticket sales during national lockdowns (Bond *et al.*, 2022; Parnell *et al.*, 2020). Thus, it is likely that even in the relatively brief time period between collecting my data and submitting my thesis the landscape of football and work will have changed considerably. Moreover, the COVID 19 pandemic has had gendered consequences. Notably, the closure of schools and day-care centres during national lockdowns significantly increased women's unpaid care work (Xue & McMunn, 2021; Zamberlan *et al.*, 2021). Thus, future research on gender inequalities in football must account for the impact of the pandemic on the football industry and on women's lives.

9.7 Concluding Thoughts

The door to football leadership is only open to women who meet a very narrow set of conditions. I argue that these conditions ensure that the women who do enter this extremely gendered domain, pose the least amount of threat to its existing cultures. Women are a threat if they work in core roles. They are a threat if they are TOO different to the dominant workforce. They are a threat if they reveal their sexuality. They are threat if they complain.

They are threat if they try to change things. This is not to say that women do not push back against these conditions – they do. However, they must do so strategically, patiently, and persistently. Football is resistant to change; as such, challenges to the status quo must be tempered. Living with these conditions also takes its toll on women, emotionally and physically. The journey to football leadership for women is littered with trade-offs and sacrifices, and while these are common occurrences for women working in other male-dominated industries, football is not a "normal" industry. It is extreme in almost every sense – long working hours, performance pressures, financial uncertainty, insecure work, lack of flexibility. Moreover, football operates under the glare of the sportlight, and this places specific pressures on women to perform an ideal workers and ideal women.

These findings tell us that having more women in leadership positions in football or any industry, should not be an end goal. The extremely gendered cultures of football are unlikely to change just by adding more women in if women are confined to roles that pose the least threat or are held to standards that few women will ever be able to meet or maintain. Furthermore, this research shows that women's ability to change exclusionary cultures from within is limited, if not completely restricted by an extremely gendered regime. Therefore, equality can only be achieved by questioning and ultimately dismantling the cultures and practices that privilege white heterosexual men to the detriment of all others.

Fundamental to this is work is the equal provision of resources for women and men's football and opportunities for over 18s to participate in mixed-gender football. Until women are valued equally to men as athletes, they will never be valued equally to men in leadership roles. While good progress has been made on this front in recent years, we are far from equality. In fact, we must question, under the conditions of an extremely gendered organisation, whether equality is possible. That is, if football's rasion d'être is the production and maintenance of male

superiority, then women will never be granted full access to this man's world. However, this does not mean that we should stop trying. There are organisations, such as Fair Game, Football v Homophobia, Kick It Out, and many others that doing important work advocating for change within in football. I absolutely believe that making football a more welcoming place for women is a worthwhile pursuit, but if we want true equality, we may need to completely reimagine the world of football for women that does not rely on the good will of men.

It is perhaps unsurprising that in coming to this conclusion, I have turned my sporting participation away from football and towards a women-led sport: Roller Derby. Afterall, I still love sport and believe in the power of sport to unite people. In Roller Derby, I have not only found a sport that is welcoming to women, but one that exists *for* women rather than accommodating women at the peripheries. I hope, with introduction of the fan -led review into football governance and the promise of an independent regulator for football in England, we will start to see meaningful changes in football for all. But for now, I am happy dedicating my precious leisure time to a sport that truly values my participation.

10. REFERENCES

Aarons, E. (2018, 19 Oct). 'We can't control the trolls': threats to Carney highlight a growing issue. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/oct/19/karen-carney-england-women-abuse-online-threats

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*(2), 139-158.

Acker, J. (2004). Gender, Capitalism and Globalization. *Critical Sociology, 30*(1), 17-41. doi:10.1163/156916304322981668

Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society, 20*(4), 441-464.

Acker, J. (2009). From glass ceiling to inequality regimes. *Sociologie du travail, 51*(2), 199-217.

Acker, J. (2012). Gendered organizations and intersectionality: problems and possibilities. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 31*(3), 214-224.

Adams-Prassl, A., Boneva, T., Golin, M. & Rauh, C. (2020). Inequality in the Impact of the Coronavirus Shock: Evidence from Real Time Surveys. In. London: Centre for Economic Policy Research Discussion Paper No. 14665.

Adamson, M. (2017). Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and A 'Successfully' Balanced Femininity in Celebrity CEO Autobiographies. *Gender, Work & Organization, 24*(3), 314-327.

Adamson, M. & Johansson, M. (2021). Writing Class In and Out: Constructions of Class in Elite Businesswomen's Autobiographies. *Sociology.* 55(3), 487-504.

Adamson, M. & Kelan, E. K. (2019). 'Female heroes': celebrity executives as postfeminist role models. *British Journal of management, 30*(4), 981-996.

Adkins, L. (2004). Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and After. *The Sociological Review, 52*(2_suppl), 3-18.

Adkins, L. (2005). Social capital. *Feminist Theory, 6*(2), 195-211.

Adriaanse, J. A. (2016). Gender Diversity in the Governance of Sport Associations: The Sydney Scoreboard Global Index of Participation. *Journal of business ethics, 137*(1), 149-160.

Adriaanse, J. A. (2019). Europe in world perspective: The Sydney Scoreboard Global Index for women in sport leadership. In A. Elling, J. Hovden, & A. Knoppers (Eds.), *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance* (pp. 11-19). Oxon: Routledge.

Adriaanse, J. A. & Schofield, T. (2014). The impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance. *Journal of Sport Management, 28*(5), 485-497.

Ahearn, L. M. (2010). Agency and language. In J. Jaspers, J.-O. Östman, & J. Verschueren (Eds.), *Society and Language Use* (pp. 28-48). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Ahmed, K. (2022, 9 March 2022). UK accused of 'betraying' women as leaked report warns of aid cut impacts. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/09/uk-accused-of-betraying-women-as-leaked-report-warns-of-aid-cut-impacts

Ahmed, S. (1998). *Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. .
Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. London: Duke University Press.
Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. London: Duke University Press.
Ahmed, S. (2021). *Complaint!* Durham, NC.: Duke University Press.
Ahmed, S. & Swan, E. (2006). Doing Diversity. *Policy Futures in Education, 4*(2), 96-100. doi:10.2304/pfie.2006.4.2.96
Ahn, N. Y. & Cunningham, G. B. (2020). Standing on a glass cliff?: A case study of FIFA's gender initiatives. *Managing Sport and Leisure, 25*(1-2), 114-137.
Aicher, T. & Sagas, M. (2009). An examination of homologous reproduction and the effects of sexism. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, 3*(3), 375-386.
Alakeson, V. (2012). *The price of motherhood: women and part-time work*. Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/28299/1/The-price-of-motherhood-women-and-part-time-work.pdf
Allen, J. B. & Shaw, S. (2013). An interdisciplinary approach to examining the working conditions of women coaches. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 8*(1), 1-17.
Alvesson, M. & Billing, Y. D. (2003). Beyond body-counting: a discussion of the social construction of gender at work. In *Gender, identity and the culture of organizations* (pp. 86-105): Routledge.
Anderson, E. D. (2009). The Maintenance of Masculinity Among the Stakeholders of Sport. *Sport Management Review, 12*(1), 3-14.
Antecol, H. & Cobb-Clark, D. A. (2013). Do psychosocial traits help explain gender segregation in young people's occupations? *Labour Economics, 21*, 59-73.
Armitage, S. H. & Gluck, S. B. (2006). Reflections on Women's Oral History: An Exchange. In R. Perks & A. Thomson (Eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 73-82). Oxon: Routledge.
Asante, A. (2022, 18 July). Lack of diversity in England Women squad will stop many girls from dreaming. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/jul/18/england-women-squad-euro-2022-whiteness-diversity
Atewologun, D. & Sealy, R. (2014). Experiencing privilege at ethnic, gender and senior intersections. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 29*(4), 423-439.
Babcock, L. & Laschever, S. (2009). *Women don't ask: Negotiation and the gender divide*: Princeton University Press.
Baker, D. T. & Kelan, E. K. (2019). Splitting and blaming: The psychic life of neoliberal executive women. *Human Relations, 72*(1), 69-97.
Balmer, D. F., Courts, K. A., Dougherty, B., Tuton, L. W., Abbuhl, S. & Hirshfield, L. E. (2020). Applying the Theory of Gendered Organizations to the Lived Experience of Women with Established Careers in Academic Medicine. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine, 32*(5), 466-475.
Bandini, P. (2006, 13 November). Newell says sorry for sexist remarks. *The Guardian*.
Barnard, C. (2003). Opting Out of the 48-Hour Week: Employer Necessity or Individual Choice? An Empirical Study of the Operation of Article 18(1)(b) of the Working Time Directive in the UK. *Industrial Law Journal, 32*(4), 223-252.
Barnard, S., Powell, A., Bagilhole, B. & Dainty, A. (2010). Researching UK women professionals in SET: A critical review of current approaches. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology, 2*(3).

Barrett, M. (1988). *Women's Oppression Today: The Marxist/feminist Encounter*: Verso.
Bartlett, S. (2022). *Karren Brady: How to Win At Entrepreneurship & Love (at the same time)* [The Diary of a CEO], 11th April 2022.
Bason, T., Salisbury, P. & Gérard, S. (2019). FIFA. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook od Football Business and Management* (pp. 423-440). London: Routledge.
Baxter-Wright, D. & Sutton, M. (2021). 14 of the best companies to work for as a mum-to-be. Retrieved from https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/worklife/careers/g21068323/best-uk-companies-maternity-leave/
BBC Sport. (2016). FA must reform or face losing funding, says Sports Minister Tracey Crouch. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/36877406
BBC Sport. (2018). Gender pay gap: how does your club compare? *2019*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/43638672
BBC Sport. (2020). Arsenal plan to make 55 staff redundant because of coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/53668802#:~:text=Arsenal%20plan%20to%20make%2055%20staff%20redundant%20because%20of%20coronavirus%20pandemic,-Last%20updated%20on&text=Arsenal%20plan%20to%20make%2055%20staff%20redundant%20because%20of%20the,12.5%25%20pay%20cut%20in%20April.
Beek, R. M., Ernest, M. & Verschueren, J. (2019). Global Football: Defining the rules of the changing game. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 20-32). Oxon: Routledge.
Beise, I. H. & McKie, L. (2016). Opting in: Women in Search of Well-Being. In M. Connerley, & J. Wu (Eds.), *Handbook on Well-Being of Working Women,* (pp. 503-516). Dordrecht: Springer.
Beise-Stjernberg, I. H. & Choroszewicz, M. (2019). Opting out: Professional women develop reflexive agency, *Equality Diversity and Inclusion,* 38(6), pp. 619-633.
Belkin, L. (2003). The opt-out revolution. *New York Times Magazine, 26*(10). Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/26/magazine/the-opt-out-revolution.html
Benard, S. & Correll, S. J. (2010). Normative discrimination and the motherhood penalty. *Gender & Society, 24*(5), 616-646.
Benschop, Y. (2009). The Micro-politics of Gendering in Networking. *Gender, Work & Organization, 16*(2), 217-237.
Berdahl, J. L., Cooper, M., Glick, P., Livingston, R. W. & Williams, J. C. (2018). Work as a Masculinity Contest. *Journal of social issues, 74*(3), 422-448.
Berkshire Consultancy. (2009). Qualitative Report for the Study of Women In Combat. In. Reading: Berkshire Consultancy Ltd.
Bezants, J. & Robinson, M. (2021, 20 April). Was this the night the European Super League was born? Owners and chief execs from Man United, Liverpool and Arsenal held talks at a trendy New York Italian in 2017, all desperate for a bigger share of TV cash. *The Daily Mail.* Retrieved from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-9490179/Was-night-European-Super-League-born.html
Bhopal, K. (2020). Confronting White privilege: the importance of intersectionality in the sociology of education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 41*(6), 807-816.

Biese, I. & Choroszewicz, M. (2019). Opting out: professional women develop reflexive agency. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 38*(6), 619-633.
Biese, I. & McKie, L. (2016). Opting In: Women in Search of Well-Being. In Connerley, M. & Wu, J. (eds) *Handbook on Well-Being of Working Women* pp. 503-516. Dordrecht: Springer,
Billing, Y. D. (2011). Are Women in Management Victims of the Phantom of the Male Norm? *Gender, Work & Organization, 18*(3), 298-317.
Bird, S. (1996). Welcome to the men's club. *Gender & Society, 10*(2), 120-132.
Bird, S., Litt, J. & Wang, Y. (2004). Creating Status of Women Reports: Institutional Housekeeping as "Women's Work". *NWSA Journal, 16*(1), 194- 206
Birkett, H. & Forbes, S. (2019). Where's dad? Exploring the low take-up of inclusive parenting policies in the UK. *Policy Studies, 40*(2), 205-224.
Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to social enquiry: Advancing knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity.
Blaikie, N. (2010). *Designing Social Research* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
Blau, F. D. & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations. *Journal of Economic Literature, 55*(3), 789-865.
Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
Bobbitt-Zeher, D. (2011). Gender discrimination at work: Connecting gender stereotypes, institutional policies, and gender composition of workplace. *Gender & Society, 25*(6), 764-786.
Bolzendahl, C. (2014). Opportunities and Expectations. *Gender & Society, 28*(6), 847-876.
Bond, A. J., Cockayne, D., Ludvigsen, J. A. L., Maguire, K., Parnell, D., Plumley, D. and Wilson, R. (2022). COVID-19: the return of football fans. *Managing Sport and Leisure, 27*(1-2), 108-118.
Booth, R. (2016, 6 June). Chelsea doctor Eva Carneiro 'heard José Mourinho insult her'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/06/chelsea-doctor-eva-carneiro-jose-mourinho-insult-filha-filho-da-puta-tribunal-told
Bornat, J. (2012). Biographical Methods. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods* (pp. 344-356). London: Sage Publications.
Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). London: Routledge. 2010.
Boyd, N. A. (2008). Who is the subject? Queer theory meets oral history. *Journal of the History of Sexuality, 17*(2), 177-189.
Bozhinov, V., Koch, C. & Schank, T. (2019). The Second Glass Ceiling: Women's Role in Supervisory Boards of German Firms. *Schmalenbach Business Review, 71*(3), 385-411.
Bradbury, S. (2011). From racial exclusions to new inclusions: Black and minority ethnic participation in football clubs in the East Midlands of England. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 46*(1), 23-44.
Bradbury, S. (2013). Institutional racism, whiteness and the under-representation of minorities in leadership positions in football in Europe. *Soccer & Society, 14*(3), 296-314.
Bradbury, S. (2020). 'Fit for doing but not fit for organising': Racisms, stereotypes and networks in coaching in professional football in Europe. In S. Bradbury, J. Lusted,

& J. Van Sterkenburg (Eds.), *'Race', Ethnicity and Racism in Sports Coaching* (pp. 22-42). Oxon: Routledge.
Bradbury, S., Van Sterkenburg, J. & Mignon, P. (2014). *The glass ceiling in European football: levels of representation of visible ethnic minorities and women, and the experiences of elite level ethnic minority coaches*. Retrieved from https://www.farenet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/The-glass-ceiling-in-football-screen3.pdf
Brady, K. (2012). *Strong Woman: The Truth About Getting to the Top*. London: Harper Collins.
Brady, K. (2021, 1 May). Boycotting social media will finally force companies to clamp down on hate. *The Sun*. Retrieved from https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14824736/karren-brady-social-media-troll-clampdown/
Bridgewater, S. (2010). *Football Management*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Brine, J. (1999). *Undereducating Women: Globalizing Inequality.* Buckingham: Open University Press.
British Sociological Association. (2017). BSA Statement of Ethical Practice. In. Durham: British Sociological Association.
Britton, D. M. (2003). *At work in the iron cage: The prison as gendered organization*, New York: NYU Press.
Britton, D. M. (2017). Beyond the Chilly Climate:The Salience of Gender in Women's Academic Careers. *Gender & Society, 31*(1), 5-27.
Britton, D. M. & Logan, L. (2008). Gendered organizations: Progress and prospects. *Sociology Compass, 2*(1), 107-121.
Britton, D. M. & Williams, C. L. (1995). "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue": Military Policy and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity. *Journal of Homosexuality, 30*(1), 1-21.
Brooks, O. (2019). *Football, Fandom and Consumption*. Oxon: Routledge.
Brown, S. & Kelan, E. K. (2020). *Gender and Corporate Boards: The route to a seat at the table*. Oxon: Routledge.
Brownsell, J. (2021, 23 April). What was behind the collapse of the European Super League?. *Al Jazeera.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/4/23/what-was-behind-the-collapse-of-the-european-super-league
Buck, J. (2022, 14 February). Ranked! This is how Newcastle United's following on social media compares with Manchester United, Liverpool, Leeds United and the rest of the Premier League. *The Shields Gazette*. Retrieved from https://www.shieldsgazette.com/sport/football/newcastle-united/how-nufcs-social-media-following-compares-with-the-rest-of-the-pl-3567819?page=5
Budgeon, S. (2014). The Dynamics of Gender Hegemony: Femininities, Masculinities and Social Change. *Sociology, 48*(2), 317-334.
Burdsey, D. (2020). *Racism and English Football: For Club and Country*. Oxon: Routledge.
Burgess, D. & Borgida, E. (1999). Who women are, who women should be: Descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotyping in sex discrimination. *Psychology, public policy, and law, 5*(3), 665.
Burk, J. & Espinoza, E. (2012). Race Relations Within the US Military. *Annual Review of Sociology, 38*(1), 401-422.

