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**Finnish female coaches' career development and perceptions – A
case study of six Finnish female coaches**

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ABSTRACT

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Women are often seen as needing to be good at everything and sometimes even better. The numbers of women and girls participating in sport are growing rapidly. However, the same pattern cannot be observed in the leadership positions within sport, which includes coaches. Although the field of female leadership within sport organizations has been researched, what factors influence female coaches' career paths and the reasons behind the underrepresentation is still under researched in Finland.

The purpose of this research is to describe the career paths and perceptions of the Finnish female coaches, who coach or have coached at a highest level of their sport in Finland. A qualitative study was conducted to describe the factors influencing the career paths of six Finnish female coaches from both team as well as individual sport. The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews after which the interviews were transcribed verbatim. This was followed by the analysis of the data by both reading the transcripts and using ATLAS.ti software to find reoccurring themes.

Based on the analysis of the data, Finnish female coaches' careers are very versatile and individual, and are characterised by a vast number of features. Female coach's careers have both traditional and modern elements. The beginning is usually an accidental one, followed by coaching as a hobby. Female coaches move fast from coaching as a hobby to professional coaching or serious leisure. Coaches who progress at a more moderate pace have more control over the advancement of their careers. Becoming qualified for coaching happens through various different ways, which shows the individuality of a coaching career. Getting hired for coaching positions, both voluntary and full-time, happen mostly through networks. Career success is defined both through traditional perceptions of success, as well as modern perceptions. Coaches are faced with a various number of challenges during their careers, including the expectations of society for coaches to be male and the difficulty of balancing work and private life. To be able deal with these challenges, a support network of family, friends, colleagues and mentors are essential. Coaching is a life-long career due to the high level of commitment that coaches have toward their own sport. The factors influencing the development of a female coaches' career highlighted in this study can be used to provide information to help further women's coaching development initiatives in Finland. This research was completed in co-operation with the Women Taking Responsibility in Coaching – initiative.

Key words: female coach, sport culture, career development, coaching path

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1 INTRODUCTION

The proportion of women in leadership positions within sport organizations do not reflect on the proportion of women taking part in sport and physical activity. (Aalto-Nevalainen 2011, 50.) The numbers of female participants are increasing, even in sports that are traditionally more male dominated. This increase can however not be seen in the numbers of female leaders in sport, including coaches. Sport culture is based on a masculine worldview, which women have to identify with, in order to succeed. The more prestigious, the higher in the hierarchy and the closer the position is to competitive sport, the smaller the proportion of women is. (Aalto 2003, 150.) The higher the level (international) of the male or female athlete, it is more likely that he or she will have a male coach it seems. The statistics of the gender of coaches does not seem to be given high priority in many countries, which could indicate that this is seen as unimportant. (Fasting & Pfister 2000, 93.) It seems as though many nations do not recognize this issue. Although women play for example football, there is very little debate about who should make the decisions in football. As long as competition is central and associated with men, women will struggle as coaches because of perceptions of leadership characteristics being more masculine. (Skille 2014, 397-399.) There are expectations in the social environment of sport that a coach is male.

There has been little research conducted into female leadership in sport and even less into female coaches careers specifically. The careers of Finnish female coaches have not been the subject of any study specifically in Finland. Research has been conducted into to the careers of Finnish female sport leaders (see Aalto 2003) and the careers of coaches, both professional and voluntary (see Käärmeniemi 2012 and Blomqvist & Hämäläinen 2013). Female coaches careers have been researched in other nations such as Australia, North America, Germany, Norway and the UK (see Norman 2012, Auld, Cuskelly, Greenhill, & Hooper 2009, Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger 2012 and Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016). Out of these nations, Norway can be said to have the most similar sport culture to Finland, being a fellow well-fare state.

The role of the male coaches is often based on historical development instead of formal education or the personality. Women's careers have become masculine, but it is limited

by having children and may explain increase in gender differences of participation after the age of 20. Incentives have been developed to facilitate gender equity in the welfare state. (Skille 2014, 389-392.) Sport culture guides the development of a coach's career, which is why it is important to gather more information about female coaches careers in a specific sport culture. In order for development to occur, it is essential to understand the meaning of current procedures (Laine 2015, 32). Gathering more information about the career paths of Finnish female coaches will help policy makers and national sport organizations (NGO's) develop strategies to increase the numbers of female coaches.

1.1 I am a Finnish female coach

One of the main reasons for choosing this research topic is because I myself am a Finnish female coach. Sport has always been a very big part of my life. I cannot remember a time when I would not have had some sport as a hobby. I think because of this, it eventually seemed unnatural to do something other than sport for a living. At first I was more focused on becoming a professional athlete and was somewhat crushed to find out that there are only a few female professionals in the sport that is closest to my heart; ice hockey. The challenges that I faced as a player and the discrimination and sexism that I have unfortunately also had to experience have definitely influenced my interest in the topic of women in sport.

After choosing to complete a Bachelor's degree in sports and leisure management, I have been able to gain experience as a coach as well as a sport administrator. One of the things that struck me the most when working as a regional girls' hockey instructor, a coach and the development coordinator of girls' and junior's hockey in Heinola ice hockey club, was the lack of female coaches. Clubs in the region often expressed the need for coaches both female and male, but yet I could never see any directed efforts from the clubs to recruit coaches. The club in Heinola did very little recruiting and mostly relied on potential coaches to contact the club or recruited coaches from the parents of players to coach the teams. The only obvious attempts to recruit external coaches for many clubs was to send emails to potential coaches or promote the availability of coaching positions through networks.

After looking at previous research conducted on this topic and attending seminars in 2014 on women's coaching careers, I realised that the topic of female coaches careers is current. I also felt that it suited my values as well as the methods that were best suited for me, when conducting my master's thesis research. This research topic was finally settled upon as a result of my participation in the Women Taking Responsibility in Coaching-project (referred to later in this thesis as WTRC).

1.2 Women Taking Responsibility in Coaching

This thesis has been completed in co-operation with the WTRC –project. The project started/was launched in 2013 and is scheduled to last until 2018. The project was originally initiated by the national rink ball and ringette associations together with the Finnish Coaches Association, after the IWG world conference held in Helsinki in the summer of 2014 named coaching as one of its main themes. Since the beginning of the project many more national sport associations have joined. The sport associations involved in the project include football, handball, ringette, floorball, ice hockey, American football, Finnish baseball, basketball, volleyball, the Finnish Coaches association and the Finnish Sport association for Persons with Disabilities. The aim of the project is to increase the numbers of female coaches and operators in sport. The project is a co-operation between the International Working-group on Women and Sport (IWG), the ministry of education and culture and the Finnish professional coaches' association (SAVAL). (Suomen Valmentajat 2016a.)

The main goals of the project are:

1. To increase the willingness of former athletes to continue their career in sport as coaches, through which the number of female coaches in team sport can be increased.
2. Increase the willingness of former athletes to continue their sport career in positions within sport clubs and national associations.
3. Support current female coaches in their careers.
4. To improve the capability of women transitioning into coaching, through mentoring programs.
5. Identifying the unique characteristics of female coaches and other features involved in women's activities within sport, utilize information provided by research as well as gather more research on the phenomenon. (Suomen Valmentajat 2016a.)

This research and its topic were developed and began from my own initiation, but are in accordance with the fifth goal of the project. The co-operation with the project involved being able to recruit participants through the projects networks (see subchapter 3.2.1).

1.3 Research questions

This Master's Thesis is a qualitative research dealing with the career characteristics of six Finnish female coaches. The underlying purpose of this thesis is to describe the career development and perceptions of Finnish female coaches' careers, in order to be able to better design initiatives and develop the Finnish coaching system, toward being more inviting to women. The aim of the thesis is to describe the different characteristics illustrating a Finnish female coaches career and its development. This general research aim is divided into the following research questions to be investigated:

1. What phases and characteristics do generally typify a Finnish female coaches career?
 - a. How do voluntary or professional coaching careers compare to the definitions of traditional and modern careers?
 - b. How do coaches become qualified?
 - c. How do coaches perceive career success?
 - d. What are the perceived challenges or barriers during a coaches' career?
 - e. How do coaches handle the successes, challenges and barriers?
 - f. How do coaches perceive the future of their coaching careers?

In order to answer these questions I have explored the unique context presented by the position of women in Finnish culture, specifically in sport. I have compared my findings to the unique context as well as existing models of coaches' career development and traditional and modern definitions of a career.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The second chapter of this thesis looks at the unique Finnish context influencing Finnish female coaches' careers. This includes both the role of women in the Finnish society in general, as well as in the Finnish sport culture in particular, and its unique

influence on coaching careers. Chapter three concentrates on the research methods applied to conduct this research. This is presented through the phenomenological research approach chosen, interviews as data collection method including the timeline of the data collection and the interviewees selected for this thesis, the data analysis process as well as the reliability and validity of this research.

The fourth chapter of this thesis concentrates on the theoretical issues surrounding the different phases of female coaches' careers and a discussion on the contents of the interviews. The discussion of chapter four deals with the traditional and modern definitions of careers, the beginning and early years of a coaches' career, coaching as a hobby and coaching as a profession as well as how coaches become qualified and are able to attain coaching positions. The chapter also discusses how coaches perceive career success, the challenges coaches are faced with during the career rat race and how they are able to cope with them as well as how coaches perceive their futures as coaches.

Finally, chapter five summarizes the main results of this thesis and compares these to the traditional and modern definitions of careers. This chapter discusses the possibilities and challenges within a female coaches' career, offers developmental suggestions based on two models of a coaches' career development and finally critically discusses the entire thesis process as well as suggests areas for further research. The perspective of a Finnish female coach is carried along and referred to throughout the different chapters of this thesis.

2 WOMEN AND SPORT IN FINLAND

In order to understand the career development and perceptions of Finnish female coaches, it is important to understand the unique cultural context of Finnish society and sport culture that influences it. This chapter will begin by describing women's roles and position within Finnish society and then move to describing the unique features of Finnish sport culture and how Finnish sport is organized. The second part of this chapter will finally look at what the position of women is in Finnish sport culture and how this has developed. Throughout the chapter I will also describe how these unique cultural aspects influence a coach and her career.

2.1 Women's roles and position in the Finnish society

Besides considering the context of Finnish sport culture, it is important to understand what the role of women within Finnish society and sport is. The position of women in the Finnish society is very strong compared to many other countries. Gender equality is a core value in Finnish society (Säilävaara 2016). Finland was more than a decade ahead of the developed nations with their powerful suffragette movements. Finnish women were given the right to vote and eligibility for office in 1906. Finnish women were the first in Europe to receive voting rights and the first in the world to be able to participate as candidates in parliamentary elections. (Sulkunen 1990, 42.)

Discrimination based on gender is generally frowned upon in Finnish society and has been a hot topic in the media, due to equality being a crucial part of the Finnish welfare state model (Socrates Grundtvig 2006). The media covers lawsuits based on gender discrimination very well. Discussions about military or civil service only being obligatory for men also rise frequently when the military is in the news. A post about companies not allowing an applicant to apply for a position based on gender in the social media, because "women have usually not been selected for this position" (Vesa 2015) quickly became national news in 2015.

Finnish women and their rights in society and in the working place as well as in sport have been very well covered by legislation. Discrimination based on gender is illegal in

Finland. Legislation on equality between men and women also states that employers are also to some extent responsible for changing the working environment so that it caters to both genders as well as actively furthering equality with goal-directed planning. (Laki naisten ja miesten välisestä tasa-arvosta 609/8.8.1986.) Amendments to the Equality Act have included prohibition of discrimination based on grounds of pregnancy and family care responsibilities (Laki naisten ja miesten välisestä tasa-arvosta annetun lain muuttamisesta 624/8.7.1992), obligating companies with over 30 employees to include measures to promote equality in annual staff and training programmes or in labour protection programmes and including a quota system in official committees and councils, where the proportion of either sex should not be below 40 per cent (Laki naisten ja miesten välisestä tasa-arvosta annetun lain muuttamisesta 206/17.2.1995). The Ombudsman of Equality monitors, particularly the prohibition on discrimination and discriminatory job and training advertising, the Equality Act. The Ombudsman handles around 200 cases annually, of which 70 per cent are brought forward by women. (Socrates Grundtvig 2006) Legislative measures still do not prevent discrimination from occurring in working life in Finland especially in certain fields of work. Sport clubs, who employ most coaches, are usually very small organizations in terms of number of staff, which means that they are not required by law to include measures to promote equality in annual staff and training programmes.

Equality has also recently been given a larger role in the sport legislation in Finland. Sport and physical activity has been established as being a basic right. Updates in the legislation also include equality and tolerance as one of the criteria for sport organizations and clubs being granted funding. (Liikuntalaki 390/10.4.2015) The original legislation already included equality as one of its starting points. It defined sport as a mean to be used as a way to further equality and tolerance as well as support the manifoldness of cultures and sustainable development of the environment. (Liikuntalaki 1054/18.12.1998) It still seems as though these measures are not enough to further equality between men and women within sport organizations. Sport is seen as a basic right in Finland but involvement in different areas of sport is not equal between genders. Although women participate in sport more than men do, women are underrepresented in the decision-making bodies in sport organizations.

Women are involved in working life just as men are, although most of the domestic work as well as childcare fall on their shoulders. The traditional male-breadwinner model has never been prevalent in Finland. In agricultural society men and women worked side by side. It was therefore only natural, when entering the industrial age when urbanization began that women were also included in the labour market. Finland has a very high rate of full-time employment for both men and women. Women's choices regarding employment are however, often between full-time work and full-time childcare, especially in the lower social classes of society. (Sihto 2016.) This does not mean that all fields of work are equally accessible for both genders. Some fields of work such as social work and health care are more female dominated whilst others such as engineering are more male dominated. Women have however, began to increase their share in previously male dominated areas of work and study (Vuorinen-Lampila 2016).

Although women in Finland tend to have completed a higher level of educational degree than men in Finland have, women in Finland do not have equal pay. Men are still more likely to get adequate work after graduation than women are. This has resulted in more men being in full-time employment than women, three years after graduation. Women are more likely to continue their studies (PhD.) or take maternity leave. These can be interpreted as being measures to deal with the difficult employment situation. Temporary work contracts are particularly common among women of childbearing age (25-34 years). Men are more likely to get full-time work after graduation, to be in permanent employment and to occupy management positions. There are far fewer women in leadership positions than there are men. Female leaders also become less frequent the higher up the organizations ladder you proceed. (Aalto-Nevalainen 2009; Vuorinen-Lampila 2016; Sihto 2016.) Although sport studies is one of the more equal fields of study in terms of the numbers of male and female students, this does not translate into working life. A coach, especially at the professional level, can be said to occupy a leadership position. That is why it is not surprising that only approximately a quarter of coaches in Finland are women and women are still a rarity amongst professional coaches (Saarinen 2016). It seems somewhat contradictory that women are more educated but men still dominate the labour market. This is due to the gender and family roles present in Finnish society. Women are seen as natural carers more often and are encouraged to stay at home with children under the age of three years, although

this is seen as being problematic for the national economy and women's working careers (Sihto 2016).

The policies and legislation mentioned can help further women's careers in many fields. The question is however, do these policies and rules also make it even more difficult for women to advance in their careers as they create more invisible barriers. In sport as well as in management the phrase "glass ceiling" is used very often. The glass ceiling refers to an invisible barrier for women to advance in their careers or to even enter certain positions. It being illegal to discriminate based on gender does not mean that it does not happen. Companies may simply not express this to employees or applicants anymore. Now that the new Sport Act has come to effect the progress of including equality and tolerance in a sport organizations' initiatives, as well as long term planning and strategy being required in order to secure funding, need to be very well monitored by appropriate authorities to ensure that plans are also being applied into practise and not only written in official documentation.

2.2 Finnish sport culture and organization

Sport and physical activity culture in Finland is very distinctive (Itkonen 2012, 11). The organization of sport, the norms guiding people's behaviour, habits etc. differ at least to some extent to other countries. For example, Finland has a long history in civic activities, which is still thriving as voluntary sport clubs organize most sport and physical activities in Finland. This is why the third sector is considered to be the most important sector for sport and physical activity in Finland and is still flourishing. Sport clubs as well as civic activities have however, undergone a transformation and many clubs and organizations now base their activities on very different values, which create challenges for policy makers and sport and physical activity organizations. Differentiation has changed the roles of the three sectors that organize and influence sport. The roles and tasks remain unstable, which requires flexibility from the sport clubs, municipalities and companies. The social significance of sport is under discussion due to the tight financial situation in the public sector. (Itkonen & Salmikangas 2015.) Even though Finnish sport culture has changed, it is still very distinctive. The thriving third sector is just one factor, which makes Finnish sport and physical activity culture so distinctive. Taking part in sport and physical activities is

considered to be almost a basic right in Finland and this is why it is often a big part of Finnish people's lives.

Sport is a relatively new phenomenon in the way we know it today. In Finland, like in many other countries, the development of society influences the development of sport and physical activity. (Koski 2012.) Changes in working life, technological advances, development in equality, changes in fiscal markets etc. all influence sport culture and its development. The need for fitness activities in sport clubs only arose because of the changes in society (e.g. urbanization and industrialization). (Itkonen 2002, 43-44.) Changes that have occurred can be seen in many ways in today's sport organizations. Sport used to be a way to induce especially the young to further the organizations general goals (Itkonen 2012, 38). Today there are two main types of clubs; socio-culturally oriented and sport and performance oriented clubs (Itkonen 2002, 45-46). The values and norms, which guide activities, have changed and now there are many different reasons behind organizing sport. Performance oriented clubs, where most professional coaches are employed, are more concerned with developing athletes and their performance, and therefore winning is extremely important. Socio-culturally oriented clubs are more motivated to provide services to improve the e.g. the social well being of people. National Sport Organizations (NSO's) are mostly responsible for developing the sport culture of their specific sport (Koski & Heikkala 1998, 16).

Finland has a very strong culture in civic activity as well as sport governance as a part of the public sectors services (Itkonen 2012, 12). The majority of sport clubs, which are the main provider of sport services, organize their activities with the help of volunteers. In sport clubs, things are learned through practical application and existing operational models are rarely questioned. The guarantee for future success is to secure future resources. Club activities have emphasised children and youth involvement, which also take part in the organization of activities. (Itkonen 2002, 43-50; Itkonen 2015, 53.) Sport clubs are also the main employer of professional coaches (Käärmeniemi 2012, 9) as well as voluntary coaches. Without volunteers most clubs would not be able to function or even exist. Volunteering happens at all levels of club activity, from voluntary participation of children and youth to the governance of the club by active parents or adults. The number of hired staff has increased, both full- and part-time, as well as the number of volunteers (Koski 2012, 266-267). However, most clubs feel that

they are suffering from a shortage of personnel, both voluntary and paid, at the management and team level (Szerovay 2015, 123). This perception puts pressure on clubs to recruit more coaches.

Although volunteering is essential in Finnish sport, the environment and facilities that are needed to maintain the “sport for all” mentality, club activities and ensure the health and wellbeing of Finnish people would not be possible without the public sector (Ilmanen 1996, 238). Sport clubs organize most of the activities, whilst municipalities are in a detrimental role when it comes to building, developing and maintaining sport facilities. Most sport facilities are publicly owned, which in itself reduces the cost of sport participation and the production cost of activities produced by the clubs. Some municipalities also subsidise clubs directly. The economic differences between municipalities have created a discrepancy in physical culture (Itkonen 2002, 41). Municipalities have very different levels of funds available for sport and physical activity and as they are able to independently decide how much funding to allocate to sport and physical activity, the values and opinions of politicians influence these decisions. Even if this system creates differences it is very likely that it will remain the “backbone in the creation of sport services” (Ilmanen 1996, 238).

