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Transforming the English coaching landscape: Black women football coaches' acts of resistance against racism and sexism

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ABSTRACT

Research question: We seek to understand how Black women coaches negotiate and resist problematic, confined social structures caused by Association football's embedded masculinised and racist culture. Through an intersectional lens, we ask what can we learn from Black women coaches' lived experiences and acts of resistance, what motivates acts, and what personal effects do coaches experience following individual resistance acts?

Methodology: Nine coaches were interviewed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Black women coaches negotiate dominant football culture by engaging in (1) transformative resistance to challenge institutional practices and afford opportunities, and (2) conformist resistance to amplify issues, resist microaggressions, and downplay their ethnic identity. Coaches' acts of resistance were motivated by a need for safety, to promote women's and ethnic minorities' interests, to challenge white privilege, and to (re)educate. These acts led to increased or diminished empowerment depending on their reception. Coaches reported positive organisational changes but also relationship conflict (e.g. were perceived as difficult).

Practical implications: Compelling personal stories provide football associations with actionable areas to ensure football is more equitable and inclusive.

Research contribution: We provide the first working model of coaches' individual acts of resistance through sharing new insights into how gender and race intersect to restrain Black women coaches' football participation.

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Women coaches; football; Black coaches; racism; acts of resistance

Black women often receive access and treatment discrimination and negative attitudes owing to their two marginalised identities of race and gender, as well as other social categories (Jones et al., 2021). This "double burden" of racism and sexism in sport can serve as an impenetrable barrier, limiting individuals to marginal positions (Borland &

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Bruening, 2010). Association football in England, characterised by its White, working-class, male origins, is an arena that has long been associated with racist and sexist language and behaviour (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Caudwell, 2017). Given their underrepresentation in the coaching workforce, this embedded masculinised and racist culture is oppressive for women of colour who often lack power to effect institutional change (Scraton et al., 2005). Yet few studies have explored Black women's experiences in football, with knowledge limited to playing experiences (e.g. Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2016). The present study expands the critical dialogue by interrogating the intersectional dynamics of race and gender for Black women coaches in the English football workplace. We ask (a) what can we learn from Black women coaches' lived experiences in football and their individual acts of resistance, (b) what influences affect their ability to resist, and (c) what intrapersonal and interpersonal effects do coaches experience following individual resistance acts? By specifically focusing on the influences that impact their ability to resist and the personal effects of these everyday acts, we emphasise how Black women coaches are subtly transforming the White and male-dominated football coaching landscape.

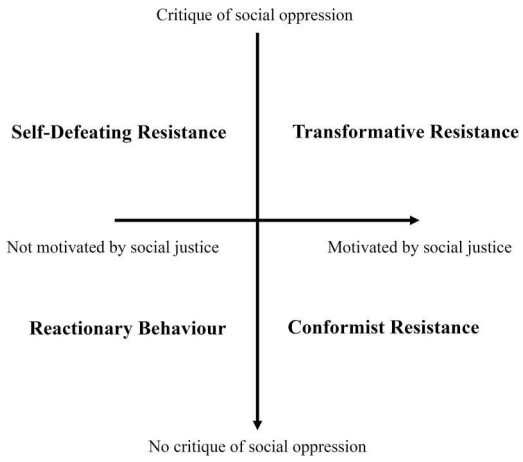

Figure 1. Conceptual framework adapted from Solorzano and Bernal (2001).

Individual acts of resistance

An act of resistance can be classified as a reaction against confining social structures (Langhout, 2005). Organised resistance and overt challenges from society have been heavily studied (see. Lilja et al., 2017; Virdee, 2018), but sociologists (e.g. Shaw et al., 2018) have recently called for greater scholarly attention towards understanding "everyday" individual acts of resistance. This approach situates the individual as not someone who is acted upon by the confining structures, but one who negotiates with structures to create their own meaning from these interactions (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