Burks, D. J. (2011). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual victimization in the military: An unintended consequence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"? *American Psychologist, 66*(7), 604.

Burrell, I. (2010, 2 October). Karren Brady: Not your average footballer's wife. *Independent.* Retreived from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/karren-brady-not-your-average-footballer-s-wife-2095517.html

Burstyn, V. (1999). *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*. London: University of Toronto Press.

Burton, L. J. (2015). Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research *Sport Management Review, 18*(2), 155-165.

Burton, L. J., Barr, C. A., Fink, J. S. & Bruening, J. E. (2009). "Think athletic director, think masculine?": Examination of the gender typing of managerial subroles within athletic administration positions. *Sex Roles, 61*(5-6), 416-426.

Butler, J. (1992). Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the question of 'postmodernsim'. In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (pp. 3-21). Florence, US: Taylor & Francis Group.

Butler, J. (1999). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. London: Routledge.

Butler, P. (2022, 24 February). Millions will be worse off after below-inflation universal credit rise, say experts. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/feb/24/millions-worse-off-below-inflation-universal-credit-rise-say-experts

Cabinet Office. (2015). *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation

Cabrera, E. F. (2007). Opting out and opting in: understanding the complexities of women's career transitions. *Career Development International, 12*(3), 218-237. doi:10.1108/13620430710745872

Carers UK. (2019). *Facts about carers policy briefing August 2019*. Retrieved from https://www.carersuk.org/images/Facts_about_Carers_2019.pdf

Carers UK. (2020). *Unseen and undervalued: The value of unpaid care provided to date during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from https://www.carersuk.org/reports/unseen-and-undervalued-the-value-of-unpaid-care-provided-to-date-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

Carnoy, M. (2009). *Sustaining the New Economy: Work, Family, and Community in the Information Age*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Castan-Vicente, F., Nicolas, C. & Cervin, G. (2019). Women in Sport Organizations: Histographical and Epistemological Challenges. In G. Cervin & C. Nicolas (Eds.), *Histories of Women's Work in Global Sport: A Man's World?* (pp. 17-48).

Catalyst. (1999). *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers*. Retrieved from https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-of-color-in-corporate-management-opportunities-and-barriers/

Caudwell, J. (2011). Gender, feminism and football studies. *Soccer & Society, 12*(3), 330-344.

Caven, V., Lawley, S. & Baker, J. (2013). Performance, gender and sexualised work: Beyond management control, beyond legislation? A case study of work in a recruitment company. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 32*(5), 475-490.

Cech, E. A. & Blair-Loy, M. (2010). Perceiving glass ceilings? Meritocratic versus structural explanations of gender inequality among women in science and technology. *Social problems, 57*(3), 371-397.

Celis, K., Erzeel, S., Mügge, L. & Damstra, A. (2014). Quotas and intersectionality: Ethnicity and gender in candidate selection. *International Political Science Review, 35*(1), 41-54.

Centre for Progressive Policy. (2022). *What women want: Tackling gender inequalities in unpaid care and the workplace*. Retrieved from https://www.progressive-policy.net/downloads/files/WiW-2-final-report.pdf

Cervin, G. & Nicolas, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Histories of Women's Work in Global Sport: A Man's World?* Cham; Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Channon, A. (2014). Towards the "undoing" of gender in mixed-sex martial arts and combat sports. *Societies, 4*(4), 587-605.

Channon, A. & Phipps, C. (2017). Pink Gloves Still Give Black Eyes: Exploring 'Alternative' Femininity in Women's Combat Sports. *Martial Arts Studies, 3*, 24-37.

Chapple, A. & Ziebland, S. (2018). Challenging Explanations for the lack of Senior Women in Science? Reflections from Successful Women Scientists at an elite British University. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology, 9*(3), 298-315.

Charles, M. & Bradley, K. (2009). Indulging our gendered selves? Sex segregation by field of study in 44 countries. *American journal of Sociology, 114*(4), 924-976.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory ; a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2008a). Constructionism and the grounded theory method. *Handbook of constructionist research, 1*, 397-412.

Charmaz, K. (2008b). Grounded theory as an emergent method. In Leavy, P. & Hesse-Biber, S. N. (Eds.) *Handbook of emergent methods*. (pp. 155-172).

Charmaz, K. (2008c). Reconstructing Grounded Theory. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods* (pp. 461-478). London: SAGE.

Charmaz, K. & Belgrave, L. L. (2019). Thinking About Data With Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Inquiry, 25*(8), 743-753.

Childs, S. & Krook, M. L. (2006). Should Feminists Give Up on Critical Mass? A Contingent Yes. *Politics & Gender, 2*(04).

Choroszewicz, M. & Adams, T. L. (2019). Gender and Age in the Professions: Intersectionality, Meta-work, and Social Change. *Professions and Professionalism, 9*(2).

CIPD. (2018). *Annual Reports and Accounts*. Retrieved from https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/annual-report-2018_tcm18-51827.pdf.

City Football Group. (2019). Our Clubs. Retrieved from https://www.cityfootballgroup.com/our-clubs/

Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2007). Finding a 'normal'woman: Selection processes for board membership. *Sex Roles, 56*(7-8), 495-507.

Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2008). Doing and undoing gender in sport governance. *Sex Roles, 58*(1-2), 81-92.

Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2012). Paradoxical practices of gender in sport-related organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 26*(5), 404-416.

Clarke, A. (2005). *Situational analysis : grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Clarke, A. (2012). Feminism, Grounded Theory, and Situational Analysis Revisted. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *The Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (2nd ed., pp. 388-412). London: Sage.
Clarke, A. & Friese, C. (2007). Grounded Theorizing Using Situational Analysis. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 362-397). London: Sage.
Clarkson, B. & Philippou, C. (2022). Gender diversity and financial sustainability in professional football: a competitive strategy and proposed interdisciplinary research agenda. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-5. doi:10.1080/23750472.2022.2089204
Clavio, G. & Eagleman, A. N. (2011). Gender and sexually suggestive images in sports blogs. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*(4), 295-304.
Cleland, J. (2015). *A Sociology of Football in a Global Context*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Cleland, J. (2016). Sexuality, masculinity and homophobia in association football: An empirical overview of a changing cultural context *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 1012690216663189*.
Cleland, J. & Cashmore, E. (2016). Football Fans' Views of Violence in British Football. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 40*(2), 124-142. doi:10.1177/0193723515615177
Cleland, J., Cashmore, E., Dixon, K. & MacDonald, C. Analyzing the Presence of Homosexually- Themed Language Among Association Football Fans in the United Kingdom. *Communication & Sport, 0*(0), 21674795211005838. doi:10.1177/21674795211005838
Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.). (2014). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
Cohen, P. N. & Huffman, M. L. (2007). Working for the woman? Female managers and the gender wage gap. *American Sociological Review, 72*(5), 681-704.
Collins, P. H. (1990a). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciouness, and the politics of empowerment*. London: Routledge.
Collins, P. H. (1990b). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: Routledge.
Collins, P. H. (2004). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*: Routledge.
Collins, P. H. & Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Connell, R. W. (2002). *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society, 19*(6), 829-859.
Corbin, J. M. & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research : techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
Correll, S. J., Benard, S. & Paik, I. (2007). Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty? *American journal of Sociology, 112*(5), 1297-1338.
Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research Design. In. London: SAGE Publications.
Crittenden, A. (2001). *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued*: Henry Holt and Company.

Crowhurst, I. (2013). The fallacy of the instrumental gate? Contextualising the process of gaining access through gatekeepers. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 16*(6), 463-475

Crowley, M. & Hodson, R. (2014). Neoliberalism at Work. *Social Currents, 1*(1), 91-108.

Culvin, A. (2021). Football as work: the lived realities of professional women footballers in England. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-14.

Culvin, A. & Bowes, A. (2021). The Incompatibility of Motherhood and Professional Women's Football in England. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 3*(267).

Cunningham, G. B. (2008). Creating and sustaining gender diversity in sport organizations. *Sex Roles, 58*(1-2), 136-145.

Cunningham, G. B. & Sagas, M. (2005). Access Discrimination in Intercollegiate Athletics. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 29*(2), 148-163.

Da Costa, J. C. R. (2021). The "new" white feminism: Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism and the problem of biological determinism in Western feminist theory. In K. Carter & J. Brunton (Eds.), *Transnarratives: Scholarly and creative works on transgender experience* (pp. 317-334). Toronto: Women's Press.

Dahl, G. (2009). Sociology and Beyond: Agency, Victimisation and the Ethics of Writing. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 37*(3), 391-407.

Dashper, K. (2019). Challenging the gendered rhetoric of success? The limitations of women-only mentoring for tackling gender inequality in the workplace. *Gender, Work & Organization, 26*(4), 541-557.

Davidson, M. & Davidson, M. J. (1997). *The Black and ethnic minority woman manager: Cracking the concrete ceiling*: SAGE.

Davies, A. R. & Frink, B. D. (2014). The Origins of the Ideal Worker: The Separation of Work and Home in the United States From the Market Revolution to 1950. *Work and Occupations, 41*(1), 18-39.

de Haan, D. & Dumbell, L. (2019). From the battlefield to the boardroom: The place of gender in sex-integrated sport. In N. Lough & A. Geurin (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Business of Women's Sport* (pp. 134-150). Oxon: Routledge.

Dearden, L. (2021, 26 May). Hillsborough trial: Timeline of 30-year battle for justice. *Independent*. Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/hillsborough-trial-timeline-david-duckenfield-a8842196.html

Deliotte. (2018). *Roar power: Annual Review of Football Finance 2018*. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/sports-business-group/deloitte-uk-sbg-annual-review-of-football-finance-2018.PDF

Denzin, N. (1983). Interpretive Interactionism. In G. Morgan (Ed.), *Beyond Method* (pp. 129-146). London: SAGE Publishers.

Deole, S. S., Deter, M. & Huang, Y. (2021). Home Sweet Home: Working from Home and Employee Performance during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UK. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport. (2021). *Fan-Led Review of Football Governance: securing the game's future*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future#chap1

Department for Work and Pensions. (2022). *Family Resources Survey: financial year 2020 to 2021*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021#disability-1

Department of Business (2018). *Ethnicity Pay Reporting Government Consultation,* Retreived from *https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnicity-pay-reporting*

Derks, B., Ellemers, N., Van Laar, C. & De Groot, K. (2011). Do sexist organizational cultures create the Queen Bee? *British Journal of Social Psychology, 50*(3), 519-535.

Devine, B. D. & Foley, N. (2020). *Women and the economy*. London: House of Commons Library.

Doble, A. (2015, 9 June). The secret history of women's football. *BBC News*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-33064421

Drago, R., Wooden, M. & Black, D. (2009). Long Work Hours: Volunteers and Conscripts. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 47*(3), 571-600.

Dunning, E. (1986). Sport as a Male Preserve: Notes on the Social Sources of Masculine Identity and its Transformations. *Theory, Culture & Society, 3*(1), 79-90.

Dunning, E. (1999). *Sport matters: Sociological studies of sport, violence, and civilization*. London: Psychology Press.

Durante, F. & Fiske, S. T. (2017). How social-class stereotypes maintain inequality. *Current Opinion in Psychology.* 18, 43-48.

Dutton, J. (2019, 16 May) David Beckham reveals how Sir Alex Ferguson made him shave his mohawk off in the Wembley dressing room as he hails the 'ruthless' manager he still calls the 'boss'. *Daily Mail.* Retreived from: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-7035669/David-Beckham-reveals-Sir-Alex-Ferguson-shave-Mohawk-off.html

Eagly, A. H. (2005). Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(3), 459-474.

Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*. Cambridge MA: Harvard Business Press.

Eagly, A. H. & Steffen, V. J. (1984). Gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social roles. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 46*(4), 735.

Edgley, A. (2021). Maternal presenteeism: Theorizing the importance for working mothers of "being there" for their children beyond infancy. *Gender, Work & Organization, 28*(3), 1023-1039.

Elkins, B. & Hanke, E. (2018). Code-Switching to Navigate Social Class in Higher Education and Student Affairs. *New Directions for Student Services.* 2018(162), 35-47.

Elling, A., Knoppers, A. & Hovden, J. (2019). Meta-analysis: Data and methodologies. In A. Elling, J. Hovden, & A. Knoppers (Eds.), *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance* (pp. 179-191). Oxon: Routledge.

Ellingson, L. L. (2014). "The truth must dazzle gradually": Enriching relationship research using a crysallization framework. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 31*(4), 442-450.

Elliott, D. (2019). Risk and crisis management. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 334-350). Oxon: Routledge.

Ely, R. J. & Meyerson, D. E. (2000). Theories of gender in organizations: A new approach to organizational analysis and change. *Research in organizational behavior,* 22, 103-151.

England, P. (1982). The Failure of Human Capital Theory to Explain Occupational Sex Segregation. *The Journal of Human Resources, 17*(3), 358-370.

England, P. (2010). The Gender Revolution:Uneven and Stalled. *Gender & Society, 24*(2), 149-166.
England, P., Budig, M. & Folbre, N. (2002). Wages of Virtue: The Relative Pay of Care Work. *Social problems, 49*(4), 455-473.
England, P. & Folbre, N. (1999). The Cost of Caring. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 561*(1), 39-51.
Enloe, C. (2007). *Globalization and Militarism: Feminist Make the Link*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
Eriksson-Zetterquist, U. & Styhre, A. (2008). Overcoming the glass barriers: Reflection and action in the 'Women to the Top'programme. *Gender, Work & Organization, 15*(2), 133-160.
Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a Reflexive Reseracher: Using Ourselves in Research*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
Evans, J. (1997). Men in nursing: issues of gender segregation and hidden advantage. *Journal of advanced nursing, 26*(2), 226-231.
Evans, T. (2021, 30 December). English football's civil war will continue in a 2022 full of rancour and mistrust. *Independent*. Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/premier-league-independent-regulator-efl-b1984349.html
EY. (2015). *The economic impact of the Premier League*. Retrieved from https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_The_economic_impact_of_the_Premier_League/$FILE/EY-The-economic-impact-of-the-Premier-League.pdf
Fairclough, N. L. (1985). Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis. *Journal of pragmatics, 9*(6), 739-763.
Faludi, S. (1992). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New Crown: Crown.
Farrer & Co. (2019). *Women in Sport: Levelling the playing field*. Retrieved from https://www.farrer.co.uk/clients-and-sectors/not-for-profit/sport/women-in-sport-levelling-the-playing-field/
Faulkner, W. (2000). Dualisms, hierarchies and gender in engineering. *Social studies of science, 30*(5), 759-792.
Faulkner, W. (2007). 'Nuts and Bolts and People':Gender-Troubled Engineering Identities. *Social studies of science, 37*(3), 331-356.
Faulkner, W. (2009). Doing gender in engineering workplace cultures. II. Gender in/authenticity and the in/visibility paradox. *Engineering Studies, 1*(3), 169-189.
Faulkner, W. (2011). Gender (in) authenticity, belonging and identity work in engineering. *Brussels economic review, 54*(2/3), 277-293.
Fenton, A. & Helleu, B. (2019). Digital and social media. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 101-113). Oxon: Routledge.
Fernando, W. D. A. & Cohen, L. (2014). Respectable Femininity and Career Agency: Exploring Paradoxical Imperatives. *Gender, Work & Organization, 21*(2), 149-164.
Fielding-Lloyd, B. & Meân, L. (2016). Women Training to Coach a Men's Sport:Managing Gendered Identities and Masculinist Discourses. *Communication & Sport, 4*(4), 401-423.
Fielding-Lloyd, B. & Meân, L. (2011). 'I don't think I can catch it': women, confidence and responsibility in football coach education. *Soccer & Society, 12*(3), 345-364.
FIFA. (2016). Inspiring Change: FIFA Female Leadership Development Programme. Zurich: FIFA.