Finnish sport culture is going through sizeable changes. The Finnish sport system is moving from amateurism towards professionalism. Professionalism is not only evident in athletes themselves but also the organization of sport is becoming more professional. Sport associations as well as clubs are becoming more professional and this is evident through, for example the number of staff present, which includes coaches. The higher level of demand and wider distribution of work has increased the need for voluntary workers in sport clubs. Actions are still being guided more by the needs of the grass root level than professional sport. The work for the foundation for Finnish professional sport is being done in voluntary sport clubs. The number of clubs that aim at national success has decreased. The demands of elite level sport have increased, which has resulted in clubs focusing more on youth sport, due to their resources already being stretched to the limit. Through the rationalization of the public sector the expectations for the third sector and civic activities are to be more and more effective. This has placed a higher demand on volume and quality of services, which in turn creates challenges with human resource management, commitment levels of staff and voluntary

potential. (Koski 2012.) Sport itself has not necessarily become more competitive and professional overall, but the organization of it has, due to the pressures placed on clubs by differentiation and the multiplicity of sport disciplines. Although Finnish sport culture is still rooted in volunteerism and “sport for all” –mentality, as sport organizations become more and more business-like, change in club activities as well as the culture of sport and physical activity, are unavoidable.

Money and global markets have a larger influence on the development of our sport culture than it used to. The production costs of success are increasing, which means that additional investments are a necessity. Money has changed sport and athleticism from play to work and a profession. In the business world, the most important thing is to make profit and therefore as these principles have become a part of sport governance, winning has become increasingly important. (Heinilä 2010, 114-120.) In Finland these effects can be seen mostly in elite level sport. Elite level sport has, as a result of media and marketing, been transformed into more business-like operations. Elite level sport has at a national level also divorced itself from voluntary civil physical activity training. (Itkonen 2002, 46.) The changes effecting elite level sport and the influence of money and business-like operations have on it, does effect voluntary and grass-root sport. As voluntary sport clubs organize most sporting activities, they have to be in constant communication with the organizations responsible for elite level sport, in order to know what is required to develop athletes and teams for the elite level. One of the effects of professionalization of elite level sport is the differentiation and specialization of voluntary sport clubs. The multiplication of different sports has caused a shortage in both physical and financial resources available for clubs (Heinilä 2010, 201).

A distinctive quality of Finnish sport culture is the availability of a very large variety of sports and physical activities. Finnish sport and physical activity organizations being based on civic activity has led to a wide variety of sports being played and practiced as opposed to sport being guided by politics and politicians (Itkonen 2012, 12; Koski 2012, 264). Where previously a lot of clubs provided a variety of different sport services, specialization has become more common and now non-specialized clubs have become a rarity. This presents new challenges to specialized clubs. According to Heinilä (2010, 200) non-specialized clubs are able to secure resources for the future better than specialized clubs. Different sports are also now drifting further away from

each other (ideologically). Different sports have their own culture and norms, which guide their activities (Itkonen 2012, 12; Heinilä 2010, 198). These differences can sometimes create challenges when sport clubs representing different sports try to cooperate and create unique circumstances to consider when studying a particular phenomenon occurring in Finnish sport. This can also create challenges for coaches seeking to become professionals. A coach has to specialize in one sport, which in turn results in fewer job opportunities.

Finnish women have been very involved in sport culture and its development from the beginning of organized sport in Finland. The first national sport organizations, which was created was the Finnish Women's Gymnastics Federation. The structure and culture of sport is still considered to be one of the hindering factors for a more diverse sport culture. The operational plans of sport clubs tend to favour men and boys over women and girls (Heinilä 1977, 15). Women's presence in club administration has remained almost the same throughout the years and is still low (Koski 2012, 266). Sport and physical activity culture is still dominated by male values and a manly structure. Women still have to conform to male values and adjust to the culture in order to be successful.

Sport was and still is to some extent in the hands of men. Although men only possess a slight majority in the positions within sport organizations, the decision making process and planning is still firmly in the hands of men as they occupy most of the positions that are placed higher up in the hierarchy (Koski 2012; Aalto-Nevalainen 2009). Volunteering in sport and sport clubs still tends to be male dominated and masculine activity. The Finnish sport cultures of different sports have started mainly as hobbies for men and boys. The competitive nature of sport has been created for men. Sport and physical activity has been formed from a male standpoint. Organizational culture therefore favours men over women (Itkonen 2012, 11 & 17; Vehviläinen & Itkonen 2009, 12-13 & 144-152). Male hegemony is also present in sport coaching. Although there have been no official inquiries into how many coaches, male or female, there are in Finland, the reality is that the majority of coaches are men (Blomqvist & Hämäläinen 2015, 4).

The position of women's sport and women in sport is strongly related to women's position within society and the changes occurring within it. Just as in many other cultures in the world, the role of women in sport culture has been very marginalized, even though Finland is considered to be one of the leading countries in the world for gender equality. The development in the equality between sexes will continue also in sport and physical activity and this will lead to sport organizations taking women's and girls' sport more seriously. Women have become more active within sport every time that they have been able to improve their social status and societal rights. The positive developments achieved in equality between men and women have created more opportunities within sport for women. (Itkonen 2012, 11 & 17; Vehviläinen & Itkonen 2009, 12-13 & 144-152; Koski 1995.)

Equality between genders is today often a starting point and value base for development, where sport and physical activity was previously a very male dominated area. The renewal of the traditional values, which guide decisions, is necessary in order to develop our countries sport and physical activity culture in a sustainable way. (Heinilä 2010, 171.) The position of women's sport will improve if it gets better visibility in the media (Koski 1995). The more traditional values and attitudes, which are more masculine, are still rooted very deeply into Finnish sport organization culture. It has been assumed in the past that equality, including equal opportunity for both genders is simply going to be achieved by the active participation of women and men in all forms of working life. It has however, been argued that in Europe the development of equality in sport organizations has almost come to a stop since 2006 (Tolvanen & Ketola, 2014). Whether equality has really been achieved and whether there is equal opportunity for both genders in all aspects of sport is debatable. The International Working Group for Women and Sport in their conference in Helsinki in June 2014 updated their declaration, which aims to develop sport culture so that it enables the full involvement of women (International Working Group for Women and Sport 2014). The changes occurring in Finnish sport culture can create both challenges and opportunities for female coaches. The increasing numbers of hired staff can create more professional coaching opportunities but at the same time more challenges for women due to Finnish sport culture still being very masculine, especially within decision-making bodies. The development of sport culture and the values and attitudes that guide sport organizations is not over, especially when it comes to the involvement of women. Female coaches

will be able to gain standing through more media attention and the general development equality within Finnish society.

3 METHODS

To be able to answer the research questions, it is important to decide on the research design to be used. This chapter begins with a description of the phenomenological research approach, which is then followed by a description of the interview data collection method, description of the interview procedure and description of the interviewees. Descriptions of the data analysis methods used and descriptions of how they have been applied in my study in practise then follow this. This is then finally followed by descriptions of the issues concerning reliability and validity of my study. Theoretical issues are presented first and are then followed by how they have been addressed in my research including the justifications behind my methodological choices.

3.1 The phenomenological research approach

A phenomenological approach was chosen as the main research approach. Phenomenology is the study of structures of perception experienced by a single person (Smith 2013). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to increase our understanding of the phenomenon of a human experience (Laine 2015, 52). The purpose of this study is to describe the career paths of Finnish female coaches. This is why a phenomenological approach was chosen for this research. This method will help provide an in depth description of the coaches' career paths and focus on their experiences rather than their opinions on how to succeed as a coach. A phenomenological approach aims at seeing the world the way that the subjects see it (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 15). It emphasises individuals' experiences. It does not aim to generalize but to understand a particular groups world of meanings. (Laine 2015, 32.) For this study, the interviewees' perceptions and experiences are the most potent information, which can help describe Finnish female coaches' careers.

A commonality for phenomenologists is the thought that individuals are shaped in correlation with the world, in which they live, and that they also partake in shaping that world. Humans are cultural-beings. Experiences and their meanings are shared within that culture. (Laine 2015, 30-32.) The coaches interviewed for this research also

influence and have influenced their position as Finnish female coaches in the world of sport, which is why it is important to look at their perceptions about their experiences. If the position of female coaches as well as the numbers of female coaches is to be improved, it is important to gather information about the women already in the profession. People's experiences are intentional, which also means that their experiences have meaning to them (Laine 2015, 31). Looking at these meanings can help provide better insight into what makes the coaching profession attractive or unattractive to women. Previous research on the topic was thoroughly looked at in order to get an understanding of the phenomenon in question. Finnish sport culture was also looked at, as it is important to know what cultural influences there might be to a female coaches' career. A research diary was started at the beginning of the process and continued till the end of the project. The research diary was used to document my thoughts and ideas that surfaced at different times during the project. It was also used as a tool to reflect on different stages of the project, to be able to develop my interviewing technique and data analysis skills. Short interview summaries were also written in the research diary to help with the data analysis process and give an idea about preliminary results.

As the main purpose of this study is to develop a detailed description of the career paths of female coaches in Finland, by using a phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method was chosen. In studies that aim at understanding a certain phenomenon, a qualitative data analysis method is usually used (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 212). A qualitative approach was chosen to research this phenomenon, as there are still very few female coaches in Finland and this subject is still very under researched. Qualitative research aims mainly at describing real life whilst quantitative research aims at finding explanations and generalizations for results (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 152). The aim of the study is not to prove already existing facts but to discover and describe new facts. This is why a qualitative approach is better suited to research the phenomenon in question.

3.2 Interview methodology and procedure

Interviews are the most commonly used data collection method in qualitative research. An interview is a conversation that has a pre-determined purpose. Just like during a

conversation, both parties influence one another. An interview is however, different from a conversation in a significant way, as it has a pre-determined purpose. The interview is conducted mainly according to the interviewer's wishes or at least in the way that he or she leads it. An ideal interview is a planned activity, the interview is initiated and steered by the interviewer, the interviewee typically requires some motivating and this is the interviewer's task, the interviewer knows his/her part but the interviewee learns it during the interview and the interviewee has to be able to rely on the interviewer keeping the information being discussed confidential. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 39–41; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 35–42.) This ideal is very hard to achieve and very unlikely to happen even with the most skilled interviewer. Interviewing requires training in order to be as effective as possible. I prepared for the challenging task by familiarizing with the interviewing technique in question through literature in my studies as well as conducting a practice interview in November 2015 to check questions as well as technique.

The test interview was conducted on the 28th of November 2015. The interviewee for the test interview was a Finnish female coach from an individual sport and a professional colleague of mine. I asked for feedback from the interviewee after the practice interview in order to improve interviewing technique. After the test interview I made final revisions to the interview framework (Appendix 2.). The answers from the test interview were not included as data for the study. During the study the interviewees were also asked for feedback about the interview so that the questions and technique could be improved for the following interviews.

The styles of interviews often differ. The differences between interviews are formed by the extent to which the interview is planned beforehand and to what extent the interviewer classifies the situation. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 42.) A structured interview has standardized questions and the interview follows the exact same pattern each time whilst an unstructured interview mostly resembles a conversation, where there is very little structure to the interview and the questions are not pre-determined. For this study the most suitable interviewing technique was semi-structured interviews or focus interviews. The focused interview is semi-structured as the themes that are going to be discussed are pre-determined but the questions and their order are not (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 197). Semi-structured interviews are suitable in

situations where the topic is emotionally sensitive, when the research aims to find out things, which people are rarely aware of, when remembering things is expected to cause false answers or when a phenomenon that the interviewees are not used to discussing every day is being researched (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 49). I chose semi-structured interviews as a data collection method, in order to enable a range of answers.

The background of the coaches was likely to be different and therefore a less guided and more flexible data collection method was required to gather the data. One of the greatest advantages of interviews as a data collection method is flexibility (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 193). Questions can be changed and their order can be adapted during an interview as well as for the following ones. This is why interviews were more suitable as a data collection method rather than questionnaires. Although questions can be adapted, it is important to have minimum control over the interviewees' answers, as the study is focused on the coaches' experiences and not my own. Conducting the data collection via interviews gave access to the ideas, thoughts and experiences of the participants in their own words rather than mine (Reinharz & Davidman 1992).

Methodological choices are often guided by what kind of information is needed, where it can be acquired from and from whom (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 173). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focused on specific themes. Interview framework was developed based on the background research. Main themes and supporting questions were designed to guide the interview (Appendix 2). Probe questions based on the participants' answers were asked in order to get more in-depth information and clarify answers. This method requires firstly that it is known that the interviewee has had certain experiences, secondly that the researcher has familiarized herself with the phenomenon and through this analysis been able to come to have some expectations of the consequences of the situation on the people who have experienced it, thirdly on the basis of this analysis the researcher is then able to create a structure for the interview and fourthly the interview is aimed at the interviewees subjective experiences of the situation that has been analysed in advance (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 50). As I explored the topic thoroughly in advance, developed the themes based on this exploration, and set criteria for the interviewees, it can be stated that I managed to fulfil the pre-conditions for this method.

3.2.1 Interview procedure and timeline

The recruitment of the interviewees was done in co-operation with the Finnish coaches association and WTRC. After the interview framework was revised based on the test interview, a recruitment email was sent out to contact persons in the WTRC and also through my personal coaching network in December 2015 with a description and purpose of the study (Appendix 1). The contact persons then referred potential interviewees to contact me or I was sent the contact information for potential interviewees. The criteria that the interviewees had to meet were that they had to have coached at the highest level of their sport (male or female league or athletes). Ten female coaches were contacted to participate in the study of whom six agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled individually with the interviewees and took place between the 12.01–18.03.2016.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. After the first interview held with a coach from an individual sport, the referral method was used to recruit more participants. I asked the first interviewee to refer other coaches that fit the criteria to me. This was done to recruit more interviewees from individual sport. Before each interview the interviewee was provided with the general themes that were going to be discussed during the interview. The interviewees were told that the following topics would be discussed during the interview: the beginning of one's coaching career, successes and failures and the future. I also researched all of the interviewees' backgrounds before the interviews, in order to get more in depth information.

The participants were provided with a detailed consent form (Appendix 3.), which included the description and purpose of the study, at the beginning of the interview or electronically beforehand in the cases where the interviews took place via Skype. The participants were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time and the interviews were only conducted if the participant agreed to sign the consent form. The participants were asked at the end of each interview about what level of anonymity they were comfortable with and as a result of this, my study was conducted anonymously and I will not reveal the participants name, the sport that they represent or the organization or athlete that they work for. In order to ensure this anonymity, I have altered some of the quotations presented in the following chapters of my thesis.

The interviews lasted 56-100 minutes. There was time allocated for additional questions as well as for the participants to elaborate or add anything at the end of the interview. Four of the interviews were conducted face-to-face at various locations and two were conducted over Skype. Skype interviews were only conducted in cases where it was the most suitable for the participant. Skype interviews were conducted as video calls, in order for the interview to be as similar to the face-to-face interviews as possible. I conducted all of the interviews in Finnish. I made notes during each interview and afterwards wrote thoughts and ideas into my research diary. I began transcription after the second interview, which was conducted at the end of January 2016. The interviews were transcribed verbatim using Express Scribe Transcription Software. The recordings were stored on my personal computer and discarded after transcription was completed. Interview transcripts were disposed of appropriately after they were no longer needed for analysis.

3.2.2 Interviewees

The interviewees that participated in this study were six Finnish female coaches who coach or have coached either male or female athletes from different sports at the highest level of their sport in Finland, as either an assistant or head coach. I decided it was important to recruit coaches from individual sport to interview as the female coaches who are involved in coaching mostly coach female dominated sports such as figure skating, equestrian sports, dancing and gymnastics. I also felt that it was important to include the experiences of coaches who coach male dominated sports as some of the most popular sports in Finland are male dominated. Many of these sports are also apart of the WTRC project. Comparing these two will also help give insight into how more women could be introduced into coaching.

The coaches who I interviewed for this study represented a variety of sports, both team and individual sport disciplines, a total of seven sport disciplines. Two of the coaches had mainly coached individual sport whilst four of the coaches mostly had experience in coaching team sport. Three of the coaches had coached more than one sport discipline during their careers. The coaches were in their late 20's to their early 60's at the time when the interviews took place. They had between nine to over 40 years of coaching experience. Four of the coaches had coached or were coaching full-time at the time of

the interviews and two were coaching as a hobby (they earned their living from another job). Of the four coaches that had or were coaching full-time, one had retired from full-time coaching but still coached as a hobby and two had job descriptions that included a range of tasks not related to coaching.

3.3 Data analysis

Phenomenological data analysis methods were employed to analyse the transcribed interviews. The transcribed verbatim was read through and notes were made. The themes found in the transcripts were underlined for clarity. This approach was used to identify which statements or phrases are essential when describing the experience or phenomenon of female coaches' career paths (Roulston 2010, 149-176). Themes were also searched for and divided into groups using ATLAS.ti analysis software. The advantage of using computer programs for analysis is the process becoming more straightforward and the challenges and disadvantages associated with using computer programs is not familiarizing with the material as thoroughly as possible (Rantala 2015, 130–131). The disadvantages of using computer programs were addressed during the data analysis process, as this was not the only method of data analysis used. The software as well as other methods chosen to analyse the data were also useful in finding similarities and differences between coaches' careers. The transcripts were read through several times to identify the most prominent themes.

The results were interpreted and themes developed. The themes identified were then divided into three different categories: descriptive factors, success factors and challenges. The findings will be presented in the following chapters of this thesis. The themes were checked using triangulation methods. The themes were revised after peer consultations. The transcriptions were read several times to develop the themes further. The results were represented in narrative form. As the interview transcripts were in Finnish, the important quotes were translated into English. I have studied in both languages and am fluent in both of them, and thus I possessed sufficient skills to conduct the translation. The translated quotes were also sent to the participants in order to ensure validity. Member checks were performed throughout the study, which included sending the findings to the participants before publication.

3.4 Reliability and validity

There are a number of ethical issues that need to be taken into consideration when conducting research. Ethical research includes looking at how consent is attained from the participants, what kind of information they are given about the research and what possible risks there are to their involvement. The information given to the participants should include information about the research process and what is going to happen. The participants also need to be able to understand this information. In this context the term consent means that the participant is able to make rational and mature evaluations and that participation is completely voluntary. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 26–27.) Participation in this study was completely voluntary and the interviewees were provided with a consent form, which included the purpose of the study as well as a description of the process (Appendix 3).

The reliability of research means the extent to which the measurements can be replicated if the procedure was to be repeated. The reliability of a qualitative study can be improved by describing the research procedure with as much detail as possible (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 216–217.) Reliability gives justice to the multiplicity of reality (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 142). Describing the research procedure with as much detail as possible whilst still protecting the anonymity of the coaches interviewed for the study has ensured the reliability of this study. The documents used during the data collection process have also been attached to this thesis as appendixes to ensure reliability.