We adopt Solorzano and Bernal's (2001) highly cited typology as a conceptual framework, which addresses four types of resistance: reactionary behaviour, self-defeating resistance, conformist resistance and transformational resistance (Figure 1). *Reactionary behaviour* does not critique oppressive conditions nor is motivated by social justice. A sporting example may be a coach walking away from the field in the face of microaggressions from players, parents, coaches and/or officials. *Self-defeating resistance* critiques oppressive conditions but does not have any interest in striving towards social justice. For instance, sport coaches may be critical of their organisation but leave their role and/or drop out of coaching. *Conformist resistance* is cognizant of social justice but only strives towards it within the confining systems. Sport coaches may look towards short-term measures (e.g. operational changes) within their organisation or profession but not challenge institutional practices. Last, *transformative resistance* critiques oppressive conditions *and* strives for social justice. Transformative resistance can be internal (i.e. subtle/silent, appearing to conform to institutional practices but with a

social justice agenda) or external (i.e. overt and non-conforming). A sports coach might confront stereotypical negative views and be motivated to change attitudes and policies within the coaching profession (internal) or through activism such as demonstrations or open letters (external). Solorzano and Bernal's (2001) framework is unique in helping researchers examine how individuals negotiate and resist power during different circumstances within and outside of football coaching systems.

There is a paucity of research dedicated to individual acts of resistance by coaches despite the apparent application of this framework to sport. While researchers have explored and made key contributions about relationships between power and resistance (e.g. Knoppers et al., 2022), to the authors' knowledge, only one study exists that applies the individual acts of resistance framework in a broader sport context. Lawrence and Davis (2019) conducted interviews with Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME[1]) football fans and observations of match crowd environments, finding that ethnic minority fans enacted conformist resistance by not engaging with individual racist behaviour and instead speaking to people in influential positions to raise their concerns. It is important to widen understanding of resistance beyond sports fans to other actors such as coaches given the longstanding gendered and racial bias in sports organisations that have been controlled by White, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men (Cunningham et al., 2021).

Power and resistance in the racialised and gendered football context

Foucault (1983) states "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95–96). Whilst individual acts of resistance have seldom been studied in football, issues of power are not new for football researchers. For example, Cleland and Cashmore (2016) note that White supporters dominate football fandom in Britain and thus retain the power to define the cultural habits of the dominant group. Non-Whites are viewed as outsiders by the established dominant group and excluded as a less powerful group. In their survey of 2500 British football fans, 83 per cent believed racism was culturally embedded, in part owing to the historical notion of Whiteness. Other scholars (e.g. Bradbury, 2013) argue that football does not exist in a cultural vacuum and thus is reflective of deeply racialised power relations embedded within society. Football has also been levelled as a site where hegemonic masculinity (i.e. dominance of men over women) is still reproduced, where women are still considered "second class citizens" (Tomas, 2021) and whose presence resists the traditional gender order (Knijnik, 2015). In a recent interview study, Knoppers et al. (2022) note that elite women coaches negotiate and resist various forms of power by engaging in strategies such as public truth telling, self-transformation and creating alternative discourses. They reveal that women football coaches in some way must comply with power discourses because they need/want jobs. While the aforementioned studies are not exhaustive of research in this area, collectively extant literature in this area centralises power, and resistance is conceptualised as a practice that challenges power relations. This leaves a knowledge gap and need to centre resistance in research, particularly everyday individual acts and their effects in the workplace.

Research on race and gender in coaching

Coaching scholarship has historically centred on gender and race as exclusive "burdens",

[1]BAME is an acronym used in Britain that stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. It is a catch all term that groups non-Whites. Originally conceived for administrative purposes, it is criticised for ignoring intricate identities (Aspinall, 2021).

overlooking the intricate, overlapping and multiple socially constructed identities that combine to explain the lived experiences of individuals (i.e. intersectionality; Crenshaw, 1989). There has been greater scholarly attention in recent years on the intersections of race and gender in coaching (Melton & Bryant, 2017), although no qualitative research exists with Black women football coaches, necessary to unpack such complexities. This section reviews relevant football literature on race and gender, as well as research with Black women coaches from a wider sport context.

Despite increases in the number of women coaching in football, research shows that they must fight against patriarchal norms and androcentric assumptions which act as sociocultural barriers to their career progression (Clarkson et al., 2019; Sawiuk et al., 2021). Indeed, women coaches across all levels of the football coaching structure experience embedded negative gender bias, higher levels of scrutiny and limited career mobility (Clarkson et al., 2019). Furthermore, on coach education courses, women often experience sexualised language and toxic masculinity (Sawiuk et al., 2021). These difficult experiences do not disappear as women spend longer, or move higher, in the coaching structures with elite women coaches dependent on the power relations that limit their participation (Knoppers et al., 2022). Women also have a higher probability of being fired than men (Nesseler et al., 2021). Notwithstanding these challenges, some advances in positive organisational culture (e.g. inclusive leadership) are appearing that support women's career development (Norman et al., 2018). In these empirical football studies, women's experiences are not differentiated by race. Bradbury (2011) does however note a distinct absence of Black and minority ethnic (BME) women as part of the workforce of the small concentration of BME football clubs in England, defining the clubs as "a male space" (p. 32). King (2007) positions the Black woman manager as having to "play the White man" to negotiate institutionalised sexist and racialised football cultures (p. 58).