Filby, M. P. (1992). `The Figures, the Personality and the Bums': Service Work and Sexuality. *Work, employment and society, 6*(1), 23-42.
Fink, J. S. (2016). Hiding in plain sight: The embedded nature of sexism in sport. *Journal of Sport Management, 30*(1), 1-7.
Fitzgerald, T. (2018). Looking Good and Being Good: Women Leaders in Australian Universities. *Education Sciences, 8*(2), 54.
Flory, J. A., Leibbrandt, A. & List, J. A. (2014). Do competitive workplaces deter female workers? A large-scale natural field experiment on job entry decisions. *The Review of Economic Studies, 82*(1), 122-155.
Fodor, É., Glass, C. & Nagy, B. (2019). Transnational business feminism: Exporting feminism in the global economy. *Gender, Work & Organization, 26*(8), 1117-1137.
Football Supporters' Association. (2021). *Woman at the Match*. Retrieved from https://thefsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Women-at-the-Match-report.pdf
Forbes, A., Edwards, L. & Fleming, S. (2015). 'Women can't referee': exploring the experiences of female football officials within UK football culture. *Soccer & Society, 16*(4), 521-539.
Ford, M. (2021, 18 February). Nursing courses see 32% rise in applications during Covid-19. *Nursing Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/education/nursing-courses-see-32-rise-in-applications-during-covid-19-18-02-2021/
Foster, D. (2015). *Lean Out*. London: Repeater.
Foster, D. & Wass, V. (2013). Disability in the labour market: an exploration of concepts of the ideal worker and organisational fit that disadvantage employees with impairments. *Sociology, 47*(4), 705-721.
Foster, R. (2019, 16 July). Lewes FC: the football club who are making equality pay. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/the-agony-and-the-ecstasy/2019/jul/16/lewes-fc-equal-pay-club-best-paid-player-woman
Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics : Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (G. Burchell, Trans.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Frankel, L. P. (2014). *Nice Girls (Still) Don't Get The Corner Office: Unconcious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers.* New York: Balance.
Freidman, S. & Laurison, D. (2019). *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged.* Bristol: Polity Press.
Frkal, R. A. & Criscione-Naylor, N. (2021). Opt-out stories: women's decisions to leave corporate leadership. *Gender in Management: An International Journal, 36*(1), 1-17.
Frost, N. & Elichaoff, F. (2014). Feminist Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Critical Theory. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* (pp. 42-72). London: SAGE Publications.
FTSE Women Leaders. (2018). FTSE 350 Company Rankings as at October 2018. Retrieved from https://ftsewomenleaders.com/our-progress/#pg-6-1
FTSE Women Leaders. (2022). FTSE Women Leaders Review Achieving Gender Balance. Retrieved from https://ftsewomenleaders.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Hampton-Alexander-Review-Report-2020_web.pdf
Galea, N. & Gaweda, B. (2018). (De)constructing the Masculine Blueprint: The Institutional and Discursive Consequences of Male Political Dominance. *Politics & Gender, 14*(2), 276-282.
Gamba, M. & Kleiner, B. H. (2001). The old boys' network today. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 21*(8/9/10), 101-107.

Game, A. & Pringle, R. (1984). *Gender at Work*. London: Pluto Press.
Garbutt, C. (1990, 20 June). The First Lady of Football, Article. *Daily Mirror,* p. 19. Retrieved from https://link-gale-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/apps/doc/AJHIFX720466171/DMIR?u=duruni&sid=bookmark-DMIR&xid=915dcb24
Garcia, A. (2022, 7 Feb). Man United's Cristiano Ronaldo becomes world's first person to reach 400 million Instagram followers. *ESPN*. Retrieved from https://www.espn.co.uk/football/manchester-united-engman_utd/story/4588594/man-uniteds-cristiano-ronaldo-becomes-worlds-first-person-to-reach-400-million-instagram-followers
Garry, T. (2018, 9 September). Women's Super League: New full-time, professional era - all you need to know. *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/45355268
Gear, L. (2020, 14 May). We Start A Review Of Our Gameplan For Growth Strategy By Looking At Participation. *The FA*. Retrieved from https://www.thefa.com/news/2020/may/14/gameplan-for-growth-participation-140520#:~:text=Launched%20in%20March%202017%2C%20our,talent%20pipeline%20for%20England%20teams.
Gee, S. (2014). Bending the codes of masculinity: David Beckham and flexible masculinity in the new millennium. *Sport in Society*, *17*(7), 917–936.
Geertz, C. (1993). *The Interpretation of Cultures.* London: Fontana Press.
Gerke, A. & Wäsche, H. (2019). Football, networks, and relationships. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 273-281). Oxon: Routledge.
Gibbons, T. (2016). *English National Identity and Football Fan Culture*. London: Routledge.
Gill, R. (2008). Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity, 25*(1), 432-445.
Gill, R., Kelan, E. K. & Scharff, C. M. (2017). A postfeminist sensibility at work. *Gender, Work & Organization, 24*(3), 226-244.
Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (2011). Introduction. In R. Gill & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (pp. 1-20). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis : emergence vs forcing*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: issues and discussions*. Mill Valley CA.: Sociology Press.
Glaser, B. G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International journal of qualitative methods, 1*(2), 23-38.
Glaser, B. G. (2007). Constructivist grounded theory? *Historical Social Research, Supplement*(19), 93-105.
Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. London: Aldine Transaction.
Glass, C. & Cook, A. (2016). Leading at the top: Understanding women's challenges above the glass ceiling. *The Leadership Quarterly, 27*(1), 51-63.
Glauber, R. (2008). Race and gender in families and at work: The fatherhood wage premium. *Gender & Society, 22*(1), 8-30.
Glauber, R. (2018). Trends in the motherhood wage penalty and fatherhood wage premium for low, middle, and high earners. *Demography, 55*(5), 1663-1680.

Gluck, S. B. & Patai, D. (Eds.). (1991). *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. London: Routledge.
Goldberg, A. E., Smith, J. Z. & Perry-Jenkins, M. (2012). The division of labor in lesbian, gay, and heterosexual new adoptive parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 74*(4), 812-828.
Gorman, E. H. (2005). Gender Stereotypes, Same-Gender Preferences, and Organizational Variation in the Hiring of Women: Evidence from Law Firms. *American Sociological Review, 70*(4), 702-728.
Gorman-Murray, A., Johnston, L. & Waitt, G. (2016). Queer(ing) Communication in Research Relationships. In (pp. 97-112): Routledge.
Govan, C. (2021, 21 December). Alex Scott left 'exhausted' due to 'constant hate' she receives as she takes break from TV. *The Express*. Retrieved from https://www.express.co.uk/celebrity-news/1539198/Alex-Scott-exhausted-hate-BBC-Sport-presenter-footballer-Instagram-break-tv-news-lates
Government Equalities Office. (2020). *Gender pay gap reporting: overview*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-pay-gap-reporting-overview
Gramsci, A., Forgacs, D. & Hobsbawm, E. (2000). *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*. New York NY: NYU Press.
Grappendorf, H. & Burton, L. J. (2017). The impact of bias in sport leadership. In L. J. Burton & S. Leberman (Eds.), *Women in Sport Leadership : Research and Practice for Change* (pp. 47-61). London: Taylor & Francis Group.
Gray, D., De Haan, E. & Bonneywell, S. (2019). Coaching the ‘ideal worker’: female leaders and the gendered self in a global corporation. *European Journal of Training and Development, 43*(7/8), 661-681.
Green, E. & Singleton, C. (2006). Risky Bodies at Leisure: Young Women Negotiating Space and Place. *Sociology, 40*(5), 853-871.
Green, E., Woodward, D. & Hebron, S. (1990). *Women’s Leisure, What Leisure? A Feminist Analysis*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd.
Grugulis, I. & Vincent, S. (2009). Whose skill is it anyway? *Work, employment and society, 23*(4), 597-615.
Guo, S. (2015). The colour of skill: contesting a racialised regime of skill from the experience of recent immigrants in Canada. *Studies in Continuing Education, 37*(3), 236-250.
Hall Jamieson, K. (1995). *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Hall, M. & Gough, B. (2011). Magazine and reader constructions of ‘meterosexuality’ and masculinity: a membership categorisation analysis. *Journal of Gender Studies,* 20(1), 67-86.
Hardin, M. & Whiteside, E. (2009). Token responses to gendered newsrooms:Factors in the career-related decisions of female newspaper sports journalists. *Journalism, 10*(5), 627-646.
Harding, S. G. (2004). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. Oxon: Routledge.
Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*. London: Routledge.
Harris, J. (2007). Doing gender on and off the pitch: The world of female football players. *Sociological research online, 12*(1), 140-151.
Harrison, G. (2018). “You have to have thick skin”: embracing the affective turn as an approach to investigating the treatment of women working in sports media. *Feminist Media Studies, 18*(5), 952-955.

Haskins, G., Thomas, M. & Johri, L. (2018). *Kindness in Leadership*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Hatmaker, D. M. (2013). Engineering Identity: Gender and Professional Identity Negotiation among Women Engineers. *Gender, Work & Organization, 20*(4), 382-396.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven CN: Yale University Press.

Healy, G. & Ahamed, M. M. (2019). Gender pay gap, voluntary interventions and recession: the case of the British financial services sector. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 57*(2), 302-327.

Hedenborg, S. & Norberg, J. R. (2019). Sweden: A gender perspective on sport governance. *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance*. London: Routledge.

Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of social issues, 57*(4), 657-674.

Heilman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. *Research in organizational behavior, 32*, 113-135.

Hekman, S. (1997). Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited. *Signs, 22*(2), 341-365. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/stable/3175275

Helgesen, S. & Goldsmith, M. (2018). *How Women Rise: Break the 12 Habits Holding You Back.* London: Random House.

Herndl, C. G. & Licona, A. C. (2017). Shifting Agency: Agency, *Kairos,* and the Possibilities of Social Action. In M. Zachry & C. Thralls (Eds.), *Communicative Practices in Workplaces and the Professions: Cultural Perspectives on the Regulation of Discourse and Organizations*. Oxon: Routledge. (Reprinted from: 2007).

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2014). Feminist Research: Exploring, Interrogating, and Transforming the Interconnections of Epistemology, Methodology, and Method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (pp. 2-27). London: SAGE Publications.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Bailey-Rodriguez, D. (2015). A Qualitatively Driven Approach to Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & R. B. Johnson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of multimethod and mixed methods research inquiry* (pp. 3-20). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Griffin, A. J. (2015). Feminist Approaches to Multimethod and Mixed Methods: Theory and Praxis. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & R. B. Johnson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of multimethod and mixed methods research inquiry* (pp. 72-90). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hillage, J., Dickson, J. & Regan, J. (2002). *Employers skill survey 2002*: Department for Education and Skills London.

Hindman, L. C. & Walker, N. A. (2020). Sexism in professional sports: How women managers experience and survive sport organizational culture. *Journal of Sport Management, 34*(1), 64-76.

Hodges, M. J. & Budig, M. J. (2010). Who gets the daddy bonus? Organizational hegemonic masculinity and the impact of fatherhood on earnings. *Gender & Society, 24*(6), 717-745.

Hoff, J. (1994). Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis. *Women's History Review, 3*(2), 149-168.

Holgersson, C. (2013). Recruiting managing directors: Doing homosociality. *Gender, Work & Organization, 20*(4), 454-466.
Holland, S. (2017). Feminist Leisure Research. In J. Long, T. Fletcher, & B. Watson (Eds.), *Sport, Leisure and Social Justice* (pp. 58-69). London: Routledge.
Holmes, J. & Schnurr, S. (2006). 'Doing femininity'at work: More than just relational practice. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 10*(1), 31-51.
Holmgren, H. (2018). Boundary-less work and digital mobile media: A qualitative exploration of employees' work-life balance in the context of constant online availability. In.
Hoobler, J. M., Masterson, C. R., Nkomo, S. M. & Michel, E. J. (2018). The business case for women leaders: Meta-analysis, research critique, and path forward. *Journal of Management, 44*(6), 2473-2499.
hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (2nd ed.). London: Pluto Press.
hooks, b. (2014). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
Houghton, T. (2019, 7 August). Equality Now and Women in Football speak out over boardroom where 'women not welcome'. *Business Live*. Retrieved from https://www.business-live.co.uk/enterprise/equality-now-women-football-speak-16708851
Hovden, J. (2010). Female top leaders – prisoners of gender? The gendering of leadership discourses in Norwegian sports organizations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 2*(2), 189-203. doi:10.1080/19406940.2010.488065
Huffman, M. L., Cohen, P. N. & Pearlman, J. (2010). Engendering change: Organizational dynamics and workplace gender desegregation, 1975–2005. *Administrative science quarterly, 55*(2), 255-277.
Huggins, M. (2019). Football and gambling. In J. Hughson, K. Moore, R. Spaaij, & J. Maguire (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies* (pp. 63-73). London: Routledge.
Hughes, M. M. (2011). Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide. *American Political Science Review, 105*(3), 604-620. doi:10.1017/s0003055411000293
Hughson, J. (2019). The Artification of Football: A Sociological Reconsideration of the 'Beautiful Game'. *Cultural Sociology, 13*(3), 305-320.
Human Rights Watch. (2021). *World Report 2021: Events of 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021
Huxford, J. (2013). Strategies of Silence: The John Terry Affair and the British Press. In J. R. Blaney, L. L. R, & J. S. Smith (Eds.), *Repairing the Athlete's Image* (pp. 123-150). Plymouth: Lexington Books.
Hylton, K. (2019). 'Race', racism and football. In J. Hughson, K. Moore, R. Spaaij, & J. Maguire (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies* (pp. 268-278). London: Routledge.
Hymowitz, C. & Schellhardt, T. D. (1986). The glass ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from the top jobs. *The Wall Street Journal, 24*(1), 1573-1592.
Ibarra, H. (1993). Personal networks of women and minorities in management: A conceptual framework. *Academy of management Review, 18*(1), 56-87.
Ingle, S. (2019, 11 March). Birmingham City fan who assaulted Jack Grealish is jailed for 14 weeks, *The Guardian.* Retrieved from

https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/mar/11/birmingham-city-fan-paul-mitchell-aston-villa-jack-grealish-pleads-guilty
Ingle, S. (2021, 7 October). 'English football will sell itself to anyone': human rights groups condemn Saudi-Newcastle deal. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/oct/07/english-football-will-sell-itself-to-anyone-human-rights-groups-on-saudi-newcastle-deal
International Olympic Committee. (2018). *IOC Gender Equality Review Project: IOC Gender Equality Report*. Retrieved from https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/03/IOC-Gender-Equality-Report-March-2018.pdf
International Olympic Committee. (2020). *Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement, Update – October 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.olympic.org/factsheets-and-reference-documents/women-in-the-olympic-movement
Ishizuka, P. & Musick, K. (2021). Occupational Inflexibility and Women's Employment During the Transition to Parenthood. *Demography, 58*(4), 1249-1274.
James, E. H. (2000). Race-Related Differences in Promotions and Support: Underlying Effects of Human and Social Capital. *Organization Science, 11*(5), 493-508.
Johnston, H. (2021, 12 October). The glamorous financier who brought blood money into the Premier League: How Amanda Staveley, 48, used her little black book of Gulf-tycoon contacts to orchestrate the £305m takeover of Newcastle United by group linked to the murderous Saudi regime. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-10080449/Amanda-Staveley-48-glamorous-financier-brought-blood-money-Premiership.html
Jones, C. & Edwards, L. L. (2013). The woman in black: Exposing sexist beliefs about female officials in elite men's football. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 7*(2), 202-216.
Jones, K. W. (2008). Female fandom: Identity, sexism, and men's professional football in England. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 25*(4), 516-537.
Joseph, L. J. & Anderson, E. (2016). The influence of gender segregation and teamsport experience on occupational discrimination in sport-based employment. *Journal of Gender Studies, 25*(5), 586-598.
Kaiser, C. R. & Spalding, K. E. (2015). Do women who succeed in male-dominated domains help other women? The moderating role of gender identification. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 45*(5), 599-608.
Kampmark, B. (2021). Are we all in this together? Footballing ethics in the age of Coronavirus. *Soccer & Society, 22*(1-2), 115-124.
Kanter, R. M. (1977a). *Men and Women of the Corporation.* New York NY: Basic Books.
Kanter, R. M. (1977b). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American journal of Sociology, 82*(5), 965-990.
Karjanen, D. (2008). Gender, Race, and Nationality in the Making of Mexican Migrant Labor in the United States. *Latin American Perspectives, 35*(1), 51-63.
Karsten, M. F. (1994). *Management and gender: Issues and attitudes*. Westport CT: Praeger Pub Text.
Kassimeris, C. (2021). *Discrimination in Football*: Routledge.
Kauppinen, K. (2013). 'Full power despite stress': A discourse analytical examination of the interconnectedness of postfeminism and neoliberalism in the domain of work in an international women's magazine. *Discourse & Communication, 7*(2), 133-151.