Preparing enough preliminary questions and supporting questions ensures the reliability of the content. The reliability of the concept can be ensured by familiarizing with the phenomenon through looking at previous research on the subject and the concept area. The more interviewers there are, the more likely it is that mistakes will be made. Selecting the right people for the interviews can ensure the reliability of the participants. The variables or themes should be formed according to the theoretical framework. Using bad examples or ignoring information, which portrays the phenomenon negatively can also compromise the conclusions that can be made based on the research. The researcher's perspective based on experiences about the results and their correspondence with reality can also help ensure reliability. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 143-144.) Although the interviewing technique used in this study was semi-structured

interviews a sufficient number of questions were still prepared in advance. These questions were based on previous research on the phenomenon in question. Only I conducted the interviews and my role during the interviews was emic in order to get more in-depth information from the participants. Member checks were performed during the interviews as well as during the data analysis process to ensure validity. I have included clarifications in square brackets [] in some of the quotations as well as editing some to ensure clarity. The final report was sent to the interviewees via E-mail and they were asked for their comments before the thesis was submitted for publishing. This was done to ensure validity of the study.

I am a coach myself and have several years coaching experience in coaching a team sport in Finland (see chapter 1). I have also been working for national associations and have a thorough understanding of Finnish sport culture both through practical experience and my studies. Although my role during the interviews was emic, I did not share my own experiences during the interview, in order not to affect the interviewees' answers. Being a coach benefitted me during the research project in the way that I understood some of the language and concepts that the coaches spoke about during the interviews. My own experience also allowed me to take an emic role during the interviews. However, my own background also presented me with challenges during the research process. I had to be very aware of my own subjectivity and experiences to not let them influence the interviews or the data analysis process.

4 FINNISH FEMALE COACHES' CAREERS

The definition of a professional career is in a state of flux, which can be seen in the differences between definitions. Careers are very individual and not all employees have the same goals regarding career advancement as well as external goals. Different definitions can lead to contradictory interpretations, which can be harmful for scholars as well as organizations (Koivunen, Lämsä & Heikkinen 2012, 27). This is why the different definitions need to be examined further. This chapter concentrates on describing the different phases of a Finnish female coach's career as well as defining what is meant by a career in both the sport context as well as in a business setting and how these two compare. This chapter begins with defining what is meant by a traditional and a modern career, which is followed by descriptions of the different phases coaches go through during their careers. This comprises of descriptions of what typically characterizes the beginning of a coach's career, hobby coaching phase and the professional coaching phase, how coaches become qualified for the coaching profession, what constitutes success during the "career rat race" and who determines success as well as what kind of challenges coaches are faced with. In addition, descriptions of the support network that is required for a successful career in the very demanding coaching profession as well as the challenges that traditional family roles place on a Finnish female coach follow this. This is then finally followed by descriptions of the expectations the coaches have for their careers in the future and how they envision the potential end of their careers.

4.1 Definitions of a career

When looking at the characteristics of a female coaches' career and what influences it, it is important to examine what is meant by a career in the traditional sense. When scholars first began researching professional careers they were linear, unchanging and took place within one organization. The organizations themselves had a lot more influence in the development of careers, advancing within the organization's hierarchy was the goal, mobility was limited and one's position and level within the organization as well as salary defined success. (Harrington & Hall 2007, 9–11.) In practise this means that an individual has moved from one position to the next, advancing upward in

the organization's hierarchy. The definition of a traditional career has been more common and shared as its definition is similar regardless of the source. Koivunen, Lämsä and Heikkinen (2012, 11) also describe the traditional career as a linear, unbroken chain of positions within one or two organizations. Commitment to a certain organization and that organization's definition of a career has also been an important part of a traditional career. Changing employers several times during one's career was frowned upon and made the individuals that changed organizations unreliable in the eyes of other employers. (Harrington & Hall 2007, 12.) Commitment to one's career has required full commitment to the organization and its goals. The wants and needs of an individual within the organization had very little meaning. Advancing within the organization was only possible if it enabled the organization to achieve its goals. Work and private life was also more easily separated because of fixed working hours and the predictable nature of work (Harrington & Hall 2007, 97).

The definition of a career has changed but some scholars still argue that the traditional definition of a career is still applicable in positions and fields of work that require less training (Harrington & Hall 2007, 12). Others question the existence of a traditional career completely and argue that a career today means all work experience and not only work experience that requires a high level of education (Koivunen, Lämsä, Heikkinen 2012, 11). However, the qualities that characterise work differ a lot between industries and countries, which is why it is impossible to definitely say whether or not the traditional definition of a career is or is not applicable when describing certain fields of work. The changes in the definition of career as a concept, reflects upon the changes occurring in society, such as economic uncertainty and the changes in the division of work in family-life. Whether it be voluntary or forced, losing one's job and changing jobs has become more common in today's society. (Harrington & Hall 2007, 63; Koivunen, Lämsä & Heikkinen 2012, 28.)

Work has become dynamic rather than static (More, Gunz & Hall 2007, 31). Careers clearly contain a lot more movement than they used to. As work has become more diverse and changing, the existence of a career has even been questioned (Harrington & Hall 2007, 9). When looking at the definition of a traditional career, this statement seems accurate. The re-definition of the concept reflects the changes that have occurred

in working life, which is why it is important to consider whether or not careers exist anymore or should we consider careers to just be a chain of job positions.

Today's definition of a career changes a lot, which shows the diverse nature of work today. Cohen (2014, 1) defines a career as being, at its core, movement within a certain period of time, especially for women. According to Harrington and Hall (2007, 11) a career today is the responsibility of the individual, freedom and growth are the main goals, the career contains a lot more movement and work satisfaction has a greater role. The prevalent definitions emphasise movement and the diversity of a career much more than the traditional definition. Current definitions are freer in nature and include things that can be interpreted in different ways. Individuality and the influence of subjectivity on the definition of career success are emphasised. Compatibility between the individual and career is also emphasised in prevalent definitions (More, Gunz & Hall 2007, 31). This kind of modern career has also created a lot of pressure for the individual due to its unpredictability, spallation and diversity. Having several employers, either simultaneously or at some point during one's career, have become more common due to the need to secure one's income. (Koivunen, Lämsä & Heikkinen 2012, 6.) Careers have become the projects of individuals, which involve reform, skill development and diverse expertise. Managing one's career is increasingly important and knowing how to sell one's skills and assets to potential employers is key. (Koivunen, Lämsä & Heikkinen 2012, 6.) We live in a world that changes at an increasingly fast pace and since the development of technology, work and careers are increasingly the responsibility of the individual. On the other hand, work has also become more flexible (Harrington & Hall 2007, 98). Depending on the employer, an individual can decide when and where she is going to work. This has both made it possible and given new meaning to the holistic nature of life. The Finnish female coaches career can be said to have characteristics of both a traditional and modern career.

4.2 The accidental beginning

A career in sport coaching does not seem to usually be an intentional one. For all of the coaches that participated in this study it can be said that it was an accidental one and began from their own interest in the sport that they practiced. When describing the beginning of their coaching careers, the coaches said that they had not actively pursued

a career in coaching or thought a career in coaching had been their calling. As one of the coaches expressed it:

“I wouldn't say that I have ever had any special calling, like I would have felt that I always knew I was going to be a coach. It was the sum of many things that I eventually chose coaching. When I quit doing sport, as I had been involved in instructing and coaching little kids, then I of course continued it. Then I chose to study sport, and somehow in connection with that, when I applied for a place in a university of applied sciences [degree in sport instructing] and got in, then maybe it was sort of a habit that as a student you would work a little.” (Coach 5)

“En mä sanoisi, että mulla enää ikinä olisi ollut jotain semmoista erityistä kutsumusta. En ole tuntenut, että mä aina tiesin, että musta tulee valmentaja. Sitten ehkä oli monen asian summa, että mä loppuviimein valmennustoiminnan valitsin. Kun lopetin urheilun, niin sitten automaattisesti kun olin sitä ohjaustoimintaa tehnyt ja pienten valmennusta, niin sitä kyllä jatkoin. Sitten valitsin vähän liikunnallista opiskelualaa ja sitten jotenkin siinä yhteydessä, kun hain ammattikorkeakouluun [liikunnanohjaaja koulutukseen], ja pääsin sinne, niin sitten samalla oli ehkä tapana että me opiskelijat tehtiin vähän töitä.” (Coach 5.)

None of the coaches had decided that they were going to be coaches or actively pursued it. All of the coaches had started coaching before they ended their competitive athletic careers. The team sport coaches also had a break from coaching between the early coaching experiences that took place when the coach was still actively competing as an athlete and the professional phase of their careers. The coaches described this early experience as important but many of them expressed that they felt that it was not the real beginning of their coaching career.

“I didn’t purposefully decide that I am going to be a coach but maybe, when I’m thinking about it now, a bystander would have noticed that it was going to be that way...I never thought that I would be a coach or that I even want to be a coach...You continued [to coach] and you developed an interest to even do it as a profession... I have lived an athlete’s life from a young age and there hasn’t been any other [kind of life] at all” (Coach 1.)

“En sillä tavalla mitenkään määrätietoisesti ollut päättänyt, että minusta tulee valmentaja, mutta ehkä näin jälkikäteen ajatellen, varmaan joku sivustakatsoja olisi sen huomannut, että siinä tulee sillä tavalla käymään. En ollut koskaan sitä ajatellut sillä tavalla, että minusta tulee valmentaja tai, että en edes niin, että mä haluan valmentajaksi. Sä jatkoit [valmentamista], ja sinulle heräsi se mielenkiinto tehdä sitä jopa ammattina...Olen elänyt sitä urheilijan elämää sieltä pienestä saakka, että ei ole muunlaista [elämää] ollutkaan.” (Coach 1.)

The participant’s coaching careers evolved from their athletic careers. Being so immersed in their sport from a young age and the sport being such a large part of their lives, made the transition into coaching very easy. The coaches’ first coaching experiences had all started from their own initiative. After the beginning of the accidental career, both interest in coaching as well as coaching education, helped fuel the coaches’ careers into coaching. One of the coaches described the influence of coaching education as follows: “Then one course led to another, then came level B, level A and then this Master Pro. In a way when you came to the opening of that tunnel then you just went for it.” “Sitten yksi koulutus tietysti poikii seuraavaan, sitten tuli taso B, taso A ja sitten tuli tää Master Pro. Tavallaan kun sä tulit siihen putken päähän niin sitten niitä mentiin.” (Coach 1.) Taking part in coaching courses made the coaches more interested in the profession and fuelled their hunger to learn more about it. These first experiences of coaching, and sport related education are what started the coaches’ accidental careers in sport coaching.

4.3 Coaching as a hobby

All of the coaches who participated in this study had begun coaching whilst still being active in their athletic careers. They became involved with instructing and coaching at this stage, through their own initiation. What is also notable is that these early experiences always included coaching children or adolescents. This is not surprising as very few coaches enter elite coaching directly; most start coaching at the club level (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 2). All of the coaches themselves were still attending some form of education (compulsory or vocational) at the time that these early experiences took place. Coaching was a hobby at this phase of their careers. As one of the coaches described it, these early experiences were the coach's way of getting used to and trying the profession out. "It was getting used to and familiarizing, and of course I was still young myself at that stage." "Se oli semmoista totuttelua ja kokeilua, ja tietenkin oli itsekin vielä nuori siinä vaiheessa." (Coach 3.)

Some of the coaches were more encouraged to begin instructing or coaching than others. However, some level of interest was needed from the individual, as it had never been a requirement for athletes to coach when they were still actively competing themselves, for any of the coaches. There were differences between individuals in this aspect of their early experiences, as some of the coaches felt that there was a culture of athletes or players coaching or instructing whilst still being active participants in the sport themselves. "I myself have had coaches who still played themselves when I first got involved [with the sport] as a kid. I just didn't think that it would be weird [coaching whilst still playing]." "Itsellä on kuitenkin ollut myös semmoisia valmentajia ketkä on pelannut itse silloin samaan aikaan, kun pikkunappulana on ollut siellä ensimmäisiä kertoja matkassa mukana. Sitä ei niin kuin ajatellut että, se olisi jotenkin outoa [valmentaa samalla kun vielä pelaa]." (Coach 6.)

The initiation to coaching as a hobby was either due to the coaches' own interest and passion toward their sport or because of the culture of athletes coaching whilst still competing present in their club or even sport. When beginning to coach, some coaches were encouraged to attend coaching education more than others. For some it was even a requirement if they wanted to be the head coach of a team or age group. Attending

coaching education at this stage was however also because of interest in self-improvement and learning more about coaching. For some of the coaches these early experiences of coaching encouraged them to seek out sport or coaching related education.

“Surely when we have gone to the first ones [coaching courses] that were for instance the associations courses, it [the initiation] has come from the club that if you want to be responsible for this group [of athletes], then you need to attend this course.” (Coach 1.)

“Varmasti silloin kun ollaan menty niihin ensimmäisiin [koulutuksiin], jotka on ollut esim. lajiliiton koulutuksia, ne [aloitteet] on varmaan tullut sieltä seuran taholta. Että jos nyt otat tämän ryhmän [urheilijoita] vastuullesi, niin sitten pitää käydä tämä koulutus.” (Coach 1.)

The coaches agreed that these early experiences were a form of less serious coaching but also provided them with valuable experiences of success as a coach. Some of the coaches felt that they were instructors rather than coaches when they first began familiarizing with the profession. This may have been due to the level of responsibilities of coaches when beginning to coach as well as the level or age of the group or athlete. All of the coaches coached or instructed children or adolescents at this stage of their careers. The culture of the specific sport may also have influenced these perceptions, as in some sport coaches are first referred to as instructors rather than coaches. This is also probably due to the nature of coaching at a certain level, as one of the coaches expressed it: “I’m talking about coaching and teaching really small children. That’s not coaching, it’s teaching.” “Puhun ihan pienten lasten valmentamisesta ja opettamisesta. Se on opettamista, ei se ole valmentamista.” (Coach 5.) Coaching children or adolescents is not seen as being professional coaching but a hobby in many sports. This is because; in many sports it is not possible to be a full-time or professional coach if you only coach children.

“At first it [coaching] was just fun and busy work with the juniors. Then when you went to a higher level of the league [as a coach] it was like it was more serious activity. Maybe it [coaching] became such that you had to be qualified at the job.
“(Coach 6.)

“Aluksihan se [valmentaminen] oli vaan niin kuin kivaa pikku puuhastelua niitten junioreiden kanssa. Sitten kun mentiin tonne korkeammalle sarjatasolle [valmentajana], niin se olikin että tää alkaa olla jo vähän vakavampaa toimintaa. Ehkä siitä [valmentamisesta] jossain vaiheessa tulikin semmoista, piti olla jo päteväkin niin sanotusti siinä hommassa.” (Coach 6.)

Some sports do not have any educational requirements for coaches who coach children, because coaching children is not seen as professional coaching, as children are not professional athletes (See Huippu-urheilun muutostyön loppuraportti 2012). This somewhat contradictory to what many sport professionals argue; that the most qualified coaches should be teaching children, as this is the stage where quality coaching is the most important. Children and adolescents have however, a tradition of being coached by volunteers who get none or very little compensation, and it is therefore very difficult to coach as a professional at this level in Finland. It requires a very high level of internal motivation to enter coaching at this level and even educate oneself, as there is very little compensation. Coaching at this level can be compared to “serious leisure” (see Stebbins 1992). It requires a coach to operate as a professional coach but coaching is still leisure time activity with little or no compensation. The coaches’ high level of interest toward their own sport, even if some were more encouraged by their club or the culture of their sport to engage in coaching, drove all of the coaches in my study, to these first coaching experiences. “It wasn’t a requirement, I wanted to [attend coaching courses] myself...It [attending coaching courses] all began from wanting to develop and learn more [about coaching].” “Ei se ollut vaatimus kyllä mä itse halusin... Kyllä se [valmennuskoulutuksissa käyminen] lähti siitä janosta kehittyä, ja oppia lisää [valmentamisesta].“ (Coach 2.)

These first experiences of coaching are valuable for the coaches considering coaching as a profession as many of the coaches described these first experiences providing them with the feeling of being good at coaching. “I liked it [coaching], they were good athletes and nice players and they took to heart what I had to give them. Maybe I got the self-confidence to believe that I could have something to give [to the profession] from that.” “Kyllä mä tykkäsin siitä [valmentamisesta], ne oli hyviä pelaajia, kivoja pelaajia ja ne otti vastaan kaiken. Ehkä siitä tuli sellainen usko itseensä, että ehkä tässä voisi olla jotain annettavaakin [ammattille].” (Coach 4.) These early experiences of success as a coach are important for women in order for them to become motivated to continue coaching and seek out educational opportunities to consider coaching as a profession and become qualified.

4.4 From hobby to profession

All of the team sport coaches had a break from coaching, usually because of the demands placed on them by their own athletic careers, in-between coaching as a hobby and coaching at a more professional level. The development from a hobby to a profession or a more serious level of coaching happened very fast for four of the coaches. Coaching as a profession or more professionally means coaching at an elite level, not necessarily full-time. The other two of the coaches, both representing a team sport, described their paths from hobby to profession as being more moderate. What is notable about this is that these two coaches felt they had more control over the pace at which their careers developed. Although all of the team sport coaches had a break from coaching between their early experiences and beginning to coach more seriously, the two team sport coaches who had entered coaching at a lower level (as an assistant coach or coaching children or adolescents) after their break, described this as being eased into coaching professionally. They felt they had more control over at what pace their careers advanced.

“In my opinion it [career development] has been suitably moderate and every time I have wanted a challenge I have been given them. It [career development] has gone exactly in the direction that I have wanted it to.” (Coach 4.)

“Mun mielestä se [urakehitys] on ollut ainakin tähän mennessä sopivan maltillista, ja joka kerta kun on haasteita kaivannut, niin niitä on saanut. Tavallaan se [urakehitys] on mennyt just siihen suuntaan mitä mä oon itse halunnut.” (Coach 4.)

They thought that this was very beneficial for their careers, as there were opportunities for experiences of success. Moderate progression allowed for the coaches to develop a feeling of competency.

“Maybe it has just fuelled the fire when my responsibilities increased a little bit at a time. I have noticed that I can do this [coach] and this [coaching] is really quite enjoyable and then when I have received positive feedback from the athletes, it has become one of the reasons why I have wanted to work better and try even harder as a coach” (Coach 6.)

“Ehkä se on vaan ruokkinut sitä tulta kun on tullut pikkuhiljaa vastuuta lisää. Huomannut aina että pärjään tässä [valmennuksessa], ja tää [valmentaminen] onkin oikeastaan aika mukavaa, ja vielä kun on saanut sitä positiivista palautetta urheilijoita myös, niin se on ollut yksi tekijä miksi on sitten halunnut vielä toimia paremmin, ja yrittää vielä enemmän siinä omassa valmennustoiminnassaankin.” (Coach 6.)

The other two of the team sport coaches entered directly into coaching adults after ending their athletic careers and both coached players that were older than them or whom they had played with themselves. The perceptions about this type of transitioning into more serious coaching was seen as a challenge and even made the coaches doubt whether or not they were cut out for the profession.

“I went straight into coaching a team at the highest level of my sport in Finland and it was hard because I went there to coach players that I had played with myself. It was not a good combination at all. At that stage I should have been learning how to transition from player mode to coach mode. I wasn’t able to do that because the players were so familiar.” (Coach 3.)