Football literature with Black men coaches emphasises their experiences of racism and underrepresentation when compared to the higher proportion of Black male footballers (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014). Bradbury et al. (2018) interviewed ethnic minority coaches and found that the persistent underrepresentation of these coaches can be explained by limited access to (and negative experiences of) coach education environments, prevailing coaching stereotypes, and closed club coach recruitment methods. Negotiating these confined structures is difficult, with some coaches resorting to humour techniques to resist (Hylton, 2018).

In the wider sport context, literature indicates that Black women coaches are often occupationally segregated with barriers like access discrimination, minimal institutional support and stereotypes (Borland & Bruening, 2010). Consequently, these coaches feel isolated, insignificant, invisible, and uncomfortable (Borland & Bruening, 2010). While barriers may be mutually felt by men sport coaches that disadvantage and subordinate Black coaches (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016), women's career experiences differ. In a multi-sport qualitative study, Rankin-Wright et al. (2019) found Black women coaches expressed gender over race as the most dominant power relation, whereas men expressed race over gender as the identity characteristic that most impeded their careers.

Method

Philosophical assumptions and theoretical framework

Issues of power, inequality and social justice were central to our investigation of the lived experiences of women coaches from diverse cultural backgrounds in the male and White dominated football industry. Consequently, critical inquiry underpinned this research

(Denzin, 2017). We also drew on intersectionality as an effective theoretical framework to investigate gender and race in football. Intersectionality was introduced by Crenshaw (1989) as a critical analytical lens to investigate multiple, overlapping social identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, age, and sexuality) and inequalities in social systems. Intersectionality has been widely adopted across academic disciplines (see for a review, Özbilgin et al., 2011), including gender and leadership (e.g. Melton & Bryant, 2017). We recognise that there is debate among scholars concerning intersectionality and its "theoretical, political and methodological murkiness" (Nash, 2008, p. 1). Nonetheless, intersectionality continues to illuminate the complex workings of power, systemic oppression and inequality. As Crenshaw points out, "because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which black women are subordinated" (1989, p. 140).

Participants

This paper is part of a larger qualitative project on gender, race, and ethnicity in coaching. In this study, we centre Black women's experiences, consistent with a need for intersectional research that does not group all non-White women together. Nine coaches who identified as Black women were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling via social media and personal associations. As minorities within the coaching profession, all women were high profile members of their communities and thus ethnicities and other demographic information are omitted to preserve anonymity. We do note occupational areas as experiences for women coaches differ by contexts (Clarkson et al., 2019). All participants chose their own pseudonym (e.g. "Araweelo", a North African ancient figurehead), shifting away from historically paternalistic researcher allocation without consultation (Allen & Wiles, 2016).

Procedure

Semi structured interviews enabled exploration of participants' football experiences and generated contextually rich and detailed information that prioritised and preserved the participants' voices (Skinner et al., 2020). The interview guide was structured into two sections: introduction to football background (e.g. "can you describe significant moments in your coaching career?"), and connections between gender and race for Black women football coaches (e.g. "to what extent do you believe gender and/or race impacts you as a coach?"). The interviews were conducted online by the third and fourth author in the summer of 2020 due to Covid-19 travel restrictions. Nonetheless, this approach was advantageous in reaching a geographically dispersed population. Interviews lasted on average between 47a nd 115 min and were transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to capture patterns within the data using open and organic coding to develop themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020). To begin the first data analysis phase, the first author immersed themselves within the data, reading and rereading the transcripts. Open and organic coding then took place and a process of theme development was then followed, where data patterns were identified that could be described as themes – codes with shared meaning and a central organising concept (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Each theme narrative was then discussed with the team. We noted that themes could be broadly summarised as instances of resistance, factors that might have influenced the act(s), or personal consequences of the act(s). In this instance, topic summaries were useful in answering the overarching research question:

what do individual acts of resistance look like in football coaching? We recognise and acknowledge that shared topics are not higher order themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020), nonetheless our presentation of both topics and themes together enable a coherent narrative.