Kay, D. (2021, 28 July). Survivor Andrew Devine dies to become Hillsborough's 97th victim. *Liverpool Echo*. Retrieved from https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/sport/football/football-news/andrew-devine-hillsborough-97th-victim-21170635

Kay, T. (1998). Having It All or Doing It All? The Construction of Women's Lifestyles in Time-Crunched Households. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure, 21*(2), 435-454.

Kelan, E. K. (2007). Emotions in a Rational Profession: The Gendering of Skills in ICT Work. *Gender, Work & Organization, 0*(0), 070730013921001.

Kelan, E. K. (2009). Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration, 26*(3), 197-210.

Kelan, E. K. & Wratil, P. (2018). Post-Heroic Leadership, Tempered Radicalism and Senior Leaders as Change Agents for Gender Equality. *European Management Review, 15*(1), 5-18.

Kelliher, C., Richardson, J. & Boiarintseva, G. (2019). All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century. *Human Resource Management Journal, 29*(2), 97-112.

Kelly, E. L., Ammons, S. K., Chermack, K. & Moen, P. (2010). Gendered Challenge, Gendered Response. *Gender & Society, 24*(3), 281-303.

Kelner, M. (2017, 6 October). Mansfield's Carolyn Radford: 'I was made into this caricature – people were calling me a bimbo'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/oct/06/carolyn-radford-mansfield-town-chief-executive-interview

Kessel, A. (2019, 12 June). Sue Campbell on life as England's mentor, inspiration and chief hugger. *The Telegraph*.

Kilvington, D. J. (2019). Does English football warrant the Rooney Rule? Assessing the thoughts of British Asian coaches. *Sport in Society.* 22(3), 432-448.

King, A. (2002). *End of the Terraces: The Transformation of English Football*. London: Leicester University Press.

King, C. (2004a). *Offside Racism: Playing the White Man*. Oxford: Berg.

King, C. (2004b). Race and Cultural Identity: Playing the Race Game Inside Football. *Leisure Studies, 23*(1), 19-30.

King, M. (2012, 4 May). Karren Brady: my greatest mistake. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/money/2012/may/04/karren-brady-my-greatest-mistake

Knoppers, A., Hovden, J. & Elling, A. (2019). Meta-analysis: Theoretical Issues. In A. Knoppers, J. Hovden, & A. Elling (Eds.), *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance* (pp. 205-217). Oxon: Routledge.

Knoppers, A. & McLachlan, F. (2018). Reflecting on the Use of Feminist Theories in Sport Management Research. In L. Mansfield, J. Caudwell, B. Wheaton, & B. Watson (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminism and Sport, Leisure and Physical Education* (pp. 163-179). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kolyperas, D. & Sparks, L. (2019). Retailing in the football indusrty. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routlege Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 400-441). London: Routledge.

Konrad, A. M., Kramer, V. & Erkut, S. (2008). The impact of three or more women on corporate boards. *Organizational dynamics, 37*(2), 145-164.

Koval, C. Z. & Rosette, A. S. (2021). The Natural Hair Bias in Job Recruitment. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 12*(5), 741-750.

Kumra, S. & Simpson, R. (2018). Postfeminism and the Performance of Merit. In P. Lewis, Y. Benschop, & R. Simpson (Eds.), *Postfeminism and Organization* (pp. 125-140). Abingdon: Routledge.

Kumra, S. & Vinnicombe, S. (2010). Impressing for Success: A Gendered Analysis of a Key Social Capital Accumulation Strategy. *Gender, Work & Organization, 17*(5), 521-546.

Lashmar, P. (1990, 17 January). What's in a game? *The Guardian*.

Laverty, R. (2022, 13 July). The rise, fall, and rise again of women's football – a 140-year history. *FourFourTwo*. Retrieved from https://www.fourfourtwo.com/features/the-rise-fall-and-rise-again-of-womens-football-a-140-year-history

Lawrence, I. (2018). *Football Club Management: Insights from the field*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Leberman, S. & Burton, L. J. (2017). Why this book? Framing the conversation about women in sport leadership. In S. Leberman & L. J. Burton (Eds.), *Women in Sport Leadership: Research and Practice for Change* (pp. 1-15). Oxon: Routledge.

Lenneis, V., Agergaard, S. & Evans, A. B. (2022). Women-only swimming as a space of belonging, *Qualitative Rsearch in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 14(1), 37-52.

Lepowsky, M. (2012). Field and Home, Self and Memory in Papau New Guinea and California. In A. Gottlieb (Ed.), *The Restless Anthropologist: New Fieldsites, New Visions*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Levanon, A., England, P. & Allison, P. (2009). Occupational feminization and pay: Assessing causal dynamics using 1950–2000 US census data. *Social Forces, 88*(2), 865-891.

Levanon, A. & Grusky, D. B. (2016). The Persistence of Extreme Gender Segregation in the Twenty-first Century. *American journal of Sociology, 122*(2), 573-619. .

Lewis, P. (2018). Postfeminism and Gendered (Im)Mobilities. In P. Lewis, Y. Benschop, & R. Simpson (Eds.), *Postfeminism and Organization* (pp. 21-42). Abingdon: Routledge.

Lim, M. S., Bowden-Jones, H., Salinas, M., Price, J., Goodwin, G. M., Geddes, J. & Rogers, R. D. (2017). The experience of gambling problems in British professional footballers: a preliminary qualitative study. *Addiction Research & Theory, 25*(2), 129-138.

Linehan, M. (2001). Networking for female managers' career development. *Journal of Management Development, 20*(10), 823-829.

Lockyer, S. (2010). Dynamics of social class contempt in contemporary British television comedy. *Social Semiotics.* 20(2), 121-138.

Lofthouse, A. (2022, 27 July). Lily Parr – trailblazer with a 'kick like a mule'. *BBC Sport.* Retreived from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/55884099

Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of Gender*. London: Yale University Press.

Lorber, J. & Farrell, S. A. (1991). *The social construction of gender*: SAGE Newbury Park, CA.

Lucas, K. (2021, 10 September). 3pm blackout explained: Why the football TV rules can't be lifted, even for Cristiano Ronaldo's Man Utd debut. *The i*. Retrieved from https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/english-football-league-3pm-blackout-explained-cristiano-ronaldo-man-united-debut-1189022

MacInnes, P. (2020, 17 June). Premier League rises to occasion with players taking a knee. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jun/17/aston-villa-sheffield-united-players-take-knee-premier-league-black-lives-matter

MacInnes, P. (2022, 16 May 2022). Jake Daniels becomes first UK male footballer to come out as gay since 1990. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/may/16/jake-daniels-becomes-first-uk-male-footballer-to-come-out-as-gay-since-1990
Magrath, R. (2018). 'To Try and Gain an Advantage for My Team': Homophobic and Homosexually Themed Chanting among English Football Fans. *Sociology, 52*(4), 709-726.
Maguire, K. (2021, 24 January). Exclusive: Finance Guru shares West Ham board reveal after Companies House update. *Football Insider*. Retrieved from https://www.footballinsider247.com/west-ham-united-news-vorley-appointment-highlights-nepotism-issues/
Mainiero, L. A. & Sullivan, S. E. (2005). Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the "opt-out "revolution. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 19*(1), 106-123.
Mainiero, L. A. & Sullivan, S. E. (2006). *The opt out revolt: Why people are leaving companies to create kaleidoscope careers*. Mountain View CA: Davies-Black Publishing.
Mantilla, K. (2013). Gendertrolling: Misogyny Adapts to New Media. *Feminist studies, 39*(2), 563-570.
Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
Mavin, S. (2006). Venus envy: problematizing solidarity behaviour and queen bees. *Women in Management Review*. 21(4), 264-276.
Mavin, S. & Grandy, G. (2016a). A theory of Abject Appearance: Women elite leaders' intra-gender 'management' of bodies and appearance. *Human Relations, 69*(5), 1095-1120.
Mavin, S. & Grandy, G. (2016b). Women Elite Leaders Doing Respectable Business Femininity: How Privilege is Conferred, Contested and Defended through the Body. *Gender, Work & Organization, 23*(4), 379-396.
McCann, H. (2016). Epistemology of the Subject: Queer Theory's Challenge to Feminist Sociology. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 44*(3/4), 224-243.
McCluney, C. L., Robotham, K., Lee, S., Smith, R. & Durkee, M. (2019, 15 November). The Costs of Code-Switching. *Harvard business review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching
McCutcheon, J. M. (2018). Reviewing pronatalism: a summary and critical analysis of prior research examining attitudes towards women without children. *Journal of Family Studies*. 26(4), 489-510.
McDowell, J. & Carter-Francique, A. (2017). An Intersectional Analysis of the Workplace Experiences of African American Female Athletic Directors. *Sex Roles, 77*(5-6), 393-408.
McGuire, G. M. (2002). Gender, Race, and the Shadow Structure. *Gender & Society, 16*(3), 303-322.
McRobbie, A. (2004). Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime. In H. Harris (Ed.), *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity* (pp. 3-14). London: Routledge.
McRobbie, A. (2015). Notes on the perfect: Competitive femininity in neoliberal times. *Australian feminist studies, 30*(83), 3-20.
Meisenbach, R. J. (2010). The Female Breadwinner: Phenomenological Experience and Gendered Identity in Work/Family Spaces. *Sex Roles, 62*(1-2), 2-19.
Messner, M. A. (1992). *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Mewett, P. & Toffoletti, K. (2008). Rogue Men and Predatory Women: Female Fans' Perceptions of Australian Footballers' Sexual Conduct. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 43*(2), 165-180.

Meyerson, D. E. (2008). *Rocking the boat: How tempered radicals effect change without making trouble*. Cambridge MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Meyerson, D. E. & Fletcher, J. K. (2000). A modest manifesto for shattering the glass ceiling. *Harvard business review, 78*(1), 126-136.

Meyerson, D. E. & Scully, M. (1995). Crossroads Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change. *Organization Science, 6*(5), 585-600.

Miller, R. (2003). Biographical Method. In R. L. Miller & J. D. Brewer (Eds.), *The A-Z of Social Research: A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts* (pp. 15-17). London: SAGE Publications.

Miller, Y. D. & Brown, W. J. (2005). Determinants of Active Leisure for Women with Young Children—an "Ethic of Care" Prevails. *Leisure Sciences, 27*(5), 405-420.

Mirza, H. S. (1997). *Black British Feminism*. London: Routledge.

Moore, K. (2021). Football is not 'a matter of life and death'. It is far less important than that. Football and the COVID-19 pandemic in England. *Soccer & Society, 22*(1-2), 43-57.

Morabito, M. S. & Shelley, T. O. C. (2018). Constrained Agency Theory and Leadership: A New Perspective to Understand How Female Police Officers Overcome the Structural and Social Impediments to Promotion. *Feminist Criminology, 13*(3), 287-308.

Morgan, D. (2006). The crisis in masculinity. In J. Lorber, K. Davis, & M. Evans (Eds.), *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies* (pp. 109-124). London: SAGE Publications.

Morgan, L. A. & Martin, K. A. (2006). Taking women professionals out of the office: The case of women in sales. *Gender & Society, 20*(1), 108-128.

Morton, A. D. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci*. London: Pluto Press.

Moxley, N. (2011, 31 Januury). Sexism row grips Notts County as Manchester City accuse club of excluding high-powered female staff. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-1352044/Sexism-row-grips-Notts-County-Manchester-City-accuse-club-excluding-high-powered-female-staff.html

Mullen, T. (2015, 29 May). Heysel disaster: English football's forgotten tragedy? *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-32898612

Munjal, D. (2022, 1 November). Chinese broadcaster ordered to pay Premier League $213 mln over TV deal. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/chinese-broadcaster-ordered-pay-premier-league-213-mln-over-tv-deal-2022-01-11/#:~:text=PPLive%20paid%20around%20%24700%20million,Beijing%2Dbased%20Super%20Sports%20Media.

Musilek, K. (2020). *Making life work: work and life in coliving.* [Doctoral Thesis] Durham University.

Nash, C. J. (2016). Queer conversations: Old-time lesbians, transmen and the politics of queer research. In *Queer Methods and Methodologies* (pp. 129-142). London: Routledge.

Nash, M. & Moore, R. (2018). 'I was completely oblivious to gender': an exploration of how women in STEMM navigate leadership in a neoliberal, post-feminist context. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-13.

Nath, D. & Beard, P. (Writers) & A. Hopkins (Director). (2021). Episode One [Television]. In *Fever Pitch: The Rise of the Premier League*. UK: BBC.
Neely, M. T. (2020). The Portfolio Ideal Worker: Insecurity and Inequality in the New Economy. *Qualitative Sociology, 43*(2), 271-296. doi:10.1007/s11133-020-09444-1
Newsham, G. J. (2014). *In a League of Their Own! The Dick, Kerr Ladies 1917-1965.* London: Paragon Publishing.
Nkomo, S. M. & Rodriguez, J. K. (2018). Joan Acker's influence on Management and Organization Studies: Review, analysis and directions for the future. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 1-19.
Norman, L. (2010). Feeling Second Best: Elite Women Coaches' Experiences. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 27*(1), 89-104.
Norman, L., Rankin-Wright, A. J. & Allison, W. (2018). "It's a Concrete Ceiling; It's Not Even Glass": Understanding Tenets of Organizational Culture That Supports the Progression of Women as Coaches and Coach Developers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 42*(5), 393-414.
Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doinf Feminist Research* (pp. 30-61). London: Routledge.
Oakley, A. (1999). Paradigm wars: Some thoughts on a personal and public trajectory. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 2*(3), 247-254.
Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: Understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. *Journal of business ethics, 27*(4), 321-334.
Odeyemi, D. (2021, 15 May). WSL television deal: A huge step forward for Women's football in England. *Varsity*. Retrieved from https://www.varsity.co.uk/sport/21449
Ogilvie, M. & McCormack, M. (2020). Gender-collaborative training in elite university sport: Challenging gender essentialism through integrated training in gender-segregated sports. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 101269022098014.
Olsen, W., Gash, V., Sook, K. & Zhang, M. (2018). *The gender pay gap in the UK: evidence from the UKHLS*. London
ONS. (2019a). *Ethnicity pay gaps in Great Britain: 2018.* Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018#:~:text=In%202018%2C%20on%20average%2C%20employees,less%20than%20White%20British%20employees.
ONS. (2019b). *Working flexibly in the public sector*. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicspending/articles/workingflexiblyinthepublicsector/2019-09-20#men-and-women-choose-to-work-part-time-for-different-reasons
ONS. (2021). *Gender Pay Gap in the UK*. Retrieved from London: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2021#:~:text=Among%20all%20employees%2C%20the%20gender,down%20from%2017.4%25%20in%202019.
Oreffice, S. & Quintana-Domeque, C. (2020). Gender Inequality in COVID-19 Times: Evidence from UK Prolific Participants. In. Bonn: IZA Institute of Labor Economics Discussion Paper No. 13463.
Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process. *The Qualitative Report.* 13(4), 695-705.