“Mä menin suoraan valmentaa joukkuetta oman laijini korkeimmalla tasolla Suomessa, ja se oli vaikeaa kun mä menin sinne valmentamaan semmoisia pelaajia joiden kanssa mä olin itse pelannut. Se ei ollut hyvä yhtälö ollenkaan. Mun olis pitänyt siinä vaiheessa opetella, sitä että millä mä irtaannun siitä pelaajamoodista siihen valmentajamoodiin. Se ei oikein onnistunut kun ne oli niin tuttuja ne pelaajat.” (Coach 3.)

On the other hand, the same team sport coach expressed that the transition into coaching after ending her athletic career came quite naturally due to the fact that she had been involved with a team sport. “It’s easy to drift into coaching. The thing of doing things as a team stays in that way.” “Se on helppo solahtaa siihen valmentajaan. Se pysyy kuitenkin se joukkueena tekemisen homma siinä niin.” (Coach 3.) This shows that the level at which one enters into, when beginning to take coaching more seriously is important, although it may be an easier transition for a team sport coach to make because you still get to work with a team.

The coaches who coached individual athletes also felt that coaching developed quite quickly from a hobby to being more serious activity. This transition happened when they became more involved with coaching and after their active athletic careers had ended. Opposite to the team sport coaches, they did not have a break from coaching during this transition. Although there were clear differences between the pace and ways that coaches transitioned from coaching as a hobby to more serious coaching, the coaches spoke about coaching adults, elite athletes or more competitively when referring to serious coaching. This fast progression to coaching at a higher level could

be due to the lack of coaches in some sports and female coaches in female teams. The opportunities to coach and the responsibility are given to those who seem eager. This is also influenced by Finnish sport culture as more serious coaching or coaching as a professional, only happens at the elite and more competitive levels.

4.5 Becoming qualified

In most professions you have to have a certain level of qualifications that prove your competency and skills in your field in order to get hired. This phase of the Finnish female coaches' careers began during their hobby coaching years or at the latest during the time when they were transitioning from hobby to more serious coaching. Becoming qualified for coaching and educating oneself went on throughout the coaches' careers. It included educating oneself through many different channels. The educational requirements set for coaches differ a lot between sports. The highest levels of educational requirements are at the international and elite levels, but even in this there are differences between sports. This is probably due to the fact that the coaching education system in Finland is very splintered.

At the moment it is not possible to complete a vocational degree in sport specific coaching in Finland, although it is possible to get a vocational degree in sport from both universities and universities of applied sciences. There are also many other organizations offering educational opportunities in the sport sector and specifically in coaching, including trade schools who offer a degree in sport coaching, that is available for coaches who have already attended a certain level of sport specific coaching courses and have a lot of practical experience as well. The course lasts one year and acceptance requires the coach to have a placement in e.g. a sport club and to have a recommendation from her own national association. Trade schools, sport institutes and national sport associations also provide coaching courses that are specifically meant for former athletes. These courses usually require the athletes to have competed at a certain level, at least on the national scale. The national and international sport associations offer sport specific coaching courses, which mostly include information on sport specific skills and training. Only a few of the above mentioned organizations have however defined what type of qualifications are required to be able to coach at a certain level. For example, in football you have to complete a certain level of education in order

to coach an elite level team. Educational requirements for a coach can differ a lot even within a specific sport.

The Finnish Coaches' Association (FCA) also offers coaching courses, however these are not sport specific but deal with a specific topic. The FCA has also created a path for coaches' development (Figure 1.), which shows the different motivations to becoming a coach, the stages of development of a coach, which are described generally in the terms of what the coach knows at each stage and how learning objectives are defined. The path is very general and could be applicable to both professional and hobby coaches. Erickson, Côté and Fraser-Thomas's (2007, 310) model of stages of developmental sport experiences of high-performance coaches (Figure 2.) is more specific and elements of it can be seen in the development of the careers of the coaches' that participated in my study.

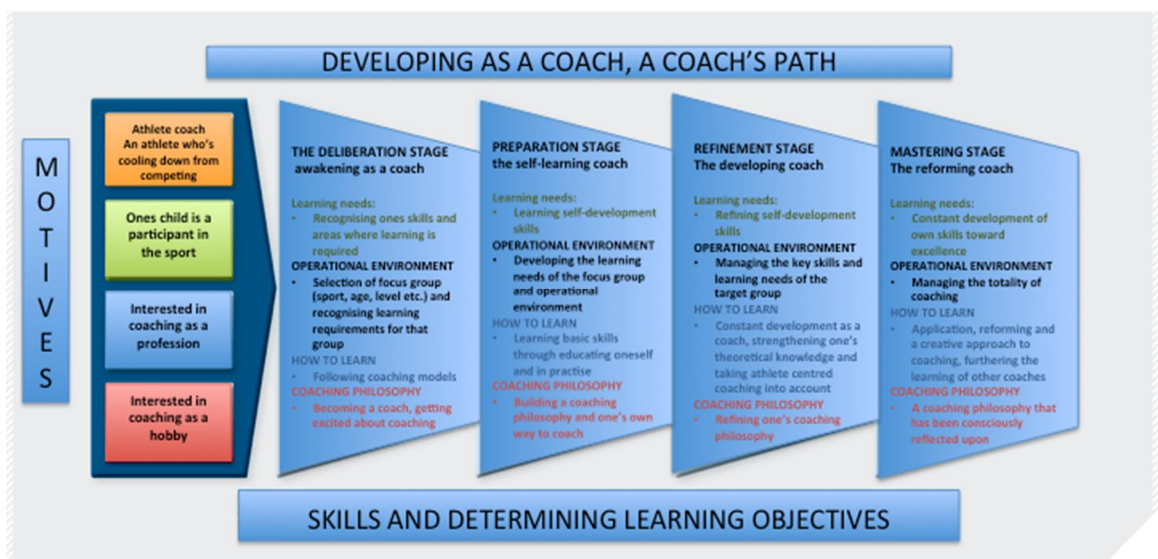


Figure 1. The coach's path (Suomen Valmentajat 2016b)

The motives that the coaches had when they began coaching can most closely be linked to the motive of coaching as an athlete cooling down from competing. The coaches were not necessarily cooling down from competing when they began coaching, but they were all still athletes. None of the coaches coached because of the involvement of their own children in the sport, however many of the coaches had become involved with their sport because of their parents or siblings participation. The coaches' motives changed throughout their careers. They evolved

from being motivated to coach as a hobby to being motivated to coach as a profession, even though not all of the coaches were able to coach full-time. Although the coaches were of different ages and had different levels of coaching experience, they had all advanced to the mastering stage seen in Figure 1 and to either the part-time early coaching stage or the high performance head coaching stage seen in Figure 2. What is notable is that the coaches in my study began coaching earlier than in Erickson, Côté and Fraser-Thomas's model. Some of the stages presented in this model clearly overlapped for some of the coaches in my study and the coaches did not necessarily progress from one stage to the next in the same order or pace as seen in the model. This is most likely due to there being more full-time coaching opportunities available in North America and their sport system being based largely on collegiate sport.

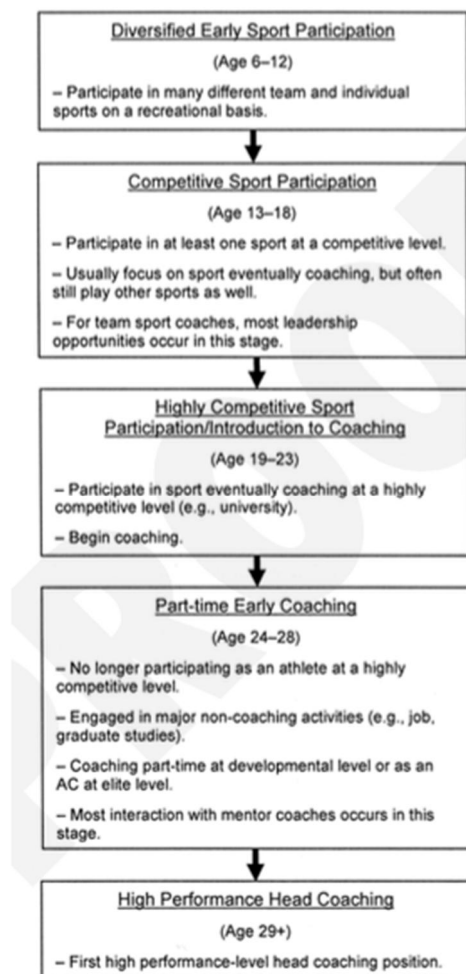


Figure 2. Stages of developmental sport experiences of high-performance coaches (Erickson, Côté & Fraser-Thomas 2007, 310)

4.5.1 Getting educated

Coaches usually have some form of formal education in sport and those who have not competed at the elite level have usually completed sport studies at an international level. (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 2). Coaches are responsible for athlete development at all levels of coaching. Another part of the coaches' job is to maintain their own expertise. In coaching, one can never have enough skills. (Kaski 2013, 118.) This is why the educational or competency gaining phase goes on throughout the coaches' careers. "Never, a coach is never ready." "Ei koskaan, ei valmentaja koskaan ole valmis." (Coach 1.)

The coaches in my study felt that it was their obligation; whether or not they were coaching full-time, to educate themselves and ensure their capability. A coaching career is more modern than traditional in this way, since the individual clearly carries the responsibility of their career and its development.

"In my opinion if you are in the profession and are working as a full-time coach, getting your salary from it, then it also means that you have to take care of your professional education always when it is possible. Always!" (Coach 1.)

"Mä näen sen vähän sillä tavalla, että jos olet toimessa ja toimit päätoimisena valmentajana, saat siitä palkkasi, niin se tarkoittaa myöskin sitä, että pitää huolehtia siitä omasta ammatillisesta kouluttautumisesta aina kun se on mahdollista. Aina!" (Coach 1.)

Although the quote above specifically identifies the responsibility of the individual to educate oneself when working as a full-time coach, the coaches who were coaching in their free time also felt that it was extremely important to be qualified. As one of them put it: "There's always work for professionals." "Ammattilaisille kyllä aina riittää hommia." (Coach 6.) Coaching still requires certain skills and a level of knowledge when coaching in one's own free time.

Becoming qualified for the coaching profession can happen in many different ways. Mentoring has been mentioned in many studies as one of the more positively influential factors of women's coaching careers (Norman 2012). Mentoring is a traditionally a method for improving an individual. The importance of mentoring has been found to be more important for women especially in more male dominated organizations. This is why mentoring programs are often aimed for female employees. The people being mentored have often expressed the importance of the gender of the mentor. However, the preference over the gender of the mentor differs a lot. The importance of women mentoring women has been viewed both from the perspective of presenting women with female role models as well as having a mentor who is easier to relate to and vice versa. A male mentor has been expressed to be more beneficial when wishing to further one's career. The importance of the mentor being distinguished in the eyes of the individual being mentored is however undisputed. Female mentors have also been found to be useful especially in discussing how to balance family life and work. (Norman 2012; Mutanen & Lämsä 2006; Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 188.) Mentorship is often seen as being important by both genders. Women still often view informal mentoring and role models to be more important than men do. Women have also been found to "search for knowledge" more actively than their male counterparts. (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 3-4.) Coaches place a high value on learning from others (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 188). The coaches in my study also mentioned the value of having a mentor. Having a mentor was seen as a way to develop and learn as a coach but also as a support network.

"He has been a really important person for me, as a mentor and also as a coach. I have learned from him especially on the mental side, strengthening self-confidence, support and giving responsibility and believing in that I can handle it and I am good [at coaching]. That's when you can say that I really blossomed as a coach. When you have someone in the background who you knew that would be there, help and support you if everything didn't go as well as planned. That's when everything started to go well. After that all sorts of good things have happened." (Coach 2.)

“Hän on ollut mulle tosi tosi tärkeä ihminen, mentorina ja niin kuin myöskin valmentajana. Olen oppinut häneltä varsinkin henkisellä puolella, vahvistamaan itseluottamusta, tukemaan ja antamaan vastuuta, ja uskomaan siihen että mä pärjään, ja olen hyvä [valmentaja]. Sitten oikeastaan voi sanoa, että puhkesin kukkaan valmentajana. Kun oli se joku siellä takana, joka tiesi että koko ajan ei aina menekään niin hyvin, ja että en ole yksin tässä, ja hän on siinä mukana ja auttaa ja tukee. Sitten rupesi menemään hyvin. Sitten on tapahtunut kaikenlaista hyvää.”

(Coach 2.)

The educational background of the coaches that participated in this study differed a lot between coaches. All but one of the coaches had vocational education in sport. Two had bachelor's degrees in sport sciences, two had master's degrees in sport sciences and one had a degree from a trade school. The coach who did not have vocational education in the sport field had a degree in another field and had competed at the elite level during her athletic career. Some of the coaches had completed their vocational education in sport during the phase when they were still coaching as a hobby whilst others completed their degrees when already in the more serious coaching phase, however still in the early years of their coaching careers. All of the coaches had attended a number of sport specific coaching courses organized either by their respective sport disciplines national or international associations. The numbers of courses and the levels of sport specific coaching education varied a lot between coaches. Some coaches had been required to attend certain courses in order to coach at a certain level whilst others had not needed to but chosen to do so because of the desire to learn more. Two of the coaches felt that they did not need to attend that many sport specific coaching courses because there was very little for them to learn. This was mostly due to the coaching path and courses being not being very developed in their respective sport disciplines when they first entered the more serious coaching phase. One of the coaches emphasised that her degree in sport sciences provided her with a better basis for coaching than what her association's courses could have done at the time.

“You don’t become a coach in moment...In Finland there isn’t any, it’s not possible for you to graduate from university as a specific sport’s coach and you can’t become a specific sport’s coach in any other way other than by studying that specific sport. You cannot become a pianist if you just play the accordion or the violin, that’s a fact.” (Coach 1.)

”Valmentajaahan susta ei varmaan tule hetkessä... Suomessahan ei ole sellaista, että sulla olisi mahdollista valmistua yliopistosta nimenomaan tietyn lajin valmentajaksi. Tietyn lajin valmentajaksi ei voi tulla muuten kuin opiskelemalla sitä tiettyä lajia. Susta ei voi tulla pianistia jos sä soitat vain haitaria tai viulua tai jotakin, se on ihan selviö.” (Coach 1.)

This type of individuality in a career pathway to becoming qualified and competent in one’s field is more consistent with the modern definition of a career. There is not a “right” path to becoming a coach. College education is still seen as being important whether it be certain courses or a whole degree (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 187). All of the coaches felt that both vocational and sport specific coaching courses were valuable for them. Education was seen as a vital part of becoming a good coach. The coaches did however feel that the experiences and knowledge to be gained from vocational degrees was different from what could be gained from coaching courses. Courses were seen to motivate to continue coaching. Attending these coaching courses and seminars on coaching went on throughout the coaches’ careers. There is value in educating oneself in many different ways and through your coaching career.

“It’s been extremely important support and security that I have an [vocational] education. I have relied on the kind of professional competency that it has given me. Of course I have educated myself in my own sport all the time. Been willing to improve myself.” (Coach 5.)

“Kyllä mulla on ollut ihan hirvittävän tärkeä tuki ja turva se, että mulla on [ammattillinen] koulutus. Mä oon luottanut paljon siihen sen antamaan tietynlaiseen ammattitaitoon. Tietenkin oon kokoajan niin kuin lajin puolella kouluttanut itseäni. Ollut halukas kehittymään.” – (Coach 5.)

4.5.2 Educational experiences as an athlete

The importance of leadership experience as an athlete is often expressed to be of value by coaches. Being a captain in a team is seen as being “a bridge” between being an athlete and a coach. (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 186.) Athletic experiences can also be seen as a way to gain knowledge and skills required for coaching. Although athletic experience in the sport one coaches is necessary to become a high-performance coach, experience at the elite level as an athlete is not necessary (Erickson, Côté & Fraser-Thomas 2007, 311). During my study all of the coaches expressed having gained some skills or competencies from their athletic careers, which they found useful as a coach. Leadership experience was not mentioned but being able to relate to your athletes, having good coaches and even experiencing a less successful athletic career was seen as influencing one’s coaching career, especially when transitioning from hobby to profession.

“Well it [athletic career] influences probably in the way that you know the amount of work that you have to do before you can take those strides forward as a player...you know what the players are feeling when you are training, how it feels. Then also kind of the other way around, the athletes can’t trick you because you know where you would have taken the easy road yourself and you can catch them right away in the beginning. Maybe those are the biggest [ways that my athletic career has influenced my coaching career]. Of course maybe the way that you have enjoyed playing the game yourself was reflected into coaching as well.” (Coach 3.)

“No se [oma urheilu-ura] vaikuttaa varmaan sillä tavalla, että itse tavallaan tiedostaa sen työn määrän, joka sun pitää tehdä ennen kun sä pystyt ottamaan niitä harppauksia pelaajana eteenpäin... Sä tavallaan tiedät, että mitä ne pelaajat kokee kun tehdään treeniä ja miltä se tuntuu. Sitten tavallaan myös toisinpäin niin ne pelaajat ei voi kusettaa, koska sä tiedät että minkälaista ja sä tiedät itse että missä kohtaa sä olisit sluibalillut, ja pystyt narauttamaan ne sieltä jo heti kättelyssä. Ehkä ne on ne suurimmat [tavat millä oma urheilu-ura on vaikuttanut valmentamiseen]. Tietysti se minkälaisesta pelaamisesta sä oot itse tykännyt, niin se jollain asteella heijastui vielä sinne valmentamiseen myös.” (Coach 3.)

These perceptions of gaining competencies from one's own athletic career can be the result of the coaches developing expectations for their own coaches during their athletic careers. A coach is often expected by athletes to be an expert, exemplary, grown-up, responsible and dedicated. Disappointments in a coach give them the role of a non-educator and result in athletes feeling that they do not want to be like their coaches. (Hämäläinen 2008, 5, 107.) Experiences of good coaching during one's own athletic career influenced the coaches' careers positively in my study. Good coaches acted as role models for the coaches, as they would mimic certain aspects of their coaching, especially at the beginning of their careers. The athletic career was also meaningful for the coach who had experienced a less successful athletic career (she had not competed at an elite level). Her athletic career motivated her to pursue coaching, as she wanted to do things differently than what she had experienced as an athlete.

“Of course my own career has been meaningful in the way that I don't want athletes to have to experience what it's like when you don't have your own coach and you have to do it [practise] on your own. On the other hand, I have pondered many times that maybe it was a good thing [for my coaching career] that I've had to analyse and think about those things by myself as an athlete, at that time already. Maybe it's been kind of good for the coaching career that there have been some quite

challenging moments during my [athletic] career that I've had to live through, but it's not a good thing in anyway from the perspective of athlete development.”
(Coach 5.)

“Sillä tavalla tietenkin varmasti omalla uralla on ollut merkitystä, että mä en ainakaan toivoisi, että urheilijat joutuisivat kokemaan sitä, että ei olisi sitä omaa valmentajaa siinä olemassa, ja joutuukin yksin sitä hommaa [harjoittelua] tekemään. Mutta sitten taas toisaalta oon monta kertaa pohtinut sitä, että olisiko ihan hyvä asia [valmentajauralleni], että mä olen joutunut analysoimaan ja pohtimaan asioita silloin jo urheilijana, yksin. Ehkä valmentajanuran kannalta on ollut ihan hyvä, että mä olen joutunut semmoisia vähän haastavia hetkiä omalla urallani elämään, mutta ei se niin kuin urheilijan kehittämisen kannalta missään nimessä ole hyvä asia.” (Coach 5.)