Findings and discussion

In this section, we describe and discuss participants' resistance acts, what motivated them and their effects. The data show evidence of transformative and conformist resistance. In consideration of the wide breadth of findings below, we present the first working model of individual acts of resistance in football (Figure 2).

Transformative resistance

Our data demonstrated that Black women coaches engage in (internal) transformative resistance in their workplace as a means of attempting to change structures and systems. These acts are subtle, but rooted in a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice that is demonstrated by engaging with the media and outside advocacy groups, providing new opportunities for participants from diverse backgrounds, and challenging language.

Engaging with outside advocacy groups and the media

Coaches enacted external transformative resistance by speaking out about oppression in football and the need for social justice in channels outside of their clubs and local football associations, primarily by engaging with the media and outside advocacy groups. This is transformative as the sport media play a crucial role in educating viewers on what a coach "looks like". Black women coaches represented in the media helps move away from stereotypical perceptions of White, working-class men (van Sterkenburg, 2019). Most coaches believed that being part of action groups was the best way to enact change. Some coaches openly critiqued current football structures within the media in efforts to change them. For instance, Mya (adult elite coach) raised concerns over the impact of "BAME coach" initiatives and noted their limitations if existing closed hiring practices did not change. She criticised some of the affirmative action initiatives she had been part of, exposing the limited transformative potential of such schemes if incorrectly handled. She described how on one work placement in an elite environment, she spent the week picking up the cones after each training session and had little involvement with players outside of observation. If coaches like Mya do not receive opportunities to demonstrate their value and expertise in front of decision-makers (who have typically been gatekeepers of closed hiring practices), it is unlikely that the commendable intentions of such initiatives could be achieved. Positively though, coaches did note that initiatives "are becoming more useful" as diversity and inclusion becomes central to strategic agendas for governing bodies. As such, sports initiatives must ensure that affirmative action initiatives that are participant placement focused also work with employers and recruiters to improve the system.

Providing opportunities for others

Some coaches provided opportunities within football (internal transformative resistance) so that women footballers from diverse backgrounds had a place to belong. This was often motivated by a lack of opportunity for women and girls of colour in football and a desire to provide chances that they themselves had not received. Araweelo (youth recreational coach) explained:

> I started a club because I felt like there wasn't really an opportunity for young girls from the BAME community to play football or safe, comfortable environment. It's female only, it's led by coaches that look like them. So I really felt like there really was a gap in football

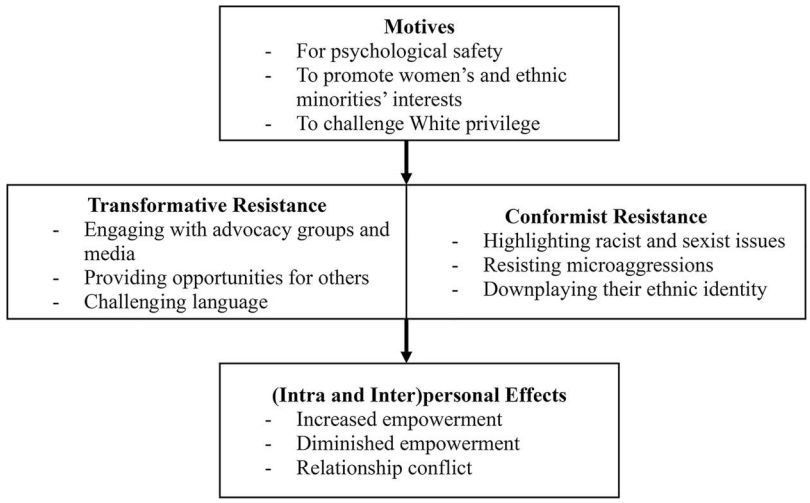

Figure 2. A working model of individual acts of resistance in football.

> at the minute, so I thought let me just start of and give them a session. I didn't really see it as it becoming a massive thing to start off with, I thought, let me just start this session and see what the interaction was like, see if people like it, see if they would in attend and, you know, by the fourth session, we had 40 girls plus signed up. So the impact and the response we had was great.