Ortner, S. B. (2006). *Anthropology and social theory*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
Ott, E. M. (1989). Effects of the male-female ratio at work: Policewomen and male nurses. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13*(1), 41-57.
Özbilgin, M. F., Beauregard, T. A., Tatli, A. & Bell, M. P. (2011). Work–life, diversity and intersectionality: A critical review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 13*(2), 177-198.
Pape, M. (2020). Gender segregation and trajectories of organizational change: The underrepresentation of women in sports leadership. *Gender & Society, 34*(1), 81-105.
Parnell, D., Bond, A. J., Widdop, P. & Cockayne, D. (2020). Football Worlds: Business and networks during COVID-19. *Soccer & Society*, 1-8.
Parnell, D., Bond, A. J., Widdop, P., Groom, R. & Cockayne, D. (2021). Recruitment in elite football: a network approach. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 1-17.
Parnell, D., Widdop, P., Groom, R. & Bond, A. J. (2018). The emergence of the sporting director role in football and the potential of social network theory in future research. *Managing Sport and Leisure, 23*(4-6), 242-254.
Parreñas, R. S. (2012). The reproductive labour of migrant workers. *Global Networks, 12*(2), 269-275.
Parveen, N. (2020, 24 October). UK's top universities urged to act on classism and accent prejudice. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/oct/24/uk-top-universities-urged-act-classism-accent-prejudice
Patterson, C. J., Sutfin, E. L. & Fulcher, M. (2004). Division of labor among lesbian and heterosexual parenting couples: Correlates of specialized versus shared patterns. *Journal of Adult Development, 11*(3), 179-189.
Pavlidis, A. & Connor, J. (2016). Men in a 'women only' sport? Contesting gender relations and sex intergration in roller derby, *Sport in Society,* 19(8-9), 1349-1262.
Peterson, H. & Engwall, K. (2016). Missing out on the parenthood bonus? Voluntarily childless in a "child-friendly" society. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 37*(4), 540-552.
Pfister, G. & Radtke, S. (2009). Sport, women, and leadership: Results of a project on executives in German sports organizations. *European Journal of Sport Science, 9*(4), 229-243.
Philippou, C., Clarkson, B., Pope, S., Jain, S., Parry, K., Huang, X. & Cox, A. (2022). *The Gender Divide That Fails Football's Bottom Line: The Commercial Case for Gender Equality*. Retrieved from Coventry: https://www.fairgameuk.org/s/The-Gender-Divide-That-Fails-Footballs-Bottom-Line-Fair-Game-Report-March-2022.pdf
Piggott, L. V. & Pike, E. C. (2019). 'CEO equals man': Gender and informal organisational practices in English sport governance. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1012690219865980.
Pinho, M. & Gaunt, R. (2019). Doing and undoing gender in male carer/female breadwinner families. *Community, Work & Family*, 1-16.
Pope, S. (2017). *The Feminization of Sports Fandom: A Sociological Study*. Oxon: Routledge.
Pope, S. & Pfister, G. (2018). Introduction. In G. Pfister & S. Pope (Eds.), *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding Into a Man's World*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pope, S. & Williams, J. (2018). A Socio-Historical Account of Female Experiences of Football's Golden Age in England. In G. Pfister & S. Pope (Eds.), *Female Football Players and Fans: Intruding into a Man's World* (pp. 157-184). London: Springer.
Portelli, A. (1998). What Makes Oral History Different? In R. Perks & A. Thomson (Eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (pp. 42-42). Oxon: Routledge.
Powell, A., Bagilhole, B. M. & Dainty, A. R. (2006). The problem of women's assimilation into UK engineering cultures: can critical mass work? *Equal Opportunities International, 25*(8), 688-699.
Powell, A. & Sang, K. J. (2015). Everyday experiences of sexism in male-dominated professions: A Bourdieusian perspective. *Sociology, 49*(5), 919-936.
Power, K. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden of women and families. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 16*(1), 67-73.
Preissle, J. & Han, Y. (2012). Feminist Research Ethics. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (2nd ed., pp. 583-605). London: SAGE Publications.
Premier League. (2019a). Fans watch Premier League in record numbers. Retrieved from https://www.premierleague.com/news/1225124
Premier League. (2019b). Premier League Global Audience on the Rise. Retrieved from https://www.premierleague.com/news/1280062
Prevett, H. (2022, 4 March). Karren Brady's view of the boardroom: 'When I started out, women were expected to make the tea'. *The Times*. Retrieved from https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/karren-bradys-view-of-the-boardroom-when-i-started-out-women-were-expected-to-make-the-tea-hncjw033t
Prügl, E. (2015). Neoliberalising feminism. *New Political Economy, 20*(4), 614-631.
Putnam, R. D. (1994). Social capital and public affairs. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 5-19.
Rankin-Wright, A., Hylton, K. & Norman, L. (2019). Negotiating the coaching landscape: Experiences of Black men and women coaches in the United Kingdom. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 54*(5), 603-621.
Rankin-Wright, A. J., Hylton, K. & Leanne, N. (2019). Critical race theory and black feminist insights into "race" and gender equality. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.
Regan, M. & Cunningham, G. (2012). Analysis of homologous reproduction in community college athletics. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, 6*(2), 161-172.
Reichel, A., Brandl, J. & Mayrhofer, W. (2010). The Strongest Link: Legitimacy of Top Management Diversity, Sex Stereotypes and the Rise of Women in Human Resource Management 1995-2004. *Management Revue, 21*(3), 332-352.
Reilly, A., Jones, D., Rey Vasquez, C. & Krisjanous, J. (2016). Confronting gender inequality in a business school. *Higher Education Research & Development, 35*(5), 1025-1038.
Reynolds-Dobbs, W., Thomas, K. M. & Harrison, M. S. (2008). From Mammy to Superwoman. *Journal of Career Development, 35*(2), 129-150.
Rhoton, L. A. (2011). Distancing as a gendered barrier: Understanding women scientists' gender practices. *Gender & Society, 25*(6), 696-716.
Ridgeway, C. L. & Correll, S. J. (2004). Motherhood as a Status Characteristic. *Journal of social issues, 60*(4), 683-700.
Risman, B. J. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & Society, 18*(4), 429-450.
Roderick, M. (2006). *The work of professional football*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Rottenberg, C. (2014). The rise of neoliberal feminism. *Cultural studies, 28*(3), 418-437.
Rottenberg, C. (2019). Women Who Work: The limits of the neoliberal feminist paradigm. *Gender, Work & Organization, 26*(8), 1073-1082.
Royal, K. (2019). An analysis of a high-profile rape trial: the case of UK footballer Ched Evans. *Journal of gender-based violence, 3*(1), 83-100.
Rutherford, S. (2011). *Women's Work, Men's Cultures*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Ryan, I. & Dickson, G. (2018). The invisible norm: An exploration of the intersections of sport, gender and leadership. *Leadership, 14*(3), 329-346.
Ryan, M. K. & Haslam, S. A. (2005). The glass cliff: Evidence that women are over-represented in precarious leadership positions. *British Journal of management, 16*(2), 81-90.
Ryan, M. K., Haslam, S. A., Hersby, M. D., Kulich, C. & Atkins, C. (2007). Opting out or Pushed off the Edge? The Glass Cliff and the Precariousness of Women's Leadership Positions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 1*(1), 266-279.
Sabin, L. (2021, 11 October). Manchester City defender Benjamin Mendy refused bail for third time ahead of rape trial. *The Independent*. Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/benjamin-mendy-bail-rape-trial-manchester-city-b1936245.html
Sagas, M. & Cunningham, G. B. (2004). Does having "the right stuff" matter? Gender differences in the determinants of career success among intercollegiate athletic administrators. *Sex Roles, 50*(5-6), 411-421.
Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*. London: Random House.
Sang, K. J., Dainty, A. R. & Ison, S. G. (2014). Gender in the UK architectural profession:(re) producing and challenging hegemonic masculinity. *Work, employment and society, 28*(2), 247-264.
Sang, K. J., Powell, A., Finkel, R. & Richards, J. (2015). 'Being an academic is not a 9–5 job': long working hours and the 'ideal worker'in UK academia. *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work, 25*(3), 235-249.
Sartore, M. L. & Cunningham, G. B. (2007). Explaining the under-representation of women in leadership positions of sport organizations: A symbolic interactionist perspective. *Quest, 59*(2), 244-265.
Sasson-Levy, O. (2011). The military in a globalized environment: Perpetuating an 'extremely gendered'organization. *Handbook of gender, work and organization*, 391-411.
Sayce, S. (2012). Being a female pension trustee. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. 31(3), 298-314.
Schippers, M. (2002). *Rockin' Out of the Box: Gender Maneuvering in Alternative Hard Rock*. Piscataway: Rutgers University Press.
Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and society, 36*(1), 85-102.
Schmidt, S. L. & Holzmayer, F. (2019). A framework for diversification decisons in professional football. In S. Chadwick, D. Parnell, P. Widdop, & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (pp. 3-19). Oxon: Routledge.
Schoch, L. & Clausen, J. (2019). Women Within International Sports Federations: Contemporary Challenges. In C. G. & N. C. (Eds.), *Histories of Women's Work in Global Sport*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scholz, F. & Ingold, J. (2021). Activating the ‘ideal jobseeker’: Experiences of individuals with mental health conditions on the UK Work Programme. *Human Relations, 74*(10), 1604-1627.
Scott, A. (2021, 15 May). Alex Scott announced as new presenter of Football Focus. *BBC Media Centre*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/articles/2021/alex-scott-football-focus/?at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_medium=custom7&at_custom4=A0461E8C-B567-11EB-A770-96260EDC252D&at_custom2=twitter&at_custom3=%40bbcpress&at_campaign=64
Sevilla, A. & Smith, S. (2020). Baby Steps: The Gender Division of Childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy,* 36(supplement_1), S169-S186.
Shashikant, U. (2019, 30 September). Why women need to work. *The Economic Times*. Retrieved from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/earn/why-women-need-to-work/articleshow/71347546.cms
Shaw, S. (2006). Scratching the back of “Mr X”: Analyzing gendered social processes in sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 20*(4), 510-534.
Shaw, S. & Frisby, W. (2006). Can gender equity be more equitable?: Promoting an alternative frame for sport management research, education, and practice. *Journal of Sport Management, 20*(4), 483-509.
Shaw, S. & Hoeber, L. (2003). “A strong man is direct and a direct woman is a bitch”: Gendered discourses and their influence on employment roles in sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 17*(4), 347-375.
Shaw, S. & Leberman, S. (2015). Using the kaleidoscope career model to analyze female CEOs’ experiences in sport organizations. *Gender in Management: An International Journal, 30*(6), 500-515.
Sherry, E. & Rowe, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Developing Sport for Women and Girls*. London: Routledge.
Shih, J. (2002). '...Yeah, I could hire this one, but I know it's gonna be a problem': how race, nativity and gender affect employers' perceptions of the manageability of job seekers. *Ethnic and racial studies, 25*(1), 99-119.
Shogan, D. A. (1999). *The making of high-performance athletes: Discipline, diversity, and ethics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Shvili, J. (2020). *The Most Popular Sports In The World.* Retrieved from worldatlas.com/articles/what-are-the-most-popular-sports-in-the-world.html
Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
Simpson, R. (2004). Masculinity at work: The experiences of men in female dominated occupations. *Work, employment and society, 18*(2), 349-368.
Singh, V. (2007). Women and the Glass Ceiling. *The Effective Executive,* ICFAI Business School. Hyderabad, India.
Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: SAGE.
Skeggs, B. (2014). Values beyond value? Is anything beyond the logic of capital? *The British Journal of Sociology*. 65(1), 1-20.
Slater & Gordon. (2020). *41 per cent of Brits considering new jobs post covid.* Retrieved from https://www.slatergordon.co.uk/newsroom/pride-and-pointless-workplaces-could-cause-nhs-staff-surge/

Smith, B. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 10*(1), 137-149.
Smith, B. & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 11*(1), 101-121.
Smith, J. (2020, 27 Nov). Tributes to Diego Maradona show how easily violence against women is ignored. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/27/diego-maradona-violence-women-heroes-abusers
Smith, V. (2010). Enhancing employability: Human, cultural, and social capital in an era of turbulent unpredictability. *Human Relations, 63*(2), 279-300.
Spierings, N. (2012). The inclusion of quantitative techniques and diversity in the mainstream of feminist research. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 19*(3), 331-347.
Sport England, & UK Sport. (2016). *A Code for Sports Governance*. Retrieved from https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/code-sports-governance
SportingIntelligence. (2018). *Global Sport Salaries Survey 2017*. Retrieved from https://www.globalsportssalaries.com/
Srivastava, S. B. & Sherman, E. L. (2015). Agents of change or cogs in the machine? Reexamining the influence of female managers on the gender wage gap. *American journal of Sociology, 120*(6), 1778-1808.
Stainback, K., Kleiner, S. & Skaggs, S. (2016). Women in Power. *Gender & Society, 30*(1), 109-135.
Staines, G., Tavris, C. & Jayaratne, T. o. (1973). The Queen Bee syndrome. *Psychology Today, 7*(8), 55–60
Stangl, J. M. & Kane, M. J. (1991). Structural variables that offer explanatory power for the underrepresentation of women coaches since Title IX: The case of homologous reproduction. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 8*(1), 47-60.
Stat-Xplore. (2022). *People on Universal Credit.* Retrieved from https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml#
Steinberg, J. (2020, 5 April). Manchester City to investigate Kyle Walker over sex party during lockdown. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/apr/05/city-to-investigate-kyle-walker-over-sex-party-that-broke-quarantine-rules
Stone, P. (2007). The rhetoric and reality of “opting out”. *contexts, 6*(4), 14-19.
Stone, S. (2021). European Super League: Legal challenges and broken trust - what happens next? Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/56807310
Strauss, A. (1982). Social worlds and legitimation processes. *Studies in symbolic interaction, 4*(17), 171-190.
Stringer, R. (2014). Knowing Victims: *Feminism, agency and victim politics in neoliberal times*. London: Routledge.
Swain, J. (2000). 'The Money's Good, The Fame's Good, The Girls are Good': The role of playground football in the construction of young boys' masculinity in a junior school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 21*(1), 95-109.
Swan, E. & Fox, S. (2010). Playing the game: Strategies of resistance and co-optation in diversity work. *Gender, Work & Organization, 17*(5), 567-589.
Symons, K. (2019). *One of the Boys: The (Gendered) Performance of My Football Career.* [Doctoral Thesis] Victoria University

Tang, J. (1997). The glass ceiling in science and engineering. *The Journal of Socio-Economics, 26*(4), 383-406.

Tapper, J. (2021, 26 June). Younger and more diverse: TV's team of pundits now reflect their game. *The Observer*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/26/younger-and-more-diverse-tvs-team-of-pundits-now-reflect-their-game

Taylor, D. (2010, 21 October 2010). Balaclava-clad fans make death threats at Wayne Rooney's home, *The Guardian,* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2010/oct/21/wayne-rooney-manchester-united-city

Taylor, L. J. (1990). *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster 15 April 1989: Final Report*. Retrieved https://www.jesip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Hillsborough-Stadium-Disaster-final-report.pdf

Teow, J., Goel, S., Carney, T. S. & Cooper, A. (2019). *Women in work index 2019: Turning policies into effective action*. Retrieved from https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/WIWI/pwc-women-in-work-2019-final-web.pdf

Terjesen, S., Sealy, R. & Singh, V. (2009). Women Directors on Corporate Boards: A Review and Research Agenda. *Corporate Governance: An International Review, 17*(3), 320-337.

The FA. (2017a). A significant moment for the FA, as governance reforms confirmed by shareholders. Retrieved from http://www.thefa.com/news/2017/may/18/fa-governance-reforms-180517

The FA. (2017b). Vacancy: The FA non-executive director. Retrieved from http://www.thefa.com/sitecore/content/the-fa/county-sites/www-hertfordshirefa-com/home/news/2017/jun/22/vacancy-the-fa-independent-non-executive-director

The FA. (2018). *The Football Association Gender Pay Gap Report 2017*. Retrieved from London: http://www.thefa.com/news/2018/mar/01/fa-gender-pay-report-2017-270218

The FA. (2020). *Football Leadership Diversity Code*. Retrieved from London: https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/inclusion-and-anti-discrimination/football-leadership-diversity-code

The FA. (2021a). The FA Management. Retrieved from https://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/the-fa-management

The FA. (2021b). *The Football Handbook 2021/22*. Retrieved from London:

The FA. (2021c). *A Game For All: The FA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024*. Retrieved from London: https://www.thefa.com/news/2021/oct/08/a-game-for-all-fa-equality-diversity-inclusion-strategy-2021-2024-20210810#:~:text=A%20Game%20For%20All%20outlines,football%20for%20years%20to%20come.