Previous experience or known role in sport has been found to be the most influential factor in legitimizing an individual in the sport sector. It can be seen as being a requirement for getting to the elite of sport management. A professional or successful sport career can legitimize an individual within sport. This shows that there is a unique social and cultural operating system with its own norms and values in sport. (Laakso 2016, 161-162.) Although Laakso's study was concerned with management positions in sport organizations and not coaches, this same statement can be seen to also be true in their case. Being successful in one's athletic career definitely influenced the career of the coaches who were interviewed for my study, especially at the beginning of the more serious coaching phase. Five of the coaches had been successful and competed at an elite level during their athletic careers. They were known within their sport and as a result of this they were approached by clubs and sport organizations and asked to either apply or were offered a coaching position directly. “It began when the clubs of course found out that I was quitting [my athletic career] and that I would maybe have time and then the phone calls just started.” “Se sai alkunsa siitä että kun seurat tietysti kuuli, että nyt oon lopettamassa [kilpaurheilun], ja että olisi aikaa ehkä, ja sitten niitä puheluita

vaan tuli.” (Coach 3.) Coaches recognize that success as an athlete influenced their careers as coaches because it can help them gain more respect from other coaches as them being well known within their sport (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 186).

The proportion of female coaches who have competed at the elite level as an athlete is much greater than the men who have (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 2). The reason for female leaders, including coaches, in sport organizations having a background in competitive or elite sport more often than men can be due to the higher standards set for women for them to advance in their careers (Aalto 2003, 162). Knowing the sport and physical activity subject matter and own sport career seem to be more legitimizing than leadership and management competency. Leadership and management competency is only important to those who are educated in that field. (Laakso 2016, 164-165.)

4.5.3 Thresholds to becoming qualified

Educating oneself in the sport field can also present a unique set of challenges for women. When entering into coaching education to further their opportunities as a coach, female coaches are not necessarily judged by the same standards as men. Both participants and the instructors of coaching courses have acknowledged that there are different expectations for female participants and the female participants often have to prove their skills as a player more than the male coaches. It has also been found that in order to participate in coaching courses or be a good coach, a woman needs to present male characteristics. Female characteristics or “mothering skills” have been viewed to only be beneficial when coaching women, girls or children. (Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger 2012.) Coaching education and coaching practise is more oriented toward the male needs and ideals, which can make it difficult for women to adapt to the norms and values present in these settings. Male dominance in coaching is due to it being embedded in the culture of sport and general society as well. (Fasting & Pfister 2000, 103.) This has resulted the numbers of women attending coaching education, in for example Spain being much lower than men and decreasing at higher levels of education (Hinjosa & Soler 2016). This is also true, especially in team sports, in Finland. This type of investment into a career in coaching may be difficult for women to make because of the uncertainty of the coaching profession.

“I have always known that, rarely as a woman, can you get a profession out of it [coaching], at least the kind of profession where you would be able to earn your living from it. But I have always thought that if someday you will be able to find a daytime job, which has luckily happened for me now, that then you can within the limits of your resources continue to coach”. (Coach 6.)

“Aina olen tiennyt että harvemmin naispuolisena ammattia siitä [valmentamisesta] itselleen saa, ainakaan semmoista ammattia, että sillä elättäisi. Mutta olen aina ajatellut että jos sitä jotain päivätöitä löytäisi, niin kuin nyt on onnellisesti käynyt, niin sitten siinä ohessa pystyy sitten resurssien puitteissa jatkamaan sitä valmentamista.” (Coach 6.)

The coaches in my study felt that they had to make a financial and/or mental investment into their coaching careers, which was mostly related to educating themselves. Although vocational education is free in Finland, this is not always the case for sport specific coaching courses. There are very large differences between the financial resources available in clubs and national sport associations to educate coaches. This means that sometimes in order to educate oneself in the field, a coach has to pay large sums of money for their coaching courses. This can create unequal educational opportunities between coaches. “I made really tough sacrifices in order to be able transition into a professional coaching career and I paid 3000€ myself for one of my coaching courses when I left the club to work for the association.” “Mä tein tosi kovia uhrauksia siinä että mä pystyin siirtymään ammattivalmentajan uralle, ja mä maksoin mun yhdestä valmennuskurssista 3000€ itse, kun mä lähdin silloin seurasta liittoon töihin.” (Coach 2.) The threshold to educate can also be a mental one, especially for coaches who coach sports that are male dominated. There are very few women attending coaching courses in male dominated sports, which mean that women who do attend tend to stand out.

”What has always been a challenge is that usually I was the only woman on those [coaching] courses...You have to be, at least then you had to be a certain type of person in order to dare to go with men on those courses. It wasn’t always easy.”
(Coach 2.)

”Se mikä on ollut aina haasteena on se että... yleensä mä olin se ainut nainen niillä kaikilla [valmennus-] kursseilla ...Et kyllä siinä saa, ainakin silloin sai olla tietyn tyyppinen ihminen, että kehtasi lähteä sinne miesten mukaan koulutuksiin. Ei se helppoa aina ollut.” (Coach 2.)

The level of the team or athlete’s that the coach coaches also influences educational opportunities for female coaches. The level of professionalism of women’s sport influences the attitudes within a sport organization toward investing in a coach’s education. This places an even larger responsibility of taking care of one’s capability on the individual. As one of the coaches expressed it: “There’s no one here in the club that requires you to [attend coaching courses] when you coach women. Then you have to be going there [to coaching courses] yourself.” “Täällä seurassa ei kukaan vaadi sitä [valmennuskursseilla käymistä], kun sä oot naisten valmentaja. Sitten se pitäisi itse olla siinä menossa sinne [valmennuskursseille].” (Coach 4.) This shows that the educational requirements set for coaches vary a lot and depends on the organization and the team or athlete that one coaches. This type of culture within a sport organization can make it more difficult for women to find and want to take part in educational opportunities, as it can make them feel as though it does not matter whether or not they are educated for the profession.

The timing of coaching education also posed a challenge for some of the coaches in my study. The coaches who coached in their leisure time felt that they did not have time to take part in coaching courses because their coaching responsibilities already placed high time demands on them. This was mostly due to the fact that they had very large responsibilities in their coaching roles, and that the educational opportunities were offered or suggested to them when they had already entered the more serious coaching

phase of their careers. Limited coaching personnel resources also posed a time constraint on one of the coaches, which she felt made it impossible for her to attend coaching education at the time as well.

“Then there was the top coach certificate and then you would have had to invest so much time into it that it was kind of a passing thing. At the time when you’re coaching in the SM-league (Finnish championship) and in the national team and then a certificate on top of that, then something is going to be done poorly. In a sense, for educating yourself, you need to have time to do it. In a way it would be better if you were an assistant coach, that you wouldn’t have responsibility [of a head coach], educating yourself further during that time.” (Coach 3.)

”Sitten siellä oli se huippuvalmentaja-tutkinto, ja sitten siihen olisi taas pitänyt satsata niin paljon aikaa, että sitten se oli niin kuin vähän ohi mennyt juttu. Samalla kun valmennat SM-sarjassa ja maajoukkueessa, ja sitten vielä joku tutkinto siihen päälle, niin sitten jotain jää kyllä huonosti tehtyä. Tavallaan ehkä siihen kouluttautumiseen sulla pitäisi löytyä se aika tehdä ihan rauhassa sitä. Ehkä se olisi justiin semmoista, että sä olisit vaikka kakkosvalmentajana, että sulla ei ole se päävetovastuu, kouluttautuu sitten siinä kohtaa vähän pidemmälle.” (Coach 3.)

Advancing very quickly from coaching as a hobby to coaching more seriously and becoming a head coach, created challenges for the coach to educate herself in the profession, mostly due to the fact that she was coaching in her leisure time. One of the coaches suggested that to lower many of these thresholds to educate, it had helped that she knew the content of the coaching courses because of her background. “I knew what was coming. I was very much on the inside there [the coaching educational system]. In that way it was easy to go there [coaching courses].” “Mä tiesin että mitä sieltä on tulossa. Mä olin silleen hyvinkin sisällä siinä jutussa [valmentajakoulutusjärjestelmässä]. Se oli silleen helppoa mennä

sinne [valmentajakursseille].” (Coach 2.) Knowing how the coaching education system works as well as the content and the learning objectives of the coaching courses can help lower the threshold for women to get educational coaching qualifications.

4.5.4 Getting hired

Sport organizations including their administration and leadership are an important part of a woman’s coaching career. Female coaches can work directly for sport organizations or participate in coaching courses organized by a national sport organization to gain a license to coach for example. As mentioned previously, the culture that exists in sport organizations tends to be more masculine. Women are seen to be more anomalies than anything else. Sport organizations are also largely responsible for making hiring decisions about coaching staff. This can sometimes present invisible barriers for female coaches as it has been found that administrators of sport organizations have considered elite coaching attributes to be more masculine. (Auld, Cuskelly, Greenhill & Hooper 2009.)

The masculine being preferred has also been evident in other research. Sartore-Baldwin and Walker (2013) conducted a study to gain the perspective of men by interviewing male coaches on their perceptions about female coaches in collegiate basketball. The research established that the masculine culture of collegiate basketball was something that is hindering equality between male and female coaches. Male coaches felt the need to change their behavior in the presence of female coaches’. Some coaches also expressed feeling uncomfortable in the presence of a female coach. The culture of sport organizations is definitely something that is hindering women from advancing in their coaching careers. The coaching environment being an important influence in a woman’s coaching career has also been presented in other research (Norman 2012; Auld et. Al. 2009). Certain characteristics are expected of sport leaders, which are often masculine. Gender is seen to influence positively in some instances where the person is applying for a position in a very male dominated sport but also as a hindering factor as it is sometimes used as a disqualifying factor. Women feel that they need to constantly prove their credibility and expertise. (Laakso 2016, 162-165.)

Kilty (2006) found that external barriers to professional development were categorized as unequal assumptions of competence, hiring from principal of similarity, homophobia and lack of female mentors. According to the female coaches' who participated in the Kilty's study a male coach is automatically assumed to be more competent than a female coach. The participants felt that women had to "prove themselves" whilst the competency of men was accepted simply based on credentials. Participants felt that they had been excluded from leadership opportunities because of being women in a male dominated department and for exhibiting a different leadership style. Women participating in the conferences discussed issues of homophobia as a barrier to professional opportunities. Women who are good coaches are often described as being male-like and a lesbian. Female mentors were seen as providing guidance and facilitating networks and contacts for aspiring coaches. Internal barriers to professional development were categorized as perfectionism, lack of assertiveness, inhibition in promotion of accomplishments and high stress of balancing work and life. The participants were highly trained, knowledgeable and competent but also very self-critical. Coaches expressed their areas for improvement with the greatest of ease but had a lot of trouble when asked about their strengths. This can influence professional advancement in the sense that women are more critical about themselves when applying for positions. The study also found that women are also not very good at promoting their own accomplishments. When discussing them they often shifted from saying "I" to "we". This can create a problem with job opportunities and references. (Kilty 2006, 224-226.)

Being anomalies in the coaching world also presents other barriers than sport culture being traditionally masculine. Opportunities or "simply getting your foot in the door" is something that is again favoring men over women. Hiring a female coach is sometimes considered to be a higher risk decision because of the attention that it brings to the organization as well as the change in the dynamic of the coaching team as well as the entire sports team (Sartore-Baldwin & Walker 2013). Hiring practises in the sport sector, especially concerning coaches seem to be similar in many other countries as well. In a study conducted in Norway, it was found that most coaches are invited to their coaching positions. The coaches in the study felt that the federations know whom to ask because there are so few coaches. However, even some of the coaches that participated in the study admitted that these types of hiring practises could result in

recruitment from “closed networks”, which in turn result in a process by which a group reproduces itself by hiring and promoting others similar to themselves. (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 5.)

These hiring practises are not only unique to hiring female coaches as some of the studies conducted have also included male coaches. Networks have also been deemed extremely important for advancing in one’s coaching career in North America. Knowing people assists some coaches in attaining coaching positions. (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 191.) As these hiring practises are so common in the sport sector, they have become the norm and seeking out open vacancies is seen as being “pushy”. “It has [being hired] gone in the way that I have been asked [to coach]. I haven’t tried to force my way anywhere [coaching positions].” “Kyllä se [palkkaaminen] sitten on mennyt niin että on kysytty [valmentamaan]. En mä oo ollut tyrkyttämässä itseäni mihinkään [valmennustehtäviin].” (Coach 3.) The coach felt that enquiring about possible coaching opportunities from clubs and even the national association would be forcing it. Non-transparent hiring practises can be a hindering factor for getting more women into coaching. The coaches in my study felt that their actions should speak for themselves and coaching positions had to be earned. The sport organizations or clubs would determine whether or not their skills and competency was sufficient for them to be considered for coaching positions. The capability of a coach and how useful she can be to the sport organization, being determined by the organization and not the coach shows evidence of the presence of elements of a more traditional career within Finnish female coaches’ careers.

Coaching education is very strongly related to a coach’s perception about her level of competence. Perception about competence is related to education, possessing competence and skills for a leader and legitimization from within sport. Successes in ones’ own sport career also influence a leader’s perception about competence positively. Perception about competence is negatively affected if a leader has a lot of outside influences. (Laakso 2016, 160-161.) The level of competence of a coach being determined by the sport organizations and clubs, rather than the coaches themselves, makes coaches doubt their own capability and skills. Many of the coaches felt that if you are capable and do your job well, then you will get hired and be able to further your

career. Not being offered positions is seen as being due to not being capable enough to do the job required.

“Such that you tried to do your own thing as well as you could at that moment. Not any kind of climbing or that you would be spreading the word around that I’m interested. I base it more on how you do it [coach]. If someone’s interested then they’ll ask. If they aren’t interested, then I can live with that too.” (Coach 3.)

“Ihan semmoista että yrittää tehdä sen oman hommansa sillä hetkellä niin hyvin kuin pystyy. Eikä mitään semmoista kiipeämistä, että sä jotain juttua levittäisit tuolla että mua kiinnostaa. Kyllä mä enempi niin kuin perustan siihen, että miten sä teet sillä hetkellä sen homman [valmennat]. Jos jotain kiinnostaa niin sitten ne kysyy. Jos ei kiinnosta, niin sitten mä pystyn elämään myös sen kanssa.” (Coach 3.)

None of the coaches had applied for announced positions they had found themselves after their early experiences of coaching. They had either been asked to apply for an open coaching position or been offered the job directly. This hiring trend continued throughout their careers.

”I was asked. That’s what I was just thinking about, that it would be strange if I would need to start writing a job application. I wouldn’t know how to do it. Anyway, there are only a few educated professional coaches in this line of work. When I for example graduated from university, I would have wanted to stay in the same city but they didn’t have the resources to hire a full-time coach. I didn’t even get a chance to ask [about open coaching vacancies] before I was already asked.” (Coach 5.)

“Mua on kysytty. Sitä mä justiinsa ajattelinkin, että onpa ihmeellistä jos tarvitsisi ruveta tekemään jotain työhakemusta. Mä en kyllä osaisi tehdä sitä. Tässä työssä on kuitenkin koulutetut ammattivalmentajat aika vähissä. Siinä kohtaa kun esimerkiksi mä valmistuin yliopistosta, mä olisin kauheasti halunnut jäädä sinne samaan kaupunkiin, mutta siellä ei ollut resursseja siihen, että siellä olisi palkattu päätoimista valmentajaa. Niin en mä ehtinyt mistään kysyä [avoimia työpaikkoja], kun mua jo kysyttiin.” (Coach 5.)

These types of hiring practices are very common in the sport sector in Finland. Hiring often occurs from a very small pool of candidates. People are often recruited through networks and positions are not even advertised. These practices hinder women since they do not have the same kind of networks as men do. (Aalto 2003, 170.) Networks are important throughout female coaches', as well as other sport professional's, careers in Finland. Various types, meaning the background within sport or their career path, of sport professionals benefit from networks. Outside influencers are often in a significant role. Key individuals heavily influence careers and external legitimization is required for advancement. Being an individual, who comes from within a certain sport, meaning that they have a background in another leadership role or as an athlete, seems to be an indicator to sport organizations that they have already attained some legitimacy as a sport leader. (Laakso 2016, 157-159.) Networking is also an important part of coaching education due to its large importance in the sport profession. It has been found that participants place a higher value on traditional coaching clinics when they emphasise networking or mentoring. Coaching clinics are sometimes seen as a way to improve one's resume or networks rather than coaching skills. (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 187.)

Networking was crucial due to the hiring practises in place. Coaches were aware of the hiring practices because they emphasised the value of networking. The coaches felt that you needed to know people in order to advance, not necessarily to a position that would be classed as higher in an organizations hierarchy but to different positions and opportunities, and be offered coaching positions. This was especially evident in football

and in ice hockey. “The thing is that the coaching side of things really is such that the more you know people and network, then the easier it is to get a job in the future.” “Kyllähän tää valmennuspuoli on kuitenkin semmoinen, että mitä enemmän sinä ihmisiä tunnet ja verkostoidut, niin sitä helpommin voi sitten tulevaisuudessa saada sitten töitä.” (Coach 4.) This further supports the argument that sport organizations have a unique operating system with its own unique cultural norms and values. Elite level athletes are very valued when sport organizations recruit coaches to the coaching profession and hiring is mostly done through networks. Coaches have to be well known, in order to get offered coaching opportunities or positions.

Although the culture and hiring practises can pose a challenge for female coaches, none of the coaches in my study expressed the male being preferred when it came to hiring. One of the coaches expressed being displeased about not being offered a certain position at a certain time but the people she was competing against for the position were women. The team sport coaches in male dominated sports did however, express that they felt they had to prove themselves more all the time because they were women. Their own perception was that men in the organization question their skills and authority because of their gender.

“You are always wondering whether or not you are good enough and what you should do to be good. And well these are female issues as well. I feel that as a female coach in a male dominated sport that you have to prove that you can manage twice as much.” (Coach 2.)

“Sitä miettii aina, että onko riittävän hyvä, ja mitä pitää tehdä jotta olisi hyvä. Ja sitten on näitä naisasioita myös. Kyllä mä koen, sen että naisvalmentajana miehisessä lajissa joutuu kaksi kertaa enemmän koko ajan todistamaan että pärjää.” (Coach 2.)

One of the coaches also expressed that her gender made her consider a certain coaching position differently because it involved coaching men and she was not sure how she

would be received. She also felt that attitudes toward female coaches might influence the way the athletes would perceive her and may question her skills and knowledge, which again shows that women feel that they have to prove themselves in male dominated sports.

”I did think about it when they asked [me to be a coach], that they had a need and so on. I did wonder how the gentlemen would receive me because they know I’m the opposite sex. They could be like what does she think she’s doing here etc.” (Coach 6.)

“Kyllä mä mietin sitä silloin kun sinne kysyttiin [valmentajaksi], että tarvetta on ja näin pois päin. Mietin sitä, että mitenkähän herrat ottavat minut siellä vastaan, koska tietävät että olen vastakkaista sukupuolta. Siellä voi tulla että mitä tuo nyt luulee tänne tulevansa ja näin pois päin.” (Coach 6.)