Football has the capacity to connect and improve social relations (Krustrup & Parnell, 2019). Yet current football structures lack belonging for ethnic minority groups, which forces them to negotiate-resist existing football cultures (Lawrence & Davis, 2019). The creation of new, inclusive spaces through new policies or programmes is crucial to changing football club culture (Woodward, 2007). Even when these spaces are created, however, as Holly (youth recreational coach) explained, their acceptance within traditional, organised club systems takes time and is dependent on the "success" of the group:

> It was tricky to get the team up and running and we felt discriminated against from the beginning. And occasionally we still do within the club, we still feel like girls comes second in lots of ways. But we're really getting a name for ourselves. And I was fortunate that I managed to get a really successful team together. And results seem to win men over to a certain extent. So I won a lot of friends sadly from the girls doing well and creating a good name for themselves they couldn't ignore us anymore and they couldn't just see it as the little girls.

While operating within and not outside of systems, this type of resistance differs from conformist resistance as giving back to the community is an example of engaging in a social justice agenda (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Enabling (through funding) and supporting Black women coaches to inspire a younger generation of women footballers is recommended for football associations as Black women leaders' notions of success are often shaped by practicing leadership that is inclusive, fair and socially just (Moorosi et al., 2018). By doing so, associations may retain these coaches and develop a sense of football belonging for all ethnic minorities.

Challenging language

Participants felt that the onus was on them to change the system themselves, rather than relying on members of the existing structures to enact change. Coaches often challenged

the language used in club or governing body communications that was insensitive to their race (internal transformative resistance). Ebony (talent development coach) disputed her club referring to her as "the BAME coach" on her club's list of coaches and challenged for it to be changed. These women, by virtue of the power and authority of their roles, are privileged individuals (Smooth, 2010). Yet as Hooks (1989) argues, they are also trapped by marginalisation within their organisations. Language is an important demonstration of group identity (or exclusion) – Black women coaches described feeling "othered" by the term and "singled me out". Continued use of "BAME" by football associations and their affiliated clubs ignores intersectional experiences between ethnic groups (see Sporting Equals, 2021). The data presented here shows the football community reasons why language needs to evolve so that ethnic minority coaches do not need feel it is their responsibility (through resistance) to transform their football sites into inclusive environments. Responsibility and accountability lie with organisations.

Conformist resistance

Participants recognised the place for striving for social justice within the football systems, enacting conformist resistance by highlighting racist and sexist issues, resisting microaggressions and downplaying their ethnic identity.

Highlighting racist and sexist issues

The coaches felt that it was their responsibility to caution the people who possess power in football of the racist and sexist practices that Black women coaches face on a daily basis. Araweelo stated:

> I'm definitely trying to use that contact to make sure that they understand because, you know, fair enough they might not know what's going on, but we need to sort of as coaches be able to take it forward to them

By amplifying issues to contacts, who they perceived to be able to effect change, coaches put their trust in the football system to support them. However, "fighting" was a common expression used by the coaches to describe their resistance: against the "old guard" of White middle class male coaches in power who have "fixed mindsets and outlooks", against their girls' teams always coming second, and one coach noted fighting against history "when it was normal to be excluded". By highlighting racist and sexist issues in football, Black women coaches push against systems to try and change them.

Resisting microaggressions

Gender microaggressions are subtle forms of sexism that "place women at a disadvantage, infantilize or stereotype them" (Sue, 2010, p. 12). Racial microaggressions also involve subtler forms of discrimination that, Sue et al. (2007) categorise as microinvalidations ("communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of colour", p. 4), microassaults ("explicit and intentional racial attacks designed to insult or harm a person of colour in environments in which the aggressor is generally shielded from the risk of public exposure", p. 4), and microinsults ("subtle snubs" experienced as insulting by the person of colour, but of which the perpetrator may be unaware, p. 5). Our participants experienced microinsults (e.g. subtle snubs) from colleagues and challenges to their presence. In response to this sexism, some of the coaches described "laughing it off", a finding consistent with Hylton (2018). It was perceived difficult to pin down the root of the microaggressions; sometimes the acts felt gendered and other times racial. Black women coaches resisted microassaults by exposing aggressors within reporting structures, similar to ethnic minority fans within Lawrence and Davis (2019) research. Bush (youth recreational coach) stated she "recorded all [her] games home and away" to catch microassaults after she (and her players) received

racial insults from another coach. These microaggressions were traumatising and difficult to resist, Holly shared:

> There's a man on the committee of our club and he's the main reason that I don't put myself what would be on my committee. He's not horrible. He's not particularly lecherous. But he is sexist in his own way. He makes me feel small a lot. He puts me down a lot. And I just I'm not comfortable with him. There have been times when he's made me cry. Which I've then again, felt embarrassed about and blame myself, I felt stupid and then thought well how can I stand up to someone if I can't even keep my composure? Therefore, I've let him get away with [it].