The FA. (2021d). A one-year progress update on the elite game Football Leadership Diversity Code. Retrieved from https://www.thefa.com/news/2021/nov/10/fldc-progress-update-10112021

The FA. (2022). The FA Structure. Retrieved from https://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/structure

The FA in Association with The Institute of Directors. (2017). The FA Women in Leadership Programme. In: The Institute of Directors.

The Fawcett Society & The Global Institute for Women's Leadership. (2021). *Bridging the gap? An analysis of gender pay gap reporting in six countries*. Retrieved from London:

The Independent. (2021, 9 September). Cristiano Ronaldo: Explaining the rape allegations against Manchester United footballer. *The Independent,* Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/cristiano-ronaldo-rape-case-allegations-b1915710.html

The Premier League. (2018). *This is Premier League 2017/18.* Retrieved from https://pulse-static-files.s3.amazonaws.com/premierleague/document/2018/06/04/52ad969f-e821-4460-8f12-cb680a91c183/This-is-PL-Interactive-Combined.pdf

The Sutton Trust & The Social Mobility Commission. (2019). *Elitist Britain 2019: The Educational Backgrounds of Britain's Leading People.* The Sutton Trust & Crown Copyright 2019.

Thébaud, S. & Taylor, C. J. (2021). The Specter of Motherhood: Culture and the Production of Gendered Career Aspirations in Science and Engineering. *Gender & Society, 35*(3), 395-421.

Thorberg, R. & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded Theory and Theoretical Coding. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 153-169). London: SAGE.

Tobias Neely, M. (2018). Fit to be king: how patrimonialism on Wall Street leads to inequality. *Socio-Economic Review, 16*(2), 365-385.

Torchia, M., Calabrò, A. & Huse, M. (2011). Women directors on corporate boards: From tokenism to critical mass. *Journal of business ethics, 102*(2), 299-317.

Torre, M. (2014). The Scarring Effect of "Women's Work": The Determinants of Women's Attrition from Male-Dominated Occupations. *Social Forces, 93*(1), 1-29.

Torre, M. (2017a). Attrition from male-dominated occupations: Variation among occupations and women. *Sociological Perspectives, 60*(4), 665-684.

Torre, M. (2017b). We Don't Leave, They Kick Us Out: Women's Exit From Male-Dominated Occupations. Retrieved from https://gendersociety.wordpress.com/2017/11/15/we-dont-leave-they-kick-us-out-womens-exit-from-male-dominated-occupations/

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837-851.

Travers, A. (2009). The Sport Nexus and Gender Injustice. *Studies in Social Justice, 2*(1), 79-101.

Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

Truss, C., Alfes, K., Shantz, A. & Rosewarne, A. (2013). Still in the ghetto? Experiences of secretarial work in the 21st century. *Gender, Work & Organization, 20*(4), 349-363.

Tuckey, I. (2019, 6 February). Newport keeper Joe Day sprints off pitch after Middlesbrough win to be with pregnant wife as she gives birth to twin girls. *The Sun*. Retrieved from https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/football/8361933/joe-day-newport-county-middlesbrough-fa-cup-man-city-twins/

Tufford, L. & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*(1), 80-96.

Tutchell, E. & Edmonds, J. (2015). *Man-made: Why so few women are in positions of power*. Farnham: Gower Publishing.

Tutchell, E. & Edmonds, J. (2016). *Man-made: Why so few women are in positions of power*. Oxon: Routledge.

Tyler, M., Carson, L. & Reynolds, B. (2019). Are Fire Services 'Extremely Gendered'Organizations? Examining the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in Australia. *Gender, Work & Organization, 10.1111/gwao.12393*. doi:10.1111/gwao.12393

UEFA. (2017). *Women's football across the national associations 2016/17*. Retrieved from https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women%27sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356_DOWNLOAD.pdf

UK Government. (2010). *Equality Act 2010*. Retrieved from UK: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Upal, S. (2017, 22 November). BABY STEPS Wigan's Ryan Colclough scores twice before being substituted and dashing to hospital to see his child being born. *The Sun*. Retrieved from https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/football/4969455/wigan-ryan-colclough-scores-twice-before-being-substituted-and-dashing-to-see-his-child-being-born/#:~:text=%22I'm%20so%20happy%20to,had%20broken%2C%20his%20second%20child.

Vaczi, M. (2016). Dangerous liaisons, fatal women: The fear and fantasy of soccer wives and girlfriends in Spain. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 51*(3), 299-313.

Valencia, L. (2015). Being a Mother, Practicing Motherhood, Mothering Someone: The Impact of Psy-Knowledge and Processes of Subjectification. *Journal of Family Issues, 36*(9), 1233-1252.

Vallas, S. P. & Cummins, E. R. (2015). Personal branding and identity norms in the popular business press: Enterprise culture in an age of precarity. *Organization Studies, 36*(3), 293-319.

Verniers, C. (2020). Behind the maternal wall: The hidden backlash toward childfree working women. *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology, 4*(3), 107-124.

Vidgen, B. & Williams, A. R. (2022, 12 Aug). Nearly 70% of Premier League footballers are abused on Twitter – we used an AI to sift through millions of tweets, *The Conversation,* Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/nearly-70-of-premier-league-footballers-are-abused-on-twitter-we-used-an-ai-to-sift-through-millions-of-tweets-188317

Villiers, C. (2019). Boardroom Culture: An Argument for Compassionate Leadership. *European Business Law Review*, 253-278.

Vinnicombe, S., Atewologun, D. & Battista, V. (2019). *The Female FTSE Board Report 2019: Moving Beyond the Numbers*. Retrieved from https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/-/media/files/the-female-ftse-board-report-2019.ashx#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20women%20on%20the%20boards%20has%20risen%20from,26%20in%20CFO%2FFD%20roles.

Waddington, I., Roderick, M. & Naik, R. (2001). Methods of appointment and qualifications of club doctors and physiotherapists in English professional football: some problems and issues. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 35*(1), 48-53.

Wajcman, J., Bittman, M. & Brown, J. (2009). Intimate connections: The impact of the mobile phone on work/life boundaries. In Goggin, G. & Hjorth, L. (Eds.) *Mobile technologies (*pp. 24-37). London: Routledge.

Walby, S. (1997). *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge.

Walker, N. A. & Bopp, T. (2011). The Underrepresentation of Women in the Male-Dominated Sport Workplace: Perspectives of Female Coaches. *Journal of Workplace Rights, 15*(1), 47-64.
Watts, J. H. (2009). Leaders of men: women ‘managing’in construction. *Work, employment and society, 23*(3), 512-530.
Weitz, R. (2001). Women and Their Hair. *Gender & Society, 15*(5), 667-686.
Welford, J. (2011). Tokenism, ties and talking too quietly: women's experiences in non-playing football roles. *Soccer & Society, 12*(3), 365-381.
Welford, J. & Kay, T. (2007). Negotiating barriers to entering and participating in football: strategies employed by female footballers in the United Kingdom. *Women, Football and Europe: Histories, Equity and Experiences*, 151-171.
Wells, J. E. & Hancock, M. G. (2017). Networking, mentoring, sponsoring: strategies to support women in sport leadership. In L. J. Burton & S. Leberman (Eds.), *Women in Sport Leadership: Research and Practice for Change*. London: Routledge.
West, C. & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125-151.
Whelehan, I. (1995). Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'Post-Feminism'. In. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Whisenant, W. A., Pederson, P. M. & Obenour, B. L. (2002). Success and Gender: Determining the Rate of Advancement for Intercollegiate Athletic Directors. *Sex Roles, 47*(9/10), 485-491.
Whitler, K. A. & Henretta, D. A. (2018). Why the influence of women on boards still lags. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 59*(3), 79-81.
Wigmore, T. (2022, 31 May). Why Aren’t There More Black Managers In English Soccer? *FiveThirtyEight*. Retrieved from https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-arent-there-more-black-managers-in-english-soccer/
Wilkes, K. (2015). Colluding with neo-liberalism: Post-feminist subjectivities, whiteness and expressions of entitlement. *Feminist review, 110*(1), 18-33.
Wilkinson, K., Tomlinson, J. & Gardiner, J. (2017). Exploring the work–life challenges and dilemmas faced by managers and professionals who live alone. *Work, employment and society, 31*(4), 640-656.
Williams, C. L. (1992). The glass escalator: Hidden advantages for men in the “female” professions. *Social problems, 39*(3), 253-267.
Williams, C. L. (2013). The Glass Escalator, Revisited:Gender Inequality in Neoliberal Times, SWS Feminist Lecturer. *Gender & Society, 27*(5), 609-629.
Williams, C. L. (2014). The Happy Marriage of Capitalism and Feminism. *Contemporary sociology, 43*(1), 58-61.
Williams, C. L., Muller, C. & Kilanski, K. (2012). Gendered Organizations in the New Economy. *Gender & Society, 26*(4), 549-573.
Williams, J. (1994). *English football stadia after Hillsborough*. Leicester: University of Leicester, Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research.
Williams, J. (2001). *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What To Do About It*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Williams, J. (2003). *A Game for Rough Girls?: A History of Women's Football in Britian*. London: Routledge.
Williams, J. (2006). ‘Protect me from what I want’: Football fandom, celebrity cultures and ‘new’football in England. *Soccer & Society, 7*(1), 96-114.
Williams, J. (2022). *The History of Women's Football*. Leeds: Pen and Sword.
Williams, J. & Hess, R. (2015). Women, Football and History: International Perspectives. *The International Journal of the History of Sport, 32*(18), 2115-2122.

Wingfield, A. H. (2007). The modern mammy and the angry Black man: African American professionals' experiences with gendered racism in the workplace. *Race, Gender & Class*, 196-212.
WISE. (2018). Boardroom Stats 2018. Retrieved from https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/statistics/boardroom-stats-2018/
Witz, A. (1992). *Professions and Patriarchy*. Oxon: Routledge.
Women in Football. (2016). *Women in Football 2016 Survey Analysis*. Retrieved from https://www.womeninfootball.co.uk/resources/women-in-football-2016-survey-analysis.html
Women in Sport. (2017). *Beyond 30%: Female Leadership in Sport*. Retrieved from https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Women-in-Sport-Beyond-3025-1-1.pdf?x99836
Women in Sport. (2018). *Beyond 30%: Workplace Culture in Sport*. Retrieved from http://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Beyond-30-Workplace-Culture-in-Sport-report.pdf?x99836
Woodward, R. & Winter, P. (2004). Discourses of Gender in the Contemporary British Army. *Armed Forces & Society, 30*(2), 279-301.
Working Families (2020). Top 30 Employers for Working Families 2020 announced. Retrieved from https://workingfamilies.org.uk/news/top-30-2020/
Wozniak, D., Harbaugh, W. T. & Mayr, U. (2014). The menstrual cycle and performance feedback alter gender differences in competitive choices. *Journal of Labor Economics, 32*(1), 161-198.
Wrack, S. (2018, 13 November). The next goal for women’s football is to help clubs balance the book. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2018/nov/13/womens-football-finances
Wrack, S. (2020, 14 May). FA hits target with 3.4m women and girls playing football in England. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/14/fa-hits-target-to-double-womens-football-participation-in-three-years-england-gameplan-for-growth
Wrack, S. (2021a, 28 April). For women’s football being aligned with the men’s game comes at a price. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2021/apr/28/womens-football-aligned-mens-game-comes-at-a-price
Wrack, S. (2021b, 5 October). ‘Not just surviving, thriving’: interest in women’s sport has risen since pandemic. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/oct/05/not-just-surviving-thriving-interest-in-womens-sport-has-risen-since-pandemic
Wrack, S. (2022, 13 April). Kenny Shiels’ talk of ‘emotional’ women is unacceprtable. Football deserves better. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2022/apr/13/kenny-shiels-talk-of-emotional-women-is-unacceptable-football-deserves-better
Wright, B. (2018, 9 December). LGBT+ football fans: homophobia needs to be tackled. *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-46476399
Wright, T. (2014). Gender, sexuality and male-dominated work: the intersection of long-hours working and domestic life. *Work, employment and society, 28*(6), 985-1002.
Xue, B. & McMunn, A. (2021). Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown. *PLOS ONE, 16*(3), e0247959.

Yoder, J. D. (1991). Rethinking Tokenism: Looking Beyond Numbers. *Gender & Society, 5*(2), 178-192.

Zamberlan, A., Gioachin, F. & Gritti, D. (2021). Work less, help out more? The persistence of gender inequality in housework and childcare during UK COVID-19. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 100583.

Zheng, W., Kark, R. & Meister, A. L. (2018). Paradox versus dilemma mindset: A theory of how women leaders navigate the tensions between agency and communion. *The Leadership Quarterly, 29*(5), 584-596.

Zimmerman, L. M. & Clark, M. A. (2016). Opting-out and opting-in: a review and agenda for future research. *Career Development International, 21*(6), 603-633.

11. APPENDIX

11.1 Gender Pay Gap (mandatory data) published April 2018

	Club	% Women working at the club (all levels)	% Women in upper pay quartile	Difference in pay between women and men (mean hourly rate)	Difference in pay between women and men (median hourly rate)	% women awarded bonus pay (in previous 12 months)	% Men awarded bonus pay (in previous 12 months)	Bonus Pay Gap (mean)
Premier League	Arsenal	27%	29.0%	79.6%	-2.5%	55.0%	64.0%	92.4%
	AFC Bournemouth	30%	18.0%	83.0%	30.0%	0.6%	15.5%	100.0%
	Brighton Hove Albion	20%	16.0%	59.7%	-0.6%	33.9%	37.6%	93.1%
	Burnley	39%	9.4%	88.4%	15.6%	11.6%	46.3%	98.2%
	Chelsea	16%	11.0%	83.0%	0.0%	10.0%	2.0%	91.0%
	Crystal Palace	32%	16.0%	84.0%	17.0%	7.0%	17.0%	98.0%
	Everton	33%	18.5%	75.1%	0.2%	61.9%	68.1%	93.6%
	Huddersfield Town	26%	7.8%	76.2%	20.9%	4.5%	16.6%	92.0%
	Leicester City	24%	22.0%	78.0%	0.0%	72.0%	78.0%	93.0%
	Liverpool	46%	38.8%	77.5%	0.1%	3.6%	9.6%	95.5%
	Manchester City	26%	19.4%	87.7%	-17.2%	25.7%	22.7%	98.8%
	Manchester United	23%	20.0%	77.3%	-2.8%	15.5%	32.4%	81.8%
	Newcastle United	22%	14.0%	83.3%	0.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Southampton	29%	20.0%	84.4%	23.1%	43.0%	47.0%	97.5%
	Stoke City	22%	2.2%	92.5%	30.5%	17.5%	28.6%	98.9%
	Swansea City	20%	6.0%	87.8%	26.4%	16.0%	23.2%	97.2%
	Tottenham Hotspur	24%	15.0%	83.0%	3.0%	30.6%	32.4%	90.0%
	Watford	22%	11.3%	87.0%	3.0%	18.0%	22.3%	93.4%
	West Bromwich Albion	33%	15.8%	84.4%	34.3%	22.1%	45.3%	94.2%
	West Ham United	30%	10.8%	87.4%	32.0%	6.3%	25.2%	53.2%