Sometimes even the initiatives to get more women involved with coaching can create a challenge for women, when it comes to becoming qualified and feeling competent as a coach. Positive discrimination is a type of action, which has been used both in policy and initiatives to get more women into coaching. It has also been mentioned by coaches as being influential in advancing the careers of female coaches. Positive discrimination includes favouring a certain gender when designing recruiting initiatives, special funds etc. as well as making conscious decisions to hire women through quotas or simply favouring women when hiring. Positive discrimination still being discrimination is cause for it being very disputed. Some argue that creating equal opportunity does not include favouring women as this discriminates against men. (Norman 2012; Auld et. al. 2009.) These types of initiatives can however cause female coaches to doubt their own competence.

“I don’t want to believe that I have gotten any job just because I am a woman. I have thought that it’s really important, that I want to get to those things [coaching

positions] because of my know-how and not my gender. I still today want to believe that it has gone that way. Of course when it comes to certain positions it has probably been beneficial that there have been very few female coaches, and they have wanted them [female coaches] to become involved.” (Coach 2.)

“Mä en haluaisi uskoa, että mä olen missään vaiheessa päässyt mihinkään pestiin vain sen takia että mä olen nainen. Mä olen pitänyt sitä tosi tärkeänä, että mä haluan aina päästä niihin juttuihin mun osaamisen takia, enkä sukupuolen takia. Mä haluan uskoa edelleenkin tänä päivänäkin siihen, että se on mennyt myös näin. Tietenkin varmaan tietyissä paikoissa on ollut hyötyä siitä, että on ollut vain vähän naisvalmentajia, ja niitä [naisvalmentajia] on haluttu sitten mukaan.”(Coach 2.)

For a coach it can be extremely harmful not to be aware of one’s own know-how. It can moderate the speed at which a female coaches career advances. Being qualified and competent for the job was very important to all of the coaches who participated in my study. Not knowing the skills and knowledge required to coach a certain team even caused one of the coaches to hesitate when asked to be the head coach. She did not realize that she had all the skills and know-how to be the head coach until she was forced by circumstance to take over the position.

“I was asked earlier if I wanted to [be the head coach]. Then I just said that I wasn’t ready for it yet. Then when the time came, then I was ready after all. Then I noticed that I could do this [be the head coach].” (Coach 4.)

”Kysyttiin multa aikaisemminkin jo sitä, että haluanko mä [olla päävalmentaja] Sitten mä vaan totesin, että en ole valmis vielä siihen. Sitten kun se aika tuli, niin sitten olikin jo valmis. Sitten huomasin, että tähän [päävalmentajana olemiseen] pystyykin.” (Coach 4.)

A coach has to be very self-aware of her own skills as well as her strengths and weaknesses. This can help her navigate both the coaching educational system and the entire coaching profession.

4.6 The career rat race

In a traditional career, an individual only works for a few organizations during the time span of their entire professional career. Evidence of a more traditional career path was present in some of the coaches' career paths that participated in my study. Two of the coaches had worked for only a few organizations during their careers whilst the other four had worked for many different organizations during their careers. It is notable, that the two coaches who had only worked for a few organizations (2-3) had not advanced upward in the hierarchy of the organization, but worked in the same position or within the same team. This is most likely due to the fact that there is very little hierarchy within sport organizations, especially at club level where the two coaches had been working. Even though there may not be the same level of commitment to one or two organizations, coaches still have to be very committed to their careers. As one of the coaches expressed it when describing the nature of work of a coach:

“Not that I have really at the moment like at all thought that “OH NO” that I have taken that time [at work]. I wouldn't have been able not take it and I wouldn't have wanted to not take it. I've been able to make that choice myself and on the other hand, been given a family that have supported that I have been able to do so. Like I've said that, although I feel a lot of gratitude and humility that great we have had the kind of athletes who we've been able to get far with, but at the same time I feel drained. I know that this profession and career has taken its toll.” (Coach 5.)

“Ei sillä että mä niin kuin oikeestaan tällä hetkellä olisin niin kuin yhtään ajatellut, että voi voi kun mä oon sen ajan ottanut [töissä]. En mä olisi osannut

olla ottamatta enkä olisi ehkä halunnutkaan. Itsehän mä sen valinnan olen saanut tehdä, ja oon saanut toisaalta myös perheen mikä tukee, että on voinut tehdä sillain. Niin kuin sanottu niin vaikka tässä on syvä kiitollisuus ja nöyryys siitä että mahtavaa, että meillä on ollut semmoisia urheilijoita joiden kanssa me ollaan päästy pitkälle, mutta sitten samaan aikaan on kulunutkin olo siinä rinnalla. Tiedän että se on oman veronsa ottanut tää ammatti ja tää ura.” (Coach 5.)

This type of career where a coach only works for one to two organizations during her entire career is very unusual for coaches, especially at the elite level, as coaches usually seem to be very easily exchangeable if unable to attain traditional success. Four of the coaches in my study had occupied several coaching positions in many different organizations in their careers so far. In a sport coaches career it seems to simply be a reality that you will get fired or have to change jobs at some point during your career.

“Probably one of the hardest things to face as a coach, resigning from a post or getting fired or something...there is a saying that there are only coaches who...have been fired and those who will be fired. All great coaches get fired at some point but how you deal with it is another issue.” (Coach 2.)

“Valmentajien yksi kovimpia paikkoja ovat irtisanoutumiset tai potkut tai jotain muuta. Semmoinen sanonta on olemassa, että on niitä valmentajia jotka ovat saaneet potkut, ja on niitä jotka tulevat saamaan potkut. Kaikki huippuvalmentajat jossain vaiheessa saa ne potkut, mutta se, että miten sä pystyt ne käsittelemään, se on sitten toinen juttu.” (Coach 2.)

Careers in sport are individual and diverse. To advance both individual characteristics, organizational and cultural factors can be detected to have an impact. Careers are not

only built upwards toward the top of the hierarchy but consist of different situations and events. (Laakso 2016, 156.) “The path was sort of a zigzag.” “Se polku oli semmoinen polveileva” (Coach 5.) A coaches’ career consisting of different situations and event can also be seen in the way that it is possible to coach as serious leisure. Coaching at as serious leisure does however, mean that a coach has to secure her income from another job. Having several employers simultaneously creates challenges, which could be seen in the careers of the voluntary female coaches who participated in my study. If a coach gets very small or no monetary compensation for coaching, it means that she has to secure all or most of her income from another job, which in turn means that she will not be able to commit as much of her time to coaching.

“I wish that it [working part time as a coach] would be possible to some degree for these people who do coach. That you would be able to get enough [salary] to be able to not have to work a full day [in another job]. I believe that it would make it easier for a lot of people and maybe make it possible to continue coaching a little bit longer.” (Coach 3.)

“Mä justiin toivoisin että se [valmentaminen osa-aikaisesti] olisi jollain asteella mahdollista näille ihmisille jotka tekee [sitä]. Se, että pystyisi saamaan ehkä sen verran [palkkaa], että ei tarvitsisi ihan täyttä päivää tehdä [toisessa työssä]. Mä uskoisin, että se helpottaisi aika montaa, ja mahdollistaisi ehkä sen valmennusuran jatkumisen vähän pidempään.” (Coach 3.)

Compatibility between the individual and career has become more important (More, Gunz & Hall 2007, 31). This compatibility includes the goals of the organization and individual matching. The compatibility between the individual and the organizations values and activity has a greater emphasis. Although all of the coaches were highly committed to their respective sport disciplines, they also felt that if the goals and level of motivation between organizations, coaches and athletes did not match, that their level

of motivation at work would be much lower. Goals of the coach and organization need to match the team and athlete.

“I do enjoy it [coaching], enjoy working with the girls. It’s nice and they are really nice people, and all of them are really committed and motivated, and it’s probably the biggest reason why you manage yourself. Then if there would be the kind of group that’s not committed nor motivated then you would lose motivation yourself.” (Coach 4.)

“Kyllä nautin [valmentamisesta], nautin tekemisestä tyttöjen kanssa. Se on kyllä mukavaa, ja ne on tosi kivoja ihmisiä ja ne on kaikki sitoutuneita ja motivoituneita, ja se on ehkä se suurin syy miksi itsekin jaksaa. Sitten jos olisi semmoinen ryhmä, joka ei ole sitoutunut eikä motivoitunut, niin kyllä siinä itselläkin loppuisi motivaatio.” (Coach 4.)

Achieving this compatibility between coaches and the organization that they work for can be challenging because of the way that Finnish sport is organized. As most of the coaches work in sport clubs that are non-profit organizations that are run by volunteers’ professional coaches are faced with the challenge of working with non-professionals. This is further complicated by the way that the voluntary culture of clubs has changed. The expectations and responsibilities associated with different roles within sport clubs have changed and fewer people are willing to volunteer, especially for longer periods of time, at the club level (Szerovay 2015, 123).

“Then a challenge is of course the field that sport clubs operate in...of course it’s a kind of issue that if we every spring have to be in the situation that our employer changes. People who are responsible for this full-time, we work here, so if they are always changing the people who are coming to run this organization and who don’t know anything about it who are the parents of small

athletes and we have to, our own employer, start training and educating into the system of our sport then of course it's a thing that influences our ability to do our work." (Coach 5.)

“Sitten haasteena on tietenkin tämä seuratoimintakenttä...tottakai se on semmoinen asia että jos me joka kevät ollaan siinä tilanteessa, että meidän työnantajataho muuttuu, niin työ vaikeutuu. Ihmiset jotka vastaavat tästä päätoimisten ohella, me ollaan töissä täällä, jos ne niin kuin aina vaihtuu ne ihmiset jotka tulee tätä organisaatiota pyörittämään, ja jotka ei tiedä mistään mitään, jotka on joiden pikku-urheilijoiden vanhempia, ja meidän pitää ruveta niitä, omaa työnantajatahoamme kouluttamaan ja opettamaan tähän meidän lajin systeemiin, niin tottakai sekin on semmoinen asia, joka sitten ilman muuta vaikuttaa tähän meidän työ tekemiseen.” (Coach 5.)

The sport club setting presents a unique set of challenges because of the unique way that sport clubs are organized and run. It would be very unusual in most businesses if an employee would have to educate and train their employer every year.

Coaching requires a very high level of commitment to the profession. Without it coaching would not be possible as developing athletes requires dedication and commitment (Kaski 2013, 124). Although this caused the coaches in my study to be very passionate about their work, it also made the nature of their work very strenuous.

“I have a recollection that this is very stressful and demanding this job. I don't at all remember this as kind of easy, light and great. Many times I have thought whether or not this has been worth it. This takes a lot of time away from family-life and private life.” (Coach 5.)

“Mulla on muistikuva siitä, että tää on erittäin stressaavaa ja kuormittavaa tää työ. En mä ollenkaan muistele tätä semmoisena helppona, kevyenä ja hienona. Todella monta kertaa olen pohtinut sitä, että onko tämä ollut sen arvoista. Kyllä tää vie perhe-elämältä ja yksityiselämästä tosi paljon aikaa.” (Coach 5.)

In today's society, especially because of the technological developments that have occurred in recent years, the line between work and private life has become blurred. The existence of the features mostly associated with traditional careers has become questionable. These blurred lines between work and private life are also true for coaches because of the nature of the profession. In Finland, the workload of a coach is unevenly divided during the season and at times coaches have to spend more time at work (Kaski 2013, 119). This can create a challenge for many coaches, as achieving a balance between work and free time can be even more difficult when something that has previously been your hobby has become your profession.

“Maybe by scheduling. Your calendar will fill up for sure if you let it. You need to make sure that you sometimes make yourself the priority and force those holidays in there [the calendar]. Making a note in there early that this is my time and not work. The challenge is when your hobby has become your work, that there aren't those lines”. (Coach 2.)

“Sitten ehkä aikatauluttamisella. Kalenteri täyttyy ihan varmasti, jos sen antaa täyttyä. Huolehtii siitä että pitää itseänsä välillä tärkeämpänä, ja lyö sinne [kalenteriin] niitä lomivia väkisin. Merkkää sinne ajoissa, että tää aika on mun eikä työ. Se haaste on tietenkin kun harrastuksesta on tullut työ, niin siinä ei ole sitä rajaa.” (Coach 2.)

Athletes often appreciate coaches being “more than a coach”. Being knowledgeable, passionate, inspirational and enthusiastic were considered to be important personality

characteristics for a great coach. (Becker 2009, 99.) Athletes also often emphasise the importance of being able to discuss everything with their coach (Hämäläinen 2008). This can further complicate drawing those lines between work and private life. Not being able to do this is very draining for coaches, which is why the profession is considered to be very demanding.

“On the other hand it’s a really demanding [coaching] style because you have to be reachable 24/7. I might get phone calls at 11 o’clock at night where someone still wants to tell me something. It requires you to commit to it. You can’t just put your phone away, or you could but then the message would be different to the athletes.” (Coach 4.)

“Toisaalta se on helvetin raskas tyyli [valmentaa], koska sä oot tavoitettavissa sitten 24/7. Mulle saattaa tulla puheluita 11 aikaa illalla missä halutaan vielä kertoa jotakin juttuja. Kyllähän se vaatii itseltäkin sen sitoutumisen siihen. Ei voi vaan laittaa puhelinta pois päältä, tai voisi varmaan mutta sitten se viesti voisi olla taas eri urheilijoiden suuntaan.” (Coach 4.)

Creating a support network for young coaches could be important since it seems that they cannot allocate their resources as well as the older coaches. Full-time coaches also have fewer resources at work than voluntary coaches. Full-time coaches have fewer possibilities to influence decision-making and the pace of work and feel less of a sense of control than the voluntary coaches. Voluntary coaches have a smaller role and can therefore focus on their role and ignore all of the other things going on in the organization. The way the organization functions, influences the full-time coach more than a voluntary coach. (Kaski 2013, 121.) The coaches who had coached full-time at some point during their careers all felt that coaching was strenuous and controlling the pace of their work was difficult. This caused many of them to feel exhausted and even become jaded toward the profession. The job descriptions of female coaches are also often very broad. Four of the coaches had other responsibilities in their job descriptions

and the other two described coaching as being a versatile profession. This is consistent with the modern definition of career.

“Workdays were very scattered, between 8 in the morning and 10 o’clock at night. That’s when you become sort of exhausted or you felt that that you can’t get as much out of yourself compared to what you want to give and it almost became a little bit like jaded. Maybe you got a little bit fed up in the moment. That’s when it became kind of like I’m going to quit everything and take a break and figure out what I’m going to do with my life.” (Coach 6.)

“Työpäivät oli hyvin rikkonaisia, aamukahdeksan ja iltakymmenen välille. Niin silloin tulee ehkä vähän semmoinen jonkun sorttinen uupuminen, tai koki että itsestään ei saa enään niin paljon irti mitä haluaisi antaa, ja siitä meinasi tulla semmoista vähän, voiko nyt sanoa että puuta. Ehkä siihen vähän leipiintyi siinä hetkessä. Silloin tuli semmoinen, että nyt lopetan kaiken ja pidän huilia, ja mietin mitä elämälläni teen.” (Coach 6.)

In my study, drawing the lines between work and private life challenged the voluntary coaches to different extents. This depended very much on the level of resources available to them. The voluntary coach, who had coached in a more extensive coaching team, meaning that there were several coaches coaching the team, felt less challenges than the coach who had coached a team, which only had a few coaches. However most sport clubs feel that they are suffering from a shortage of personnel both at the team and management level (see Szerovay 2015). With a limited number of staff coaches can begin feeling like “that you are sometimes kind of being run over by a steamroller and you are just trying to make it [the team] run smoothly.” “Sit siinä välillä tulee semmoinen että juna jyrää yli, että se on vaan sitä että sä yrität saada pyörimään sen homman.” (Coach 3.) Giving a voluntary coach too many responsibilities compared to the resources available to them can cause coaches to become overwhelmed.

The coaching profession is more flexible than other professions. Coaching has very flexible working hours. Some women have found that the flexibility of the profession is even an advantage when combining work and child-care responsibilities (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand 2016, 4). Women and men, who feel that they are able to control their work and the things that cause their stress, exhibit less symptoms of stress. Good self-esteem also has a positive effect on experiences of stress for both men and women. By being more flexible and letting women work more flexible hours, organizations can alleviate their stress as this can help them balance their work and family-lives. (Piitulainen, Rönkkö, Jaakkola & Kuhmonen 2003, 136-139.) This diversity and its benefits could also be seen in the answers in my study.

“But then maybe there is some balance in this work, like the job description being moderately broad, this has a lot of draining qualities, but then this has balancing qualities, like the lessons for the younger athletes where the stress is not so high even though learning should happen all the time but its not like that, somehow the borders aren't right here tomorrow, but they are like a year or two away.” (Coach 5.)

“Mutta sitten ehkä tässä joku semmoinen balanssi on tässä työssä, sillain että tää toimenkuva on kohtuullisen laaja, tässä on tosi paljon semmoisia kuormittavia tekijöitä, mutta sitten tässä on semmoisia balansoivia tekijöitä, joita vaikkapa on ne niitten pienten urheilijoiden tunnit, joissa se stressi ei oo niin kova, vaikka koko ajan pitäisi oppia kaikkia asioita, mutta se ei oo niin, jotenkin ne rajat ei oo niin kuin just heti tässä huomenna, vaan ne on niin kuin vähän vuoden tai kahden päässä.” (Coach 5.)

Women constantly face hurdles to their success as head coaches. Most coaches still view their possibilities to advance in their careers very positively. Passion for the sport that you coach is important in the pursuit of a career in coaching. (Morris, Arthur-

Banning & McDowell 2014, 183.) Coaches do not commit to one organization but to their sport. All of the coaches in my study expressed extremely high levels of commitment to their own sport and coaching. “I have always worked a lot...I have given more than everything of myself to this [coaching].” “Mä oon aina tehnyt ihan helvetisti töitä ... kyllä mä olen antanut itsestäni enemmän kuin kaiken tälle [valmentamiselle].” (Coach 2.) This type of high level of commitment shows elements of the influence of the traditional definition of a career. The high level of commitment required by the coaching profession as well as its other draining features caused many of the coaches in my study to seek out professional help in order to help balance their lives. Being able to do this was a very important resource for the coaches who took part in work counselling.

“Then maybe one of the biggest factors is that I have the possibility to go, every three weeks or more often if I want to, to work counselling to a kind of therapist and there I get to unravel in peace and then find ways and solutions. It’s been kind of the biggest resource that I have had here. Sometimes we do self-improvement exercises and other things. It’s been golden that, that kind of thing has been organized.” (Coach 4.)

”Sitten ehkä sitten suurimpana tekijänä, että mulla on mahdollisuus käydä joka kolmas viikko tai vaikka useammin, jos mä haluan niin työnohjauksessa semmoisella terapeutilla, ja sillä mä saan sitten purkautua ihan rauhassa, ja sitten etsitään keinoja ja ratkaisuja. Se on ollut oikeastaan semmoinen isoin voimavara, mikä mulla on ollut tossa noin. Välillä tehdään semmoisia itsensäkehittämisharjoituksia sun muuta. Se on ollut kullannarvoista, että semmoinen on järjestynyt.” (Coach 4.)

4.6.1 Career success

Traditionally the level of an employee within the organization and salary has defined success in one's career. On the other hand, the modern definition emphasises the responsibility of the individual, where freedom and growth are the main goals and work satisfaction has a greater role when defining career success. (Harrington & Hall 2007, 9–11.) When it comes to coaches, society often identifies them as great or successful based on their win/loss records and media attention. A different definition for success could be performance in terms of winning or self-perceived performance abilities or positive psychological responses from athletes. (Becker 2009, 93-94.) Society defining a coach's success based on win/loss records and media attention is more consistent with the traditional definition of career success. Traditional career success comes with its own challenges.