Resistance can appear through conformity but also through avoidance (Fordham, 1996). While Bush resisted by actively recording games, in Holly's case avoidance as a form of resistance protected her Black humanity and identity (Cammarota, 2004).

These findings confirm that women in non-playing roles experience abuse in the football workplace (e.g. Clarkson et al., 2019; Forbes et al., 2015) but the current study is the first to evidence Black women coaches resisting microaggressions in football. Furthermore, it demonstrates the additional burden that Black women coaches are encumbered with in navigating racial and gendered microaggressions.

Downplaying their ethnic identity

Black women coaches also perform conformist resistance by engaging in strategies of covering, a way to downplay aspects of their ethnic identity to assimilate to the dominant culture. Holly stated:

> I feel like I've denied a lot of that heritage most of my life because otherwise I wouldn't fit in with these people I call my friends because, who are mainly white, because that's all we've got. That's my choice.

Ebony felt the inequality she experienced was partly due to her "speaking differently" and others described not wanting their identities to make them "stand out in the crowd". Naomi (talent development coach) felt she was constantly trying to avoid being stereotypically perceived as the "angry Black woman" (i.e. a belief that Black women are angry, confrontational, loud-talking and difficult to work with – see Harrison et al., 2020) so performed everyday acts of conformist resistance by "challenging [behaviour] in certain ways" to avoid judgements. Other small acts included coaches consciously smiling more to combat perceptions – something that was perpetually effortful. Such everyday acts to downplay their ethnicity conflicted with authentic self-expression. Indeed "being careful" was a phrase that repeated regularly in the interviews and reveals Black women coaches' participation in football as periodically strenuous as they are forced to navigate race and gender.

Motives

For psychological safety

Psychological safety influenced the coaches' engagement in acts of resistance and can be defined as feeling supported to take interpersonal risks in a given context (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Safety refers to the perception of the broader group environment and, in particular, the anticipated responses of others to the potential "risky" interpersonal behaviours (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Environments that engender psychologically safe climates are purported to facilitate better employee engagement (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In this study coaches expressed safety as crucial to their leadership development, Ebony stated:

> I'm a person that, you know, got ideas, I've got views, I have got thoughts. I want to be autonomous. I want to be a leader but I want to be able to do this in a safe environment … it is important to feel safe to express and explore.

To promote women's and ethnic minorities' interests

Coaches described wanting to stand up for others as a reason for their action. For instance,

Sabrine (youth recreational) felt that girls' section at her club was "not thought worthwhile" and did not receive equitable funding to the boys' section. This inequality caused her to fight for better resources. Holly spoke about her frustrations observing online spaces for women in football being invaded by male coaches initiating her resistance:

> So it's slowly becoming more and more frustrating to be in the group. And I had to argue with somebody the other day who had literally posted I know this is a safe space for women's football, but does anyone have a contact [to get one of my male players into the professional game]. I'm having to defend girls and women and keep them at the front of everyone's agenda … I feel like I've trained myself over the years to stand up for what's right. It's maybe easier to stand up for other people. But I will stand up for myself, and especially if that's going to benefit other people to, ultimately, it's easier, but it doesn't mean I didn't do it with a thudding heart and the trembles because it's not comfortable. But it's right.

As Holly attests, when Black women engage with groups with a collective identity, a sense of responsibility to protect the group's interests can lead to acts that protect other members of the group (Cole & Stewart, 1996). These overt acts of resistance can identify hidden intersectional issues of racism and sexism, such as the #SayHerName social media activism for highlighting Black women's experiences of racial police violence (Brown et al., 2017). As Bush argues: "if we stick together, we can go and become something [in football]". We argue that the lack of spaces for Black women coaches (due to their geographic dispersion) restricts their sense of collective identity and their ability to engage in resistance against sexist and racist discrimination in football. Development of support mechanisms like this by governing bodies could better inform the career development needs for this population, lessen the responsibility that these women feel to engage in individual acts, and ultimately prevent isolation and drop out.