	League Total	27%	16.1%	82.0%	10.7%	23.9%	33.4%	92.2%
Championship	Aston Villa	18%	14.0%	74.0%	7.0%	42.0%	34.0%	83.5%
	Barnsley	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Birmingham City	39%	21.0%	60.0%	0.0%	2.0%	9.0%	72.0%
	Bolton Wanderers	20%	9.5%	61.9%	3.2%	3.5%	17.4%	97.0%
	Brentford	31%	11.0%	70.0%	29.0%	3.0%	16.0%	99.0%
	Bristol City	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Burton Albion	36%	15.2%	57.4%	7.4%	0.0%	11.0%	100.0%
	Cardiff City	24%	12.0%	75.0%	12.0%	0.0%	4.7%	100.0%
	Derby County	20%	17.3%	76.6%	-5.0%	16.0%	22.5%	98.4%
	Fulham	18%	9.8%	62.1%	5.7%	47.7%	54.9%	94.1%
	Hull City	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Ipswich Town	31%	29.3%	53.7%	9.0%	2.7%	14.2%	94.1%
	Leeds United	32%	22.5%	60.1%	6.6%	9.8%	26.7%	97.0%
	Middlesbrough	42%	25.0%	83.0%	3.9%	15.5%	23.1%	97.3%
	Millwall	31%	12.0%	66.0%	14.0%	6.0%	27.0%	85.0%
	Norwich City	39%	23.0%	76.0%	20.0%	16.0%	39.0%	91.0%
	Nottingham Forest	28%	12.8%	68.8%	11.9%	0.5%	12.9%	99.9%
	Preston North End	20%	6.0%	64.0%	9.0%	0.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	Queens Park Rangers	20%	6.0%	72.9%	10.7%	12.4%	18.9%	92.8%
	Reading	20%	7.9%	70.5%	27.2%	10.5%	26.0%	95.9%
	Sheffield United	26%	6.7%	56.6%	38.3%	10.0%	70.6%	70.8%
	Sheffield Wednesday	29%	11.0%	78.0%	23.0%	3.0%	15.0%	95.0%
	Sunderland AFC	25%	12.2%	85.1%	15.8%	48.8%	26.4%	95.1%
	Wolverhampton Wanderers	22%	14.6%	60.3%	11.5%	8.9%	15.9%	10.4%
	League Total	**27%**	**14.2%**	**68.2%**	**12.4%**	**12.3%**	**23.7%**	**89.0%**
League 1	AFC Wimbledon	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Blackburn Rovers	29%	16.3%	64.9%	1.8%	40.6%	54.4%	99.1%
	Blackpool	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Bradford City	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Bristol Rovers	35%	11.0%	47.0%	8.0%	9.0%	27.0%	90.2%
	Bury	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Charlton Athletic	17%	4.4%	50.8%	8.2%	4.3%	20.6%	50.5%
	Doncaster Rovers	20%	7.3%	45.5%	7.5%	19.7%	23.2%	86.8%
	Fleetwood Town	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Gillingham	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	MK Dons	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER

	Northampton Town	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Oldham Athletic	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Oxford United	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Peterborough United	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Plymouth Argyle	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Portsmouth	24%	11.3%	38.1%	10.5%	5.3%	12.6%	-34.9%
	Rochdale	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Rotherham United	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Scunthorpe United	25%	3.0%	63.0%	6.0%	0.0%	11.0%	100.0%
	Shrewsbury Town	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Southend United	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER	NER
	Walsall	29%	16.7%	31.5%	6.3%	58.0%	55.0%	99.0%
	Wigan Athletic	data available but also includes Wigan Warriers Rugby League Club so is excluded from GPG analysis						
	League Total	**26%**	**10.0%**	**48.7%**	**6.9%**	19.6%	**29.1%**	**70.1%**
Overall Total		**27%**	**13.4%**	**66.3%**	**10.0%**	**18.6%**	**28.7%**	**83.8%**

(-)Denotes pay gap in favour of women

NER: Not Eligible to Report

N/A: Not Applicable

11.2 Gender Pay Gap (voluntary data) published April 2018

	Club	Number of women working at the club (all levels)	% Women in senior management	% Women in upper pay quartile (excl. players and coaching staff)	Difference in pay between women and men (mean hourly rate) (excl. players and coaching staff)	Difference in pay between women and men (median hourly rate) (excl. players and coaching staff)	% women awarded bonus pay (in previous 12 months) (excl. players)	% Men awarded bonus pay (in previous 12 months) (excl. players)	Bonus Pay Gap (mean) (excl. players)
Premier League	Arsenal	462	NP	NP	16.8%	-0.7%	NP	NP	42.6%
	AFC Bournemouth	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	100.0%
	Brighton Hove Albion	NP	NP	23.0%	7.9%	0.0%	NP	NP	72.1%
	Burnley	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Chelsea	NP	NP	17.0%	6.0%	-8.0%	NP	NP	33.0%
	Crystal Palace	347	NP	19.0%	19.0%	12.0%	NP	NP	62.0%
	Everton	NP	12.7%	22.9%	22.3%	-0.4%	NP	NP	29.6%
	Huddersfield Town	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Leicester City	NP	NP	28.0%	8.8%	0.0%	NP	NP	NP
	Liverpool	NP	0.0%	42.2%	35.4%	0.0%	NP	NP	76.3%
	Manchester City	NP	NP	NP	16.0%	-17.6%	NP	NP	70.8%
	Manchester United	NP	NP	23.4%	37.8%	-7.4%	NP	NP	64.9%
	Newcastle United	NP	50.0%	21.0%	16.1%	0.0%	NP	NP	N/A
	Southampton	114	19.0%	NP	37.0%	NP	43%	44%	NP
	Stoke City	81	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Swansea City	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Tottenham Hotspur	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Watford	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	West Bromwich Albion	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	West Ham United	NP	NP	NP	-9.8%	NP	NP	NP	27.0%
	League Total			**24.6%**	**17.8%**	**-2.2%**			**57.8%**
Championship	Aston Villa		NP	18.0%	18.0%	0.5%	NP	NP	-83.0%
	Barnsley		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Birmingham City		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Bolton Wanderers	419	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Brentford		NP	19.0%	31.0%	29.0%	3.0%	2.0%	97.0%

	Bristol City		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Burton Albion		NP	NP	NP	NP	0.0%	NP	NP
	Cardiff City		NP	NP	22.0%	NP	0.0%	not	NP
	Derby County	100	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Fulham		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Hull City		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Ipswich Town		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Leeds United		NP	NP	16.0%	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Middlesbrough		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Millwall		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Norwich City		12.5%	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Nottingham Forest		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Preston North End		NP	NP	7.0%	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Queens Park Rangers		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Reading		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Sheffield United		NP	11.9%	23.9%	36.0%	10.0%	16.0%	-45.8%
	Sheffield Wednesday		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Sunderland AFC		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Wolverhampton Wanderers	158	NP	21.6%	7.0%	6.6%	8.9%	8.0%	25.0%
	League Total			**17.6%**	**17.8%**	**18.0%**	**4.4%**	**8.7%**	**-1.7%**
League 1	AFC Wimbledon		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Blackburn Rovers	198	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Blackpool		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Bradford City		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Bristol Rovers		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Bury		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Charlton Athletic		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Doncaster Rovers	66	NP	12.3%	15.6%	7.5%	19.7%	10.3%	18.7%
	Fleetwood Town		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Gillingham		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	MK Dons		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Northampton Town		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Oldham Athletic		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Oxford United		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Peterborough United		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Plymouth Argyle		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Portsmouth		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP

	Rochdale		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Rotherham United		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Scunthorpe United		NP	7.0%	14.0%	6.0%	0.0%	0.5%	100.0%
	Shrewsbury Town		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Southend United		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
	Walsall		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	Wigan Athletic	data available but includes Wigan Warriers Rugby League Club so is excluded from GPG analysis							
	League Total			**9.7%**	**14.8%**	**6.8%**	**9.9%**	**5.4%**	**59.4%**
Overall Total				**17.3%**	**16.8%**	**7.5%**			**63.8%**

NP: Not Published

Durham University
Department of Sociology

Shaped by the past, creating the future

11.3 Ethical Approval

RESEARCH ETHICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM, MAY 2015

SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

A.1. Name of researcher(s):	Amée Gill
A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):	amee.gill@durham.ac.uk
A.3. Project Title:	Women in a 'Man's World': Women's experiences of working in leadership in men's professional football in England
A.4. Project Funder (where appropriate):	AHRC
A.5. When do you intend to start data collection?	June 2018
A.6. When will the project finish?	September 2020
A.7. ***For students only:*** Student ID:	000729025
Degree, year and module:	Y1 PhD in Applied Social Science
Supervisor:	Dr Stacey Pope, Dr Martin Roderick & Professor John Hughson

A.8. Brief summary of the research questions:

This qualitative research will explore women's experiences of working in leadership positions in men's professional football in England between 1992 and the present day. This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do women experience leadership roles in men's professional football?
2. To what extent have women's experiences of working in leadership in men's professional football changed over the past 25-30 years?
3. What barriers have women faced working in this male-domain?
4. What strategies have women used to overcome these barriers?
5. Why do women remain underrepresented in leadership positions in men's professional football?

A.9. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?

The method for data collection will be oral history interviews. This study requires an in-depth qualitative approach to data collection that gives participants the opportunity to share their stories. Because this socio-historical project spans the past 3 decades, it is appropriate to use oral history interviewing as a method for data collection as this focuses on past experiences (Gilbert, 2008). Furthermore, oral history interviews are appropriate when interviewing marginalised groups whose voices have been historically silenced (Bornat & Harding, 2017).

Bornat, J. & Harding, J., 2017. *Joanna Bornat and Jenny Harding discuss oral history methods [streaming video]* [Interview] 2017.

Gilbert, N., 2008. *Researching Social Life.* 3rd ed. London: SAGE.

SECTION B: ETHICS CHECKLIST

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
a). Does the study involve participants who are *potentially vulnerable*?	☐	☒
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?	☐	☒
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	☐	☒
d) Does the research address a *potentially sensitive topic*?	☒	☐
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	☐	☒
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	☒	☐
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?	☐	☒

SECTION C: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

C.1. Who will be your research participants?

30 women (aged 18+) who work, or who have worked, in senior leadership positions in men's professional football in England in the past 30 years.

C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled?

Participants will be initially selected using purposive sampling based on the positions they have held in football; when they held these positons; how long they have held those positions; and the league positions of their club. This will ensure that I sample women who have worked across all three decades of the study period and across different football leagues, as these experiences may differ.

Once selected, potential participants, if they are members, will be initially contacted (written letter) via the Women in Football organisation. However, it will be made clear that this research activity is separate to that of Women in Football as an organisation. This will mitigate the possibility of members feeling obliged to take part because of their affiliation with Women in Football.

Other potential participants will be contacted directly through their clubs, their professional profile (i.e. LinkedIn), or through other sports management networks. Given the anticipated difficultly in recruiting from this sample, participants will also be asked to identify other eligible participants who can be contacted (snowball sampling). It is recognised that snowball sampling may introduce potential ethical/sampling dilemmas in that participants may 'block' access to eligible participants or that the use of personal connections may result in a very similar sample (Bell, 2014). However, given the varied approach that will be taken to sampling, and the use of purposeful sampling to ensure a varied sample, these issues are unlikely to arise.

Bell, L. (2014) 'Ethics and Feminist Research', in Hesse-Biber, S. N. (ed.) *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer,* London: SAGE Publications, pp. 73-106

C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

Participants will be given a participant information sheet (see attached) and will be given the opportunity to speak to the researcher about the interview process, over telephone, before the interview takes place. Given the high-profile nature of the participants' roles, it is likely that they will want to know in advance what they will be asked during the interview before they consent to take part. However, given that oral history interviewing is an open-ended and flexible process, it will not possible to provide a list of the exact questions I will be asking. Instead, I will offer participants an outline of the topics that I will cover during the interview (via email). This will give participants confidence, going into the interview, that they know what will be covered without compromising the research process i.e. participants pre-planning their answers.

Although formal consent will be gained through a signed consent form at the beginning of the first interview (see attached consent form), in line with item 19 of the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2017), verbal consent will also be sought and renegotiated throughout the recruitment and interview process to check that participants are happy to continue as the research process develops. As Mason (2002) suggests, renegotiating consent can be an important part of the research process as participants become more and more aware of what their consent actually means. For

example, it may be that participants reveal information about a third-party that they do not wish to be used as data, but that helps to give context to an experience they are sharing – the extent to which this information can be used as data can be negotiated with participants throughout the interview process.

Participants will also have the right to withdraw their consent at any point in the research process. Details of which are outlined in the participant information sheet (attached)

British Sociological Association (2017) *BSA Statement of Ethical Practice*, Durham: British Sociological Association

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd Ed., London: SAGE Publications

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

Participants' identity will remain confidential to the researcher throughout the study.

Once each interview has taken place, a tape recording of the interview will be uploaded to a secure, password encrypted file and deleted from the audio recording device. During transcription, any identifiable data (names, places etc.) will be removed. In the thesis, pseudonyms will be used in place of participants' real names. Information about the participants' clubs will be limited to 'works at premier league club' or 'worked at league one club' as it may be salient to make this distinction between the type of club they work/worked for.

All data relating to the study will be stored securely on a password encrypted file that only the researcher has access to. Any paper documents (consent forms) will stored in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study. These will be securely destroyed 6-months after completion of study.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

For some high-profile participants, the information that they reveal may already be public knowledge i.e. reported in the media/autobiography. Although necessary steps will be taken to ensure the anonymity of these participants, it may be unrealistic to ensure the anonymity of a very high-profile participant who has shared their experiences publically. In which case, it will be made clear, in line with item 27 of the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (2017: p.6), that "unrealistic guarantees" of confidentiality cannot be given if the information they choose to share has already been made public.
In all other circumstances, participants' anonymity / confidentiality will be honoured "unless there are clear and overriding reasons to do otherwise" (British Sociological Association, 2017: p. 8). For example, if an incident occurs that may require the

researcher to contact the police or another emergency service during or after the interview, the anonymity of the participant may be limited in this extreme circumstance i.e. an employer may find out that the participant is taking part in the research. In this circumstance, the data that the participant has shared (interview data) will remain anonymous. However, it is recognised that research data given in confidence does not enjoy legal privilege (British Sociological Association, 2017).

Furthermore, it is possible that a participant may share information during the interview that reveals an immediate risk to their health or wellbeing or to another person's health and wellbeing (i.e. a child) that may require the researcher to act. Again, there would have to be clear and overriding reasons to compromise the anonymity of the participants.

British Sociological Association (2017) *BSA Statement of Ethical Practice*, Durham: British Sociological Association

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	☒	☐
b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	☒	☐
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	☒	☐
d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	☒	☐
e). What the data will be used for?	☒	☐
f). How the data will be stored securely?	☒	☐
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	☒	☐
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	☒	☐

SECTION D: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
1. Some interview topics, i.e. experiences of sexism, may cause upset or distress	Small likelihood considering participants will be aware of the topic beforehand	Minimal harm	The interview questions are very open-ended, so participants are free to answer in a way that they feel comfortable. Participants will also be reminded that there is no obligation to answer all interview questions. Furthermore, participants can stop the interview at any time or withdraw their participation. Participants will be signposted to relevant support and information for victims of emotional abuse (BullyingUK) / sexism (Women in Football sexism reporting process) / workplace discrimination (Equality Advisory Support Service).
2. Participants identity being revealed.	Small likelihood given the steps that will be taken	It would depend on the context – potentially very harmful if an employer was unhappy about their employee taking part.	As detailed in section C4, reasonable steps will be taken to protect the identity of each participant. However, if a participants' involvement in the study was to be revealed, their data (interview

	to ensure anonymity		data) would remain anonymous i.e. an employer would not know what their employee had said during the interview process even if they knew their employer had taken part. If it became clear that interview data could breach the confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the participants, then the data will not be published i.e. if there was only one women working at a premier league club in the 1990's, details of the league will be removed. However, as previously stated in section C5, for some high-profile women, it may not be possible to ensure anonymity if they have already made their experiences public. In which case, participants will be made aware of this risk before they take part. Again, consent will be renegotiated throughout the research process i.e. if a participant asks that something they said during the interview cannot be used.

SECTION E: POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1.Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1. Risk to safety - being a lone researcher visiting participants at their workplace/home	Unlikely	unknown	The study is considered low risk in terms of the researcher's safety; however, it is likely that interviews may take place at participants' homes (in the evening) given that many of these women will be very busy during the working day. Furthermore, it is important to create a relaxed atmosphere for oral history interviews; therefore, the participants' homes may be the most suitable place for this. As the interviews will be taking place at different places and times and some of these may be in that evenings and at the participant's home, details of research sites (including names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of interviewees) will be provided in a sealed

			envelope to a household member. I will inform the household member of my interview time and I will carry a mobile phone so that I can be contacted. At the end of the interview, I will call the household member to let them know that the interview has been completed and that I have left the site. If it was the case that this call is not received in a certain timeframe and I cannot be contacted by telephone, the household member would open the sealed envelope and contact the local police. After each interview is successfully completed the contact details provided to the household member in a sealed envelope will be destroyed. This will allow confidentiality to be maintained whilst also protecting the safety of the researcher.