The higher the level that the coach is coaching, the more pressure he or she feels to achieve results (Kaski 2013, 120). Traditional career success is not defined by the coach herself, which can create a lot of stress for a coach, as society is not influenced simply by the facts but also by the cultural norms. Women see gender both as a factor that influences success as well as a challenge or hindering factor. Men do not feel that gender influences their careers. (Laakso 2016, 161.) Gender stereotypes have often defined the characteristics required for successful leaders. Women are often thought not to possess these qualities because they are often described as typically male. Women who exhibit more feminine leadership characteristics may lose out on certain positions because they do not possess enough masculine characteristics. At the organization level, female leaders experience stress especially due to the nature of their work and the working environment. In order to succeed, women often have to adapt to the typically masculine organizational culture by adopting its attitudes and values. Women are often left out of unofficial networks proceeding at the workplace as women often feel that they get less support at work than their male counterparts. Women, who feel that their efforts are undervalued and who are given responsibilities without the appropriate resources, often feel more stress. (Piitulainen et al. 2003, 134.)

“The more public and discernible this job has become and the bigger the position has become, then the more it has also created pressure and through that it has

brought stress and problems with managing work. You think more about those [coaching related] things and you end up in different, bigger situations and more visible situations.” (Coach 2.)

“Mitä julkisempaa tästä työstä ja näkyvämpää ja mitä isommaksi se asema on tullut, niin sitä enemmän se on tuonut myös painetta, ja sitä kautta ehkä tai onkin tuonut stressiä, ja ongelmia sit siinä jaksamisessa. Niitä pohtii enemmän niitä [valmennukseen liittyviä] asioita, ja joutuu enemmän erilaisiin isompiin tilanteisiin, ja näkyvimpiin tilanteisiin.” (Coach 2.)

The media often emphasises the roles of female athletes as wives and mothers rather than focusing on their athletic talents (Aicher & Samariniotis 2012, 194). This is also true for coaches. Defining success based on media attention is unfounded if attention is not based on skills or merits as a coach. The increase in media attention for a coach can result in more scrutiny from the public. This criticism is not always based on coach’s merits, even in a traditional sense, but is many times guided by societal norms. Coaching and sport are still considered a male domain and this can be seen in the comments made about female coaches by the public. Especially since the emergence of social media, the amount of media attention that a coach receives has increased. Some of the coaches in my study mentioned that the criticism as well as praise that they get from new age media, as well as traditional media, is very different from the criticism that their male colleagues receive. “I don’t think that those kinds of things [criticism] originate as easily toward male coaches. The criticism goes more into their work and concerning the sport, when towards women the criticism is very different.” “Mä en usko että tollaisia juttuja yhtä herkästi tulee miesvalmentajaa kohtaan. Se kritiikki menee enemmän siihen työhön ja siihen urheiluun liittyen, kun sitten naista kohtaan niin se arvostelu on hyvin erilaista.” (Coach 2.) The examples of tweets presented in Image 1 and Image 2 show the kind of scrutiny that female coaches are faced with.



Image 1. “Can you see women on the field or as coaches, then why in the studio and commenting, an all time low!!!!!!” Tweet about a Finnish female commentator during the 2016 football European Championships. (Ice Tiki 2016)



Image 2. “Strange to approach through gender, because expertise, observational skills and intellect do not concern gender.” Tweet about the discussion on female commentators during the 2016 football European Championships. (MDA 2016)

Female coaches are still seen as anomalies in male dominated sport, especially as the coaches of male teams. This is evident through the discussion that arose when a female commentator was commenting on men’s football games during the European Championships in 2016. What was notable about the discussion was that the criticism was not related to the coach’s skills as a coach, expertise or other abilities in any way, but simply her gender e.g. Image 1. As can be seen from Image 2, female coaches do not only receive criticism and negative feedback from the public. The public discussion became very heated because many people began to tweet about the competency and skill of the female commentator. It was however interesting how the discussion was still very centred around gender rather than skills or merits. As one of the other coaches in my study also pointed out, media is not the only source of criticism. One of the

challenges of the coaching profession is that the job includes having to receive a lot of feedback from various sources.

“In a coaching career in our sport, and probably not in any other sport either, can you be very vulnerable, kind of sensitive because you do receive all kinds of critique. Some of it’s probably justified but then there’s a lot of a kind of overreactions because sport always generates all kinds of emotions. Maybe it would be a little bit different if you would have waited and not given feedback straight away.” (Coach 1.)

“Ei meidän lajissamme valmentajan uralla, eikä varmaan muussakaan lajissa, voi olla hirveän hienohipiäinen, sillä tavalla arka, koska kyllähän sitä tulee kaikennäköistä arvostelua. Osa siitä on varmaan ihan niin kuin paikallaankin, mutta sitten tulee varmaan paljon sellaisia, jotka on vähän ylilyöntejä, koska urheilu aina sytyttää kaikennäköisiä tunteita. Ehkä olisi ollut vähän erilaista, jos olisi odottanut hetken eikä heti antanut palautetta.” (Coach 1.)

Although there are positions that are considered more prestigious than others, such as coaching the national team, there is still very little hierarchy within sport organizations, especially sport clubs. This was also evident in the answers given by the coaches that I interviewed for my study. For example as one coaches expressed it: “There isn’t really any kind of professional hierarchy, that there would be any kind of positions, I mean that there aren’t any posts that I could think of, that I could somehow get higher in my situation.” ”No kun tässä ei oo niin kuin mitään semmoista, ammatillista hierarkiaa sinänsä, että tässä olisi jotain tehtäviä, tarkoitan tässä ei oo mitään semmoisia posteja mitä voisin ajatella, että mä tästä asemassa nousisin jotekin.” (Coach 5.) The lack of professional hierarchy in sport, which is consistent with the modern definition of a career, and society defining the success of a coach in terms, which are more consistent with the traditional definition can create a lot of conflict for coaches. This could be seen

in the way that the coaches' definition of career success had changed over their coaching careers.

“That for me has been a change in my thinking; before I used to think that the sign of a good coach was the higher he or she was and what his or her position was, but today I think that it doesn't guarantee that the other wouldn't be as good of a coach and that there are different kinds of coaches.” (Coach 2.)

“Se on ehkä ollut mulle se myöskin se ajatusmallin muutos, että ennen kun niin kuin se hyvän valmentajan merkki oli se, että mitä korkeammalla se oli, ja mikä sen pesti oli, niin tänä päivänä mä ajattelen sen silleen, että se ei takaa yhtään sitä, että se toinen ei olisi yhtä hyvä koutsi, että on erilaisia valmentajia.” (Coach 2.)

The influence of the traditional definition of a career in terms of what defines career success made the coaches view success as win/loss records and prestigious positions especially at the beginning of their careers. Prestigious positions were considered to be coaching the national team or an athlete at the elite level. The coaches described their career development as taking a zigzag path rather than a linear one, however all of them described their career development as constantly developing toward more success. In this context, success was not seen as a certain coaching position or winning medals or championships, but progressing toward coaching elite level athletes and developing the team or athlete, which in the sport context means progressing upwards in the hierarchy. Both the traditional and the modern definitions clearly influence the coach's perceptions about career success, however only the individual can define her own success.

The influence of both the traditional and modern definitions of success could also be seen in the contrast between answers when the coaches were asked to describe successes that they had experienced during their careers to when they were asked to give concrete examples. The examples or most memorable moments of success were

more consistent with the traditional definition of success, as they were moments where winning or athletic success was involved. When describing success in more general terms the coaches mostly spoke about successes that they had experienced in everyday coaching and not only success in individual games or competitions.

“When I got involved with coaching that team or when I took responsibility of coaching strength and conditioning, that was maybe when I experienced those first real experiences of success, when we received the gold medals and all of the profile athletes were still physically intact at that point. That’s when you knew that something had been done right and you’re actions had been successful. The experiences of success really are those when you are thanked for the training sessions, you can see that the athletes are enjoying themselves.”
(Coach 6.)

“Silloin kun hyppäsin siihen joukkueeseen remmiin, tai otin fysiikkavalmennuksesta vastuun, niin siinä ehkä koin ensimmäiset kunnolliset onnistumisen kokemukset, kun kultamitalit viritettiin kaulaan ja kaikki profiilipelaajat oli vielä ehjiä siinä vaiheessa. Että silloin niin kuin tiesi, että jotain on tehty oikein, ja siinä omassa toiminnassa on onnistunut. Kyllä ne onnistumisen kokemukset on niitä, että saa kiitosta treeneistä, ja näkee että urheilijat viihtyy.” (Coach 6.)

Although the coach mentioned an experience of success that involved winning, the success was not that they had won but that they had succeeded in training the team and keeping the athlete’s from getting injured. The coaches emphasised that the “big” moments of success, which meant success in the more traditional sense, were transient and only lasted for a little while and were often accompanied by the feeling of emptiness. Everyday coaching was seen as being much more motivating and the fuel that kept the coaches involved with the profession.

“People always say medals and winning. Everyday coaching is where you get more of those [experiences of success]. Those [medals and winning] are small and fast great moments and then it’s like over. Everyday coaching is it. Takes more time but then maybe it’s more rewarding when you look back in time, when they are always over so quickly, the finals. If you base the whole thing [coaching] on that [winning] it’s pretty empty then.” (Coach 3.)

“Aina sanotaan että mitalit ja voitot. Kyllähän se on se arki, mistä sä enemmän niitä [onnistumisen kokemuksia] saat. Ne [mitalit ja voittamiset] on pieniä nopeita huippuhetkiä, ja sit se on niin kuin ohi. Kyllä se arki on se. Vie enemmän aikaa, mut sit ehkä palkitsevampaa, kun sä katsot sitä aikaa taaksepäin, kun ne on niin äkkiä ohi sitten ne finaalipelit aina. Jos sä vaan perustat sen koko homman [valmentamisen] siihen [voittamiseen], niin se on aika tyhjä sitten.” (Coach 3.)

Although the coaches felt that successes involving developing the individual and the team as a whole were more important than winning, they still recognized that traditional career success could sometimes also be beneficial for their coaching careers. Coaching an athlete who had succeeded at the elite level or attaining a prestigious elite level coaching position or award could make the challenges of everyday coaching simpler.

“It is easier of course if you have one successful athlete and you go to your city’s sport office, then of course everyone knows that that well known athlete needs a practice time at a facility. It does open doors in a different way. The possibilities to improve training conditions as the coach of a successful athlete, even if you are a woman, are significantly improved when you get success, that’s clear.” (Coach 1.)

”On helpompaa tietenkin, jos sulla on yks menestynyt urheilija, niin ainakin kun meet oman kaupungin liikuntatoimeen, niin on tietysti, jokainen tietää että se tunnettu menestynyt urheilija tarvitsee harjoitusvuoron. Kyllä se aukaisee ovia ihan erilailla. Mahdollisuudet parantaa olosuhteita menestyneen urheilijan valmentajana, vaikka olisit nainen, parantuu kyllä ihan huomattavasti kun sitä menestystä tulee, se on ihan selvä.” (Coach 1.)

Although the coaching profession presents coaches with a lot of challenges, very few barriers were mentioned. Very few coaches perceive any barriers to becoming a head coach. (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 184.) The barriers that were pointed out were combining a full-time job with volunteering coaching and family-life. The inability to find this balance and the resources was forcing the coach to take a step back from the profession because of a lack of time resources. This seemed to be the cause of a lack of compatibility between the goals and level of commitment required from the organization and the individual. Only one of the full-time coaches felt that there were any barriers to coaching. She expressed that the lack of future athletic talent could possibly be a barrier for her career, as this would force her to adjust her own goals a lot. Again, this shows the importance of the compatibility between organization and the individual. The large importance of compatibility between the organization and individual shows that the coaches' perceptions about their careers are influenced more by the modern definition in this instance.

4.6.2 Coaching is a team sport

One of the more dominant themes that emerged during my study was that coaching is very much a team sport, whether or not the coach actually coaches a team or an individual athlete. The tasks of a coach are manifold and broad. The profession of coaching has very high time-demands, which can create very stressful situations. In a study published by Kilty (2006) women participating in coaching conferences expressed struggling with combining work and family-life. This resulted in putting their career on hold to have children or remaining assistant coaches instead of pursuing head coach

positions. The traditional gender roles do not allow for the possibility of being loyal to both family and profession. The importance of a supportive spouse was emphasised and also a network of family and friends who are willing to help. (Kilty 2006, 226-227.) Kaski (2013) also concluded, in her study on the wellbeing of coaches at work, that the coaching profession is demanding and requires decision-making skills, has quantitative demands (working-hours) and creates a conflict between work and family (Kaski 2013, 119). A coaching career requires commitment from the coaches' family. This often seems to be more important for women than for men. In a study conducted by Sisjord, Fasting and Sand (2016, 4) on the different career paths to becoming an elite coach in Norway found that women considered family more than men during their careers but saw family as mostly being a supportive factor rather than a hindering one. Partners are seen to be enablers for women's careers as sport leaders (Laakso 2016, 162-165).

Since traditional family roles have changed in today's society and the nature of work and when work is done having being different, a holistic career has greater meaning. There is no longer a focus on just work in the definition of a successful career, but also on the compatibility of work and private life. Productivity at work can decrease if one's experiences in private-life or family-life are stronger than in work-life, but family and non-working time can also enrich work-life and therefore make individuals more effective (Greenhaus & Foley 2007, 131-134). Family-life is however, often seen as one of the greatest challenges for a career. Family and private-life is also seen to influence career related decisions. (Harrington & Hall 2007, 4.)

Family influence on female coaches' careers emerged in several ways during my study. Family and friends were seen as a resource for coping with the stressful nature of the profession but was also seen to cause conflict between career and family as well as create challenges. Family influenced many of the coaches' career decisions. This did not only mean the coaches' spouses or children but also family and friends.

“From here there is still a humane distance to my hometown, so if I would have to leave to the other side of Finland then I would have to think about it. Then if you would know that it's something project natured for example that it's a gig

for a few years to see how it starts going, then I wouldn't see it as impossible.”

(Coach 6.)

“Tästä nyt on vielä inhimillinen matka kotipaikkakunnalle, että jos ihan toiselle puolelle Suomea joutuisi lähtemään, niin kyllä sitä hetken joutuisi miettimään.

Sitten taas jos tietää, että on kyse jostain projektiluontoisesta, esimerkiksi että on vaikka parin vuoden setti, niin siinä katsoo että mitenkä se lähtee sujumaan, niin en mä silloin sitä mahdottomuudeksi näkisi.” (Coach 6.)

Family and friends provide coaches with a support network, which is why it has such a big influence on career decisions. Social support outside of work is more important for most women compared to internal social support (from inside the organization) (Piitulainen et al 2003, 138). The support of family and friends is crucial for a female coach. Family influences female coaches' careers at different stages in their lives and creates challenges, but was mostly seen as a positive resource. Moving in order to further one's career is not always an easy decision to make, due to interests outside of work, which is why organizations need to take this into consideration when designing work. Relocation because of work may also cause challenges because of the lack of possibilities for women to coach professionally. Relocating may sometimes happen because of the spouse's career needs, which in turn can again create a conflict between family and career for the coach. This gives female coaches' careers more elements of a modern career because of the lack of structure and linear progression.

“Probably my coaching career has been defined by our family's relocations, we have moved a lot from one place to another and a lot of starting again and even starting a new club...None of these moves have been down to me. They have originated because of my husband's job and the relocation of jobs.” (Coach 1.)

“Varmaan niin kuin tätä mun valmentajauraa on kuvannut ne meidän perheen muuttamiset, että meillä on ollut paljon muuttoja paikasta toiseen, ja paljon

uudelleen aloittamista, ja jopa uuden seuran käynnistämistä...Mitkään nämä meidän muutot eivät ole olleet minun suunnittelemani siirtoja. Että ne on tullut ton mun miehen työn ja työpaikkojen siirtymisten takia.” (Coach 1.)

There is still a clear conflict between work and private-life. The effects of non-working time on work cannot be eliminated completely, which is why it should be taken into consideration in professional careers. Employers can no longer encourage employees to step into a different role when entering the workplace and forget about the things that have occurred at home, since they will influence the employee whether the employer wants it or not. The holistic nature of work was also important for female coaches. As one of the coaches expressed it:

There are more important things in life [than coaching] and in some ways it has gotten into the right dimensions. Before, one lost match was, the world collapsed, but now I have understood that now you just work harder and it's just one match and it's not just up to me and I don't have to carry the loss or failure by myself. I have a team there and the athletes and everyone. Before I was like, I have to solve all the problems and I have to be last one to jump ship and now during the past few years it's developed into being more teamwork and I share a lot of the responsibility with the team and I feel they are important and I have learned that it's not just me who runs this.” (Coach 2.)

“Elämässä on muitakin tärkeämpiä asioita [kuin valmentaminen], ja jollain tavalla on tullut oikeanlaiset mittasuhteet sitten siihen. Ennen yksi hävitty peli oli niin, että maailma kaatui siihen, mutta nyt on ymmärtänyt sen, että nyt tehdään kovemmin töitä ja se on yks peli, ja se ei oo vaan musta kiinni, ja mun ei tarvii yksin kantaa sitä tappiota tai epäonnistumista. Mulla on tiimi siinä ja pelaajat ja kaikki että. Mä oon ennen ollut semmoinen että mun pitää ratkoa

kaikki ongelmat, ja mun pitää olla se joka hyppää viimeisenä laivasta pois, ja nyt tää on enemmän muuttunut viimeisten vuosien aikana tiimityöskentelyksi, ja mä jaan paljon vastuuta sille tiimille, ja pidän niitä tärkeinä ihmisinä, ja oppinut siihen että se ei oo vaan mun vetoista touhua.” (Coach 2.)

Working in a team makes it easier to balance life. Working and career has become an entity that also includes a social- and family-life. The balance between work and life effects the individual’s definition of career success. Employers are not the only factor influencing careers anymore. The clear change in careers puts pressure on the employees as well as the employer. Employers should investigate what a career means to the different individuals in their organizations and strive to motivate the individuals to advance in their careers. Working as a team, having a co-workers and a professional support network including mentors was seen as a major resource to cope with the strenuous nature of the profession. Not being the only one responsible for the team or a group of athletes was seen as a way to relive stress and also make coaching possible when doing it as a volunteer rather than a professional.

“Well often I have been in a lucky situation that there is a coaching team, that I haven’t have had to be responsible for the team on my own, that I have had help from there [the coaching team], and then there’s discussions, discussions and again discussion.” (Coach 6.)

“No useasti oon ollut onnellisessa tilanteessa siinä että on valmennustiimi, että ei ole tarvinnut yksi vastata koko joukkueesta, että on saanut sitten apuja sieltä [valmennustiimiltä], ja sitten on keskustelut, keskustelut ja vielä kerran keskustelut.” (Coach 6.)

The team itself was also seen to be a similar resource to coaching staff and a support network.

“In team sport the team is always such a big supporting factor. From there [the team] you can get resources for yourself even if you are having a bad day. There [in the team] there’s always someone who’s having a good day where you can get some positive energy for yourself. To manage to the next day and to the next leg and in the moment you often notice that this [coaching] is actually quite nice.” (Coach 6.)