To challenge White privilege

Feelings of exclusion and a lack of opportunities that Black women coaches attributed to their skin colour and gender were common and fuelled a willingness to confront and resist White privilege. Ebony believed racism was both institutionalised in football governance and manifested through individual (un)conscious bias where club boards were predominantly "White, middle-class males who were brought up in an era where what [Black women] are fighting [for] now was not the norm". Coaches were frustrated by observations of White privilege and (whilst responsibility and accountability does not lie with individuals who are institutionally disadvantaged) motivated to change the system that favoured White men over others. To do so, however, Black women required confidence to challenge discriminatory practices. Armstrong (2007) argues Black women in sport must "rely on their internal fortitude as a reservoir for resistance to combat the institutional challenges faced" (p. 3) and Holly spoke of needing to have confidence to ask White footballers not to touch her hair. This is another example that their participation in football is effortful and points to reasons why Black women are underrepresented in coaching – it is hard work.

To (re)educate

Through their everyday acts**,** Black women were motivated to resist by greater education within ethnic and football communities. Bush shared how she acted to educate her community about the diverse people who work in football:

> Even now, still some people, some elders in my community recognise me because oh she's the girl that played football with the boys at the park. Some are like why is she even there? Well, I'm just here. I'm getting my daily

> exercise and I'm having fun. I'm not here to think "ok these are boys I shouldn't be here".

Some coaches felt that a lack of knowledge within the football community about being a minority in football was a reason for their acts. Ebony sensed her colleagues viewed her as less important and did not understand what it was like to be a minority. She re-educated her colleagues through resisting their perceptions, however, educating White people through their acts places another demand on Black women coaches and reinforces racial disadvantage (Hylton, 2010).

Intrapersonal effects

Black women coaches felt both increased and reduced empowerment from (not) engaging in everyday acts of resistance. Empowerment is conceptualised as a process by which oppressed individuals gain some control in their lives by taking part in resistance either by themselves or with others (Parker, 2003). As this study uncovers multiple forms of resistance, we argue that there are multiple routes to (and ways from) empowerment for these women in football.

Increased empowerment

Some coaches happily framed the resistance they engaged in as "a challenge". Ebony described her desire to be included in action groups because of the associated empowerment and sense of autonomy. Mya stated she was "happy to challenge in any environment" after engaging in transformative resistance. She described challenging discriminatory practices on a coach education course:

> this is my personality, these are [my] characteristics, and this is what I stand for. And I'm not willing to negotiate those values or anything. Now, I'm much more comfortable with who I am as a person and a coach … In the past, I was just grateful to be in that environment. Whereas now I've started to think I am grateful but I have a lot to offer.

This finding extends Ashton-Shaeffer et al.'s (2001) research who found that minority sportswomen's resistance of stereotypical perceptions was aligned to their feelings of self-empowerment. Recently, Silva et al. (2020) found that Portuguese women coaches contest hegemonic masculinity in sport and by resisting patriarchal structures, they gain control in the workplace and are empowered. Given facilitating Black women's empowerment and reducing environmental stressors can lead to better mental health and well-being (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994), offering valuable career experiences may be one way to sustain their employment in the coaching profession. Coaches highlighted that their involvement in recent FA initiatives were either not long enough or had not offered true developmental opportunities to be worthwhile (e.g. Mya was assigned as assistant coach on one scheme and was told "just go and collect the cones" for the duration of the scheme). Taking account of such views is imperative for facilitating empowerment and enhancing well-being among Black women coaches as well as developing effective equality initiatives.

Diminished empowerment

Unlike experiences of ethnically diverse women coaches noted by Rankin-Wright et al. (2016), none of our participants felt like intruders in the traditional White male space. Yet when the acts were not met positively coaches felt diminished empowerment. Bush spoke about standing up for her girls' team when receiving abuse from a White male coach and how she "saw red" and had to walk away and calm herself down because of her role model status to her players. Instead, Bush felt she had to "just let [the perpetrator] talk. I let them do what they're doing" which reduced her sense of empowerment – she felt conflict between fighting for social justice and being a role model. Conflict between Black women coaches' different identities when participating in football is a recurring study theme.

Interpersonal effects

Participants saw changes in the workplace within their relationships that they felt owed to their resistance against discriminatory practices. While some noted some individual relationships that were strengthened by their actions, conflict was commonly felt. This should be balanced with positive organisational changes they witnessed preceding this section.

Relationship conflict

Naomi was perceived as being difficult by colleagues when she started questioning why she was always placed as an assistant coach when there was no accompanying explanation:

> And I think it made me appear like I was a bit of a oh, she can be difficult, you know, the atmosphere was in one of my clubs where oh, she's got an attitude.