SECTION F: OTHER APPROVALS

	Yes, documen t attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	☐		☒
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a *clinical trial*? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	☐		☒
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form.	☐		☒
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g. social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after departmental approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		☐	☒
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	☐	☐	☒
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria: For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay. For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.	Yes ☒		No ☐

SECTION G: SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURES

When submitting your ethics application, you should also submit supporting documentation as follows:

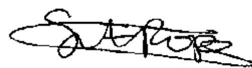
Supporting Documents	Included (tick)

Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	✓
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	✓
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	N/A
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	N/A
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	✓
Consent Form (if appropriate)	✓
For students only: Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	N/A

Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:
(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

Signatures

Researcher's Signature:
Date: 20.4.18



Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only):
Date: 23.4.18

Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.
If you decide to change your research significantly after receiving ethics approval, you must submit a revised ethics form along with updated supporting documentation before you can implement these changes.

PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION

Outcome	
Reject The application is incomplete and/or cannot be assessed in its current format. Please complete the application fully.	
Revise and Resubmit The application cannot be approved in its current format. Please revise the application as per the comments below. Please complete the application fully.	
Approved, with Set Date for Review The application is approved and you may begin data collection. A date for further review of the project as it develops has been set to take place on: ___________________________ The anticipated nominated reviewer will be:___________________________	
Approved The application is approved and you may begin data collection.	

Comments:

I approve this Ethics and Risk Assessment application and I have no conflict of interest to declare.

First Reviewer's Signature:
First Reviewer's Name: Dr Matthew David
First Reviewer's Role: Ethics Committee
Date: 08/05/2018
If applicable:
I approve this Ethics and Risk Assessment application and I have no conflict of interest to declare.

Second Reviewer's Signature: n/a
Second Reviewer's Name:
Second Reviewer's Role:
Date:

11.4 Participant Information Sheet

A study of women's experiences of working in leadership in men's professional football in England

What is this research about?

Relatively few women have occupied positions of leadership in men's professional football in England since the 1980s. However, the experiences of women who *have* worked at the top levels of football have never been fully explored. While previous research has explored women's experiences as football players and coaches, we still know very little about what it is like to for women to work in the male-dominated world of football leadership.

The aim of this research is to fill this gap in our understanding and in the history of women in football, and to work towards improving gender diversity in football leadership. To do this, I am asking women who have worked in a leadership position in men's professional football to share their stories and experiences of working in this industry.

What will I have to do?

You will take part in an oral history interview, which is a type of interview that focusses on past events and experiences. This is so I can capture your journey into football leadership and trace how women's experiences of working in football may have changed over time. These interviews are very open by nature, so you will be asked to talk freely about your experiences of working in football and any life experiences that have had an impact on your involvement in football leadership.

How long will it take?

Oral history interviews usually take 1 ½ hours, but I will work around your location and availability to make it as easy as possible. I appreciate that you will have a very busy schedule, so it may be easier to do shorter interviews or make use of Skype if meeting face-to-face is difficult.

What are the benefits of taking part?

The hope is that this research will support sports organisations to improve gender diversity and equality. Furthermore, you will be adding your experiences to the history of women in the game through the partnership with the National Football Museum.

Are there any risks in taking part?

There are no anticipated risks involved in taking part in the interview, but you are free to stop the interview and withdraw your participation at any time if you no longer wish to continue. It is recognised that this may be a sensitive topic for some people so there is no obligation to answer all the questions and you will be free to provide as much or as little information as you feel comfortable with in relation to your experiences.

What will happen to my interview data?

The interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. The information that you share in your interview will be analysed and written-up as part of my doctoral thesis on women's experiences of working in leadership in men's professional football. The findings from this project will be disseminated in the wider academic and sporting community to contribute towards our limited understanding of women's experiences of working in football. If you give permission, an anonymised

transcript from the interview will also be deposited at the national football archive to contribute towards the history of women in football.

Will my data be anonymous and secure?

Yes. Your personal data will not be published, and your interview will remain anonymous (a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name and any other identifiable data will be removed from the interview transcripts). Identifiable data will remain confidential to the researcher and stored securely on a password encrypted file. This data will be securely destroyed 6-months after completion of the study. However, it may be that some of the experiences you share will already be public knowledge (i.e. reported in the media); in which case, we will discuss the risk of publishing this data as part of the research and the extent to which it is possible to protect anonymity if you decide that this data can be published.

Can I withdraw from the study after I have agreed to take part?

Yes. You can withdraw your involvement in the study at any time during the interview and up-to 6 weeks after your last interview by emailing the researcher and stating that you wish to withdraw. You do not need to provide a reason for withdrawal, but it may be helpful for future research if you do. Once you have asked to be withdrawn, all your data will be securely destroyed.

Who is involved in this study?

The sole researcher for this PhD project is Amée Gill. The PhD is being supervised by Dr Stacey Pope (Durham University), Dr AJ Rankin-Wright (Durham University), and Professor John Hughson (UCLAN & National Football Museum). This PhD is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council through the Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme with Sporting Heritage. The collaborative institution for this project is the National Football Museum. It is important to note these organisations are there to support the dissemination of research findings and have no involvement in the research process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details below.

Amée Gill

Durham University | *Department of Sport & Exercise Sciences*|
32 Old Elvet | Durham DH1 3HN
Tel: 07854195287 | amee.gill@durham.ac.uk

11.5 Consent forms

Consent Form: Women in a 'Man's World'

Please tick Boxes
as appropriate

1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, which have been satisfactorily answered. ☐

2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

3 I agree for my interview to be audio-recorded and later transcribed. ☐

4 I understand that my real name will not be used in the thesis or in the transcription and that a pseudonym will be used throughout. ☐

5 I understand that my words may be quoted in this thesis or in future publications but that a pseudonym will be used and no identifying information will be included ☐

6 I agree to take part in the interview. ☐

Please print and sign your name below

______________________	______________________	______________________
Name	Date	Signature
______________________	______________________	______________________
Name of researcher	Date	Signature

Consent Form: Women in a 'Man's World'

Please tick Boxes as appropriate

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, which have been satisfactorily answered. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation during the interview and up-to six weeks after the interview without giving a reason. ☐
3. I agree for my interview to be audio-recorded and later transcribed. ☐
4. I agree for my transcript to be deposited at the National Football Museum's archives ☐
5. Unless otherwise agreed, I understand that my identity will remain anonymous and that my real name will not be used in the thesis or in the transcription ☐
6. Unless otherwise agreed, I understand that my words may be quoted in this thesis or in future publications but that a pseudonym will be used and no identifying information will be included ☐
7. I agree for my identity to be revealed and for identifiable information to be included in the thesis or in the transcription (optional) ☐
8. I agree to take part in the interview. ☐

Please print and sign your name below

____________________	____________	________________
Name	Date	Signature
____________________	____________	________________
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

11.6 Invitation letter

Invitation to participate in research on women and leadership in football

Dear [name],

I am a doctoral researcher at Durham University and the National Football Museum doing a project on women who work in senior roles in men's football. The project is publicly funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The research is exploring women's experiences of working in football and how they got involved in football at a senior level as there is a lack of research on this topic.

Over the next couple of months, I am conducting a large number of discussions with a range of women working in senior roles in men's football. These discussions usually last around 1 ½ hrs. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in one of these given your experiences of working in this industry?

The research is confidential and you would not be identified by name. If you are interested in taking part I would arrange a convenient time and location to meet with you to talk about your experiences of working in football leadership. I have enclosed an information sheet giving more details about this research. I would also be happy to answer any questions you might have about the project over the phone or via email.

To let me know if you would like to be involved, please let me know by email (amee.gill@durham.ac.uk) or contact me by telephone (07854195287) by [date]. If you are able to take part, I will be in touch over the next few weeks to arrange a convenient time for the session.

I do hope you are able to participate in this unique project and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Amée Gill
PhD Candidate
E: amee.gill@durham.ac.uk
T: 07854195287

11.7 Demographic survey

About You

The questions in this About You survey are optional; you do not have to answer all or any of these questions if you do not wish. However, any information you are willing to provide will help us to monitor and improve the diversity of our sample.

Please fill out or tick the appropriate boxes below

What is your age?	**What is your nationality?**
Please describe your ethnicity	
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups: ☐ White and Black Caribbean ☐ White and Black African ☐ White and Asian ☐ Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic [ ]	White: ☐ English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British ☐ Irish ☐ Gypsy or Irish Traveller ☐ Any other White background: [ ]
Asian / Asian British: ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Chinese ☐ Any other Asian background: [ ]	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British: ☐ African ☐ Caribbean ☐ Any other Black / African / Caribbean background: [ ] ☐ Any other ethnic group: [ ]
How would you describe your gender? ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Prefer to self-describe: [ ]	**Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?** ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

Please describe your sexual orientation	**What is your marital status?**
☐ Bisexual ☐ Gay Woman / Lesbian ☐ Gay Man ☐ Heterosexual / Straight ☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Prefer to self-describe:	☐ Married ☐ Civil Partnered ☐ Neither ☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Prefer to self-describe:
What is your faith or belief?	**Do you have any caring responsibilities?**
☐ Atheist / no religion ☐ Christian ☐ Catholic ☐ Buddhist ☐ Hindu ☐ Jewish ☐ Muslim ☐ Sikh ☐ Any other faith or belief:	☐ Primary carer of a child/children (under 18) ☐ Primary carer of disabled child/children ☐ Primary carer of disabled adult (18 or over) ☐ Primary carer of older person/people (65+) ☐ Secondary carer ☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Any other caring responsibilities:
Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	**If yes, are you registered as disabled?**
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say	☐ Yes ☐ No

Please describe any qualifications that you have?

☐ O levels / CSEs / GCSEs, Foundation Diploma
☐ NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ
☐ A levels / AS levels / VCEs, Higher Diploma
☐ NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City & Guilds Craft, BTEC / General Diploma, RSA Diploma
☐ Apprenticeship
☐ Higher School Certificate, Progression / Advanced Diploma
☐ NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City & Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
☐ Degree (for example BA, BSc),
☐ Higher degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE)
☐ NVQ 4 - 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level
☐ Professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy)
☐ Other vocational / work-related qualifications:

End of survey

11.8 Number of women directors from 87/88 to 17/18 in men's club football (all clubs that have played in the top 4 leagues since 87/88)

Club	No.	Club	No.	Club	No.	Club	No.
Accrington Stanley	3	Chesterfield	0	Liverpool	2	Scarborough	2
AFC Bournemouth	1	Colchester United	0	Luton Town	2	Scunthorpe United	1
AFC Wimbledon	3	Coventry City	1	Macclesfield	0	Sheffield United	0
Aldershot	0	Crawley Town	6	Manchester City	3	Sheffield Wednesday	1
Arsenal	1	Crewe Alexander	0	Manchester United	1	Shrewsbury Town	0
Aston Villa	1	Crystal Palace	0	Mansfield Town	3	Southampton	4
Barnet	0	Dagenham & Redbridge	0	Middlesbrough	0	Southend United	1
Barnsley	1	Darlington	6	Millwall	1	Stevenage	0
Birmingham City	1	Derby County	1	MK Dons	2	Stockport	1
Blackburn Rovers	1	Doncaster Rovers	4	Morecambe	1	Stoke City	0
Blackpool	4	Everton	2	Newcastle United	1	Sunderland AFC	3
Bolton Wanderers	2	Exeter City	3	Newport County	3	Swansea City	0
Boston United	0	Fleetwood Town	0	Northampton Town	0	Swindon Town	3
Bradford City	1	Forest Green Rovers	4	Norwich City	2	Tranmere Rovers	2
Brentford	1	Fulham	1	Nottingham Forest	1	Torquay United	7
Brighton Hove Albion	2	Gillingham	2	Notts County	4	Tottenham Hotspur	2
Bristol City	1	Grimsby Town	0	Oldham Athletic	1	Walsall	0
Bristol Rovers	1	Halifax	0	Oxford United	1	Watford	0
Burnley	0	Hartlepool	1	Peterborough United	4	West Bromwich Albion	2
Burton Albion	1	Hereford	2	Plymouth Argyle	0	West Ham United	2
Bury	2	Huddersfield Town	2	Port Vale	0	Wigan Athletic	1
Cambridge United	0	Hull City	0	Portsmouth	1	Wolverhampton Wanderers	1
Cardiff City	2	Ipswich Town	2	Preston North End	0	Wrexham	1
Carlisle United	5	Kidderminster	3	Queens Park Rangers	1	Wycombe Wanderers	0
Charlton Athletic	3	Leeds United	2	Reading	1	Yeovil Town	2
Chelsea	2	Leicester City	2	Rochdale	0	York	1
Cheltenham Town	0	Leyton Orient	1	Rotherham United	2		
Chester FC (city)	2	Lincoln City	3	Rushden	0	**Total**	**78**

11.9 Women Directors and CEOs in men's professional club football (2017/18 Season)

	Club	Female CEO	No. Directors	No. women Directors	% women Directors
Premier League	AFC Bournemouth		9	0	0%
	Arsenal		6	0	0%
	Brighton Hove Albion		11	1	9%
	Burnley		7	0	0%
	Chelsea		4	1	25%
	Crystal Palace		3	0	0%
	Everton		6	1	17%
	Huddersfield Town		5	1	20%
	Leicester City	Yes	6	2	33%*
	Liverpool		7	0	0%
	Manchester City		6	0	0%
	Manchester United		13	1	8%
	Newcastle United		3	0	0%
	Southampton		7	1	14%
	Stoke City		4	0	0%
	Swansea City		7	0	0%
	Tottenham Hotspur	Yes	6	2	33%*
	Watford		3	0	0%
	West Bromwich Albion		6	0	0%
	West Ham United		8	2	25%
	Premier League Total	**2**	**127**	**12**	**9%**
Championship	Aston Villa		3	1	33%*
	Barnsley		5	1	20%
	Birmingham City		5	0	0%
	Bolton Wanderers		1	0	0%
	Brentford		8	1	13%
	Bristol City		6	0	0%
	Burton Albion		8	1	13%
	Cardiff City		4	0	0%
	Derby County		6	0	0%
	Fulham		4	0	0%
	Hull City		2	0	0%
	Ipswich Town		3	0	0%
	Leeds United		3	1	33%*
	Middlesbrough		2	0	0%
	Millwall		8	0	0%
	Norwich City		6	1	17%
	Nottingham Forest		4	1	25%
	Preston North End		5	0	0%
	Queens Park Rangers		6	0	0%

	Reading		5	1	20%
	Sheffield United		6	0	0%
	Sheffield Wednesday	Yes	3	1	33%*
	Sunderland AFC		4	1	25%
	Wolverhampton Wanderers		6	0	0%
	Championship Total	**1**	**113**	**10**	**9%**
League 1	AFC Wimbledon		10	1	10%
	Blackburn Rovers		3	0	0%
	Blackpool		5	2	40%**
	Bradford City		3	0	0%
	Bristol Rovers		5	0	0%
	Bury		3	1	33%*
	Charlton Athletic		2	0	0%
	Doncaster Rovers		4	0	0%
	Fleetwood Town		3	0	0%
	Gillingham		5	1	20%
	MK Dons		6	1	17%
	Northampton Town		6	0	0%
	Oldham Athletic		5	0	0%
	Oxford United		7	0	0%
	Peterborough United		6	1	17%
	Plymouth Argyle		6	0	0%
	Portsmouth		6	0	0%
	Rochdale		6	0	0%
	Rotherham United		8	2	25%
	Scunthorpe United		4	1	25%
	Shrewsbury Town		2	0	0%
	Southend United		5	0	0%
	Walsall		9	0	0%
	Wigan Athletic		4	0	0%
	League 1 Total	**0**	**123**	**10**	**8%**
League 2	Accrington Stanley		4	1	25%
	Barnet		2	0	0%
	Cambridge United		8	0	0%
	Carlisle United		5	1	20%
	Cheltenham Town		7	0	0%
	Chesterfield		3	0	0%
	Colchester United		3	0	0%
	Coventry City		2	0	0%
	Crawley Town		3	1	33%*
	Crewe Alexander		8	0	0%
	Exeter City		8	1	13%
	Forest Green Rovers	yes	6	2	33%*
	Grimsby Town		5	0	0%
	Lincoln City		12	0	0%

	Luton Town		5	0	0%
	Mansfield Town	yes	9	2	22%
	Morecambe		7	0	0%
	Newport County		6	0	0%
	Notts County		6	1	17%
	Port Vale		3	0	0%
	Stevenage		5	0	0%
	Swindon Town		5	0	0%
	Wycombe Wanderers		5	0	0%
	Yeovil Town		6	0	0%
	League 1 Total	**2**	**133**	**9**	**7%**
	Overall Total	**5**	**496**	**41**	**8%**

Note:

*Critical Mass (>30% gender diversity)

**Gender Balance (>40% gender diversity)