Holly felt that she was negatively "getting a name for [herself]" after pushing her club's committee to set up a girls' team. Black women coaches are in a difficult position, although speaking up against inequalities brings issues into consciousness, there is a risk that by doing so their actions may perpetuate the perception of Black women viewed as difficult to work with or confrontational (Domingue, 2015). This presents a dilemma for coaches, where not confronting inequality only serves to maintain the status quo and continued misrepresentation of Black women in football from people in influential positions. Yet, when they do confront these issues it comes at (intra and inter)personal cost.

Mya recognised her career progression would have been easier if she had not called out discriminatory practices but felt integrity and being authentic was more important to her. She described one instance on a coaching course:

> And I think as well if I was that person that's agreed with everything they said I'd probably would have passed the course a lot quicker. But, I was had so many conversations with my friends and mentors, and I was like I'm done because I'm not changing me into somebody, I don't need the qualification. That's it. I'm finished. I'm not doing it. And then they kept on telling me, no, you need to carry on, carry on. And they said, why don't you just tell them what they want to hear? And I said, that doesn't sit well with me at all, integrity really important. And I'm not going to do that. And if I'm going to get the qualification, I'm going to get it kind of knowing I was authentic in that process as well.

This is indicative of the strength required of underrepresented coaches to stay in an industry where being authentic to yourself could limit career progression. Mya's quote also speaks to the concern raised by Sawiuk et al. (2021) about the current English FA coach education system that encourages learners to fit, rather than challenge, the mould. Additionally, any apparent requirement that Black women be "confident" and rely on internal strength is problematic in both organisational and academic accounts of social change (McRobbie, 2009). A diverse variety of coaches best serve a diverse variety of players (Passmore, 2013). Hence challenging previously held assumptions about coaching is part of the evolution of the game and should be encouraged by coach educators not discouraged.

Conclusions

This study offers novel insight into the workplace experiences of Black women football coaches. Answering the call of Shaw et al. (2018) for greater scholarly attention towards understanding "everyday" individual acts of resistance, this is the first study to explore sports coaches' individual acts of resistance and the first to organise these within a working model that can be used as a framework for future research. It provides new insights into how gender and race intersect in football to restrict Black women coaches' participation. We find that Black women coaches negotiate

dominant football cultures by engaging in (1) transformative resistance to challenge institutional practices (external), afford opportunities to others and to challenge language (internal) and (2) conformist resistance to amplify issues, resist microaggressions, and downplay their ethnic identity. Coaches' acts of resistance were motivated by a need for safety, to promote women's and ethnic minorities' interests, to challenge White privilege, and to (re)educate. These acts often led to increased empowerment, yet, conversely, when the acts were not received positively by others, coaches felt diminished empowerment. Some coaches experienced workplace change following their acts, although this was limited and sporadic and more often resulted in conflict. Our acts of resistance framework and intersectional lens enabled us to centre Black experiences and their compelling personal stories. In doing so we provide football associations with areas where action is needed to ensure football is more equitable and inclusive, such as offering career experiences that are valuable to Black women coaches, updating language, funding for role model initiatives, and developing online and physical connections.

This study also reveals the effortful nature of resistance acts for Black women coaches working in the football industry. Challenging both institutional racism and sexism requires a large amount of internal fortitude and adds a double burden. This additional effort may result in "burnout" and shorten the careers of these coaches. Further research here is important.

The extracts from these women coaches distinctly document the intersecting nature of aspects of their identities. As Black women their stories much be told and understood in multiplicity. For these women, the intersection of race and gender means that coaching is effortful as they were constantly forced to regulate their behaviours and expressions lest they be identified as "difficult" or seen to be conforming to stereotypical views of Black women. This constant regulation adds to the burden that these coaches face and serves to further reinforce racial disadvantages. The need to continually act in such a manner is both taxing and results in the coaches being inauthentic to their selves and their cultures.

While our studied context is sport, there is wider applicability of the findings. For instance, the *challenging the language* theme makes a unique contribution to sociological academic discussion by detailing lived experiences with institutional use of the BAME acronym. Further work is needed to understand whether the acronym (among other communications) serves to reinforce racial power dynamics and institutions in sport and elsewhere. Significantly, the presence of the acts of resistance that we document here is also evidence for the need for these acts i.e. the continued presence of confining social structures that are rooted in White male privilege. Therefore, we call for further research in this area, potentially using ethnographic methods, to uncover both acts of resistance within organisations and, consequently, areas of institutionalised racism and sexism, both in sport and within wider society. Further, we believe that the use of performative dissemination methods, such as ethnodrama that differentiate contexts will bring these stories to life in a way that may drive change.

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