“Joukkueurheilussa joukkue on aina niin iso kantava tekijä. Sieltä [joukkueesta] saa sitten itselleen voimavaroja vaikka olisikin vähän huonompikin päivä. Siellä [joukkueessa] aina jollakin on hyvä päivä, mistä saa sitten itsellekin sitä positiivista virtaa. Jaksaa sitten seuraavaan päivään ja seuraavaan etappiin, ja hetkessä sitä useasti huomaa että tää [valmentaminen] on oikeasti ihan mukavaa.” (Coach 6.)

The athletes can help keep a coach motivated when the athletes themselves are motivated and eager to work toward common goals. The team or any individual athlete can of course have the opposite effect on a coach’s motivation at work if they themselves are lacking in motivation. In a team sport where there obviously are more athletes to coach at once, the odds are that there will be at least one athlete who is motivated at that moment and whom the coach can use to obtain motivation from.

Being able to have conversations about coaching with colleagues and other coaching professionals was seen to be very beneficial and one of the most prominent ways of dealing with challenges. This also applied to dealing with challenges with individual athletes or the team. The coaches felt that the most efficient way to dealing with any type of challenge was through communication. Communication was also the area that the coaches felt created the most challenges, whether it is with athletes, the team, the organization or parents of athletes. The need for professionalization of the superiors of

coaches was also expressed, so that the coaches could focus on coaching and not have to deal with unnecessary feedback, which is not always constructive.

Coaching being very much a team sport can also often be a challenge for female coaches when coaching non-professional teams. This is the case for most women coaching team sport in Finland, as the number of staff is often limited and it is therefore difficult to share the workload. Some of the coaches in a coaching team may be full-time coaches, which usually means that she has to take responsibility of a larger load of the coaching responsibilities as others have limited time resources to commit to coaching. These different levels of commitment and resources may create conflict within coaching staff if areas of responsibility are not divided clearly and interaction between coaches is not working, as it should be.

Female leaders are faced with greater challenges than their male counterparts due to the challenges presented by having to balance work and family-life. Women feel more stress both in working-life as well as outside of it compared to men. Female leaders who have their own family are put under pressure by the attitudes in organizations as well as society. (Piitulainen et al, 129-133.) “In a way when there aren’t maybe any kind of dreams of a family-life nor any kind of childbearing. I have never had those. Then in a way they have never been an obstacle or speed bump for anything.” “Tavallaan kun ei ole ehkä semmoisia haaveita mitenkään missään perhe-elämässä, eikä oo semmoisia lapsensaantahaaveita. Mulla ei ole ikinä ollut semmoista. Niin tavallaan ne ei oo millään tavalla niinku esteenä tai hidasteena millekään.” (Coach 4.) Although the coach did not have a family of her own, she still viewed having a family as a challenge or barrier for her career like many of the other coaches also did. This shows the influence that traditional family roles still have on coaching careers today.

Some athletic departments have become more family friendly. The measures that have been taken include more flexible office hours and allowing children at work. This is done to ensure that coaches have the support and resources available to balance work and family life. (Morris, Arthur-Banning & McDowell 2014, 180.) Women who work often have to function in multiple roles in their lives. These roles can be stressful for women but have also been found to be beneficial, especially for female leaders. Outside of work family, friends, neighbours and other members of the community give support.

This social support has been found to increase mental wellbeing for women. (Piitulainen et al, 129-133.) Some of the coaches were even involved in work counselling in order to be able to balance their work (see subchapter 4.6). One the coaches had even requested it to be a part of her contract. Taking part in work counselling usually happened after some type of crisis had occurred.

“It does often go in the way that seeking out work counselling happens through a crisis. A sort of running out of steam, exhaustion and such. It’s only after that that you realise that, hey I can’t deal with these things. I do speak about things at home as well, but those are maybe the means of survival that I have.” (Coach 5.)

”Kyllähän näillä menee aika usein sitten tää työnohjaukseen hakeutuminen vähän semmoisen kriisin kautta. Vähän semmoisen väsähtämisen, uupumisen ja semmoisen kautta. Sitten vasta niin kuin tajuaa, että hei että mä en pysty käsittelemään näitä asioita. Kotona tietenkin jonkun verran asioita puhun myöskin, mutta ehkä semmoiset selviytymiskeinot ollut mulla.” (Coach 5.)

Only seeking out work counselling or other types of support after a crisis suggests that the coping mechanisms at work for coaches need to be developed. Sport clubs and organizations should work on developing more efficient support mechanisms for balancing work and private life, setting boundaries for work and making sure that coaches have a sufficient support network that they are aware of and can use. Matching personnel resources to the goals of the team and organization is also important.

4.7 The future of Finnish female coaches’ careers

All of the coaches had a very positive view on the development and the future of their coaching careers. They felt that there would always be possibilities to coach even if faced with the more challenging aspects of the career, such as combining work and family life. This is consistent with the lack of perceived barriers.

“So I would coach at some level in any case. Let’s say if there would be some [challenges] or family life and other things, that you would want to choose the family life, so then I wouldn’t travel around the world, so then I would probably coach kids or something like that.” (Coach 2.),

“Siis mä valmentaisin joka tapauksessa jollain tasolla. Sanotaan että jos tässä nyt tulee jotain [haasteita] tai perhe elämä kuvioita ja muuta, että sitten haluaisi valita sen perhe-elämän niin, että ei reissaa ympäri maailmaa, niin sitten mä varmaan valmentaisin lapsia tai jotain semmoista.” (Coach 2.)

This positive outlook that the coaches had on the future of their careers could be due to the fact that it is possible to coach as a hobby in Finland. It may also be associated with the perceived shortage of personnel that most sport clubs experience they are suffering from (see subchapter 2.2). The shortage of personnel is especially true in women’s team sports. This is maybe why the coaches felt that there would always be a possibility to coach, even if not full-time. The high level of commitment and passion toward their chosen profession was also evident in this instance, as most of the coaches expressed being willing to coach as volunteers if not able to coach full-time for one reason or another.

At the time when the interviews took place, one of the coaches who coached as a volunteer had decided to stop coaching because of the conflicts between work, coaching and family-life. She still viewed her possibilities to coach in the future very positively even though she had made the decision to quit.

“I don’t know, then you always think that when you have this kind of situation in your life that you can’t commit time wise, that could there be some kind of options that you would work with certain athletes in the background. You wouldn’t be involved in the day-to-day coaching. Maybe. Let’s see what’s going to happen. That kind of thing could be possible without you having to be at

practice every night. I don't know I have to see what the future holds.” (Coach 3.)

“En mä tiedä, sitten sitä aina miettii, että kun on tällöinen tilanne elämässä, että sä et voi sitoutua ajallisesti siihen, niin että löytyisikö siitä jotain semmoisia vaihtoehtoja, että se joidenkin pelaajien kanssa tekisit tavallaan semmoista tukevaa duunia siellä taustalla. Sä et olisi niin siinä arjessa mukana. Ehkä. Katsotaan nyt että mitä tässä tulee tapahtumaan. Et semmoinen voisi olla mahdollista, ilman että sun pitää olla joka ilta siellä treeneissä. En tiedä, täytyy tsekkaila, että mitä tässä tuleman pitää.” (Coach 3.)

The coaching profession is more flexible than most professions and the coaches could see that it was possible to organize work differently if stretched. Volunteer coaches feeling that they can control their work more than full-time coaches, again shows that voluntary coaches have more control over the content of their work than full-time coaches do. A volunteer coaches career contains more elements of a modern career than a full-time coaches does.

All of the coaches also had dreams and aspirations for the future of their careers even though they were at different stages of their career development. The coaches were all in the mastering stage seen in Figure 1 (see subchapter 4.4), but were in different life situations as well as career phases. Two of the coaches were retiring from either full-time or voluntary coaching, whilst two were quite content with their current coaching positions and two were considering making changes in their careers. The timespan of these dreams and ambitions varied. Some coaches were more focused on what they wanted to achieve in the short term whilst others had clear long-term goals. Some of the ambitions were very general whilst others very specific.

“I would hope that I would be able to bring practical coaching experience to those kind of decision-making bodies where decisions are made, which effect

coaching related things. I would want to, I have thought that I could see myself going back to being a student. I'm not going to start a dissertation but something.” (Coach 5.)

“Toivoisin että voisin sitä käytännön valmennuskokemusta tuoda semmoisiin päätöksentekoeleimiin missä tehdään päätöksiä, jotka vaikuttaa valmennuksellisiin asioihin. Kyllä mä haluaisin, ja oon pohtinut, ja voisin itseni nähdä itseni vielä opiskelemassakin. En kyllä rupea tekemään väikkäriä, mutta jotain.” (Coach 5.)

The ambitions that the coaches had for the future were very individual and varied a lot from coach to coach. This shows that the career is very much the responsibility of the individual, which gives the coaching career another characteristic that is more consistent with the modern definition of career. Although the coaches mentioned coaching national teams or athletes who compete at the elite level to be the more prestigious positions that a coach could attain, not all felt that this was the ultimate goal of their careers. Some simply wanted to coach at a certain level but as serious leisure, some dreamed of coaching full-time, whilst others were interested in coaching a certain age group.

What makes the coaching profession very unique is that it does not have a clear end point career wise. As it is possible to coach as a hobby in Finland, many coaches are able to continue coaching even after they quit coaching at the elite or more competitive level or simply full-time. Coaches are often so committed to their sport and it has become such a large part of their lives that stopping all involvement seems unimaginable. Most of the coaches felt that they would continue coaching after their retirement from either full-time coaching or coaching at the elite or more professional level.

“I can somehow see myself always coaching. Whether it is small children somewhere in Pihtipudas or wherever. It's [coaching] such a big part of me that

I couldn't be without and I wouldn't want to be and I probably wouldn't have to be. There are always coaching opportunities to be found.” (Coach 2.)

“Kyllä mä jotenkin näen itseni aina valmentamassa. On se sitten niitä pieniä lapsia tai siellä jossain Pihtiputaalla tai missä tahansa. Kyllä se [valmentaminen] on niin iso osa mua, että en mä pystyisi olemaan ilman, enkä mä haluakaan olla ilman, eikä mun varmaan tarviikkaan olla. Kyllä noita valmennustehtäviä aina löytyy sitten.” (Coach 2.)

All of the coaches were very passionate about their profession, which is probably why they found the idea of stopping completely unimaginable. The reason for coaching being the type of career that never seems to end is also because of the way that sport is organized in Finland, which means the possibility to coach as a hobby. It is possible to coach less seriously at recreational levels and with youth. Another reason for the coaches finding the end of their careers unimaginable is also the fact that they have made a career of their hobbies and have become very passionate and committed to their sport.

One of the full-time coaches felt that her career would end when she retired but she did not know when she would be able to do so because of the many ways that there is to contribute to the coaching profession. She also felt that her career would still continue for a long period of time even though she had been a coach for a few decades. She also felt that the longer your coaching career is, the more competent you become as a coach.

“I think that my coaching career, if everything goes well, then it will end when my working career ends. I'm of course hoping that I will be able to be productive and a good coach all the way to the end so that it doesn't have to be anything like that. If you think about elite level coaches in this sport then they are really experienced and old-timers that are influential in this sport. So I do

believe that experience and vision increases over the years and it brings more competence.” (Coach 5.)

“Kyllä mun valmennusura, jos kaikki asiat menee hyvin niin se päättyy siihen, kun mun työura päättyy. Toivoisin tietenkin, että pystyn olemaan aikaansaava ja hyvä valmentaja loppuun asti, että sen ei tarvitse olla mitään sellaista. Jos huippuvalmentajia mietin tässä lajissa, niin ne on todella kokeneita ja vanhojakin tekijöitä, jotka tässä lajissa vaikuttaa. Että kyllä mä uskon siihen, että kokemus ja näkemys lisääntyy vuosien myötä, ja se tuo lisää sitä ammattitaitoa.”
(Coach 5.)

The reason for this coach feeling that there would be a clear end point to her career, compared to the other coaches who did not, could be because her career had more features of a traditional career than the other coaches' careers did. A more traditional career path can help a coach visualize a beginning and an end to her coaching career.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Finnish female coaches' careers are very versatile and individual, and are characterised by a vast number of features. This chapter begins with a summary of the results of my study and a discussion on how they compare to the traditional and modern career definitions of career. This also comprises of a discussion regarding the relationship between the career phases characterising a Finnish female coaches coaching career and Finnish sport culture, in order to provide conclusions about my research. In addition, this is then followed by a discussion on the possibilities and challenges within a Finnish female coaches career. This includes comments on the current state of the coaching system in Finland and developmental suggestions for its improvement. Finally a critical analysis of my research follows this, including the limitations of my study and suggestions for areas of future research.

5.1 Finnish female coaches' careers are a mix of the modern and traditional

Both the traditional and modern definitions of career apply to a Finnish female coaches career development and their perceptions. The beginning of a coach's career is usually an unintentional one. This unintentional nature of a coach's career heavily reflects the position of sport in Finnish society. Sport is based on volunteerism and therefore coaching, especially children, is a hobby. The motives to begin coaching usually stem from the coaches' high level of interest in their own sport as athletes and in some cases the presence of an organizational culture, where athletes are expected or encouraged to take part in coaching. The motives to coach changed as the coaches' careers progressed. However, none of the coaches' motives to begin or continue coaching involved their own children participating in the sport. This may be why all of the coaches were interested in coaching as a profession, as their involvement was not tied to their own child's participation and interest in the sport.

The athletic career of coach influenced coaches' careers, especially in the early years of coaching and the hobby-coaching phase. The coaches are aware of this influence, especially when it came to coaching opportunities. An athletic career at the elite level was however not necessary to become a successful coach, as one of the coaches' had not competed at the elite level. This coach had however, attained a higher level of

vocational degree than some of the other coaches. All of the coaches felt, regardless of the level they had competed at, that their athletic careers and their own coaches influenced their coaching. This was either by their previous coaches setting a good example or through disappointment in them, which resulted in the coaches wanting to be different from their own coaches. The coaches had completed various levels of coaching education from coaching courses to master's degrees in sport sciences, which showed the versatility of career paths and evidence of elements of a modern career. Coaching as well as general education in the sport field fuelled interest in the coaching profession especially when first becoming acquainted with coaching. Female coaches value education, both vocational and coaching specific. This was even true for the coaches who had completed less or a lower level of education. The coaches perceived that a coach is never ready, and should continue self-development throughout ones' career.

A female coaches career usually develops very quickly from a hobby to professional coaching or serious leisure. Coaching careers and the speed that the coaches advance to different positions differ. The ones that expressed a more moderate pace of development usually had more control over what their responsibilities were in a team of coaches, which is consistent with the modern career. However, even these coaches advanced quite quickly to coaching adults. This again shows that coaching children and youth is considered to be a hobby and less serious coaching. If a coach is motivated to coach professionally or as serious leisure, she is often directed to coach adults rather than children or adolescents. This fast pace of development may also be due to the perception of a lack of coaches and volunteers in certain sports and sport clubs. Individuals, who express interest and are motivated to coach, are able to advance more quickly to coaching adults due to this. The coaches who perceived their careers to have progressed at a faster pace from hobby to professional coaching or serious leisure felt that this also had some negative effects on their careers. This faster pace of development even made some coaches consider quitting during the early years of their careers. The organization having more control over career advancement than the individual is more consistent with the traditional career.

The traditional definition of a career can also be seen in a coach's career, in the way that coaches determine whether or not they are qualified to coach a certain team or athlete.

Coaches define their own capability through how much recognition they get from sport clubs and organizations and whether or not they get offered coaching positions to some extent. The hiring practises in the sport sector, which concern the hiring of female coaches, are more consistent with a traditional career as the individual does not sell their own skills and assets to the organization by applying. The organization determines whether or not the skills and assets of a coach are needed before a position is offered or a coach is asked to apply. Things learned through practical application and existing models are rarely questioned.

The coaches who were interviewed had both traditional and modern career paths in terms of the numbers of organizations they had worked for. Two had worked for only a few organizations (2-3) whilst four had several employers. The high level of commitment to an organization, which is usually a characteristic of a traditional career, is not present in a coach's career. However, all of the coaches were highly committed to coaching as well as their specific sport. The coaches enjoyed their profession, which shows that they valued wellbeing at work to some extent, although the profession can also be said to be very unpredictable and demanding. Female coaches' careers are more modern in the way that the individual has most of the responsibility of her own career. The content of female coaches' work is more consistent with a modern career as the job descriptions of female coaches are often very broad. Four of the coaches had other responsibilities as part of their job descriptions and the other two described coaching as being a versatile profession.

Coaches perceive career success both through the lens of the traditional but also the modern. Career success is seen both as winning medals and championship, which are often mentioned as the most memorable moments, as well as successes with individual athletes and the team in everyday coaching. The successes in everyday coaching are seen to be more motivating than traditional career success, as those memorable moments are transient. An internal crisis often occurs when there is a conflict between these two definitions of career success, as the conflict causes coaches to begin questioning what constitutes success in her career and who defines whether or not she is successful. There is evidence of the presence of a culture, which favours men in sports that are more male dominated. This does not include concrete experiences of discrimination but perceptions about existing prejudices when coaching the opposite

sex, organizations and media being more critical of female coaches. Sport culture in Finland still possesses a lot of masculine elements, especially in male dominated sports, which could be seen in the answers of the coaches who coached male dominated sports.

Coaching is a team sport, even for coaches who coach individual sport. Having a support network, supportive spouse, family and network of friends is important in order to help coaches cope with the strenuous nature of the coaching profession. The influence that family has on career decisions is very large, especially concerning traditional family roles. This is why the coaches perceived combining work and family-life to be a challenge. Conflicts between these two aspects of life can even lead to coaches quitting the profession. Balance between work and private life clearly influences perceptions about career success and wellbeing at work. Communication is a central part of a coach's career. Being surrounded by supportive coaching colleagues and having a mentor was perceived to help manage the strenuous nature of the profession. Working in a team of coaches was perceived to help balance work and family life, as there are more people to share the coaching responsibilities. In team sport, the team itself was seen as a positive resource for a coach. Some coaches even sought out work counselling to cope with the stress created by their work. However seeking out work counselling usually only occurred after some type of crisis. Helping coaches in balancing work and their private lives is definitely an aspect that sport organizations should place more focus on. As is typical for a modern career, the lines between these two aspects of life have become blurred.

Finnish female coaches have a positive outlook on the future of their coaching careers. This is due to it being possible to coach as a hobby and the passion for their own sport that all of the coaches expressed. The sport clubs perceiving a shortage of personnel may also influence the perception of there always being coaching positions available. Voluntary coaches perceive that they will be able to control the content of their work more than full-time coaches do. It is therefore possible to conclude that voluntary coaches' careers are more modern than full-time coaches' careers. Future aspirations and goals are very individual, which shows the modernity of a coaching career. Coaching a national team or elite level athletes who compete at the international level is still considered to be the most prestigious position that a coach can attain, however not all coaches express this to be the ultimate goal that they have for their careers.

A coaching career is a lifelong one when a coach has had a more modern career. When the career has been more traditional, it is easier to envision and end. Many coaches feeling that coaching is a lifelong career may again be due to the fact that it is possible to coach as a hobby in Finland. The high level of commitment that the coaches expressed toward their sport may also cause them to want to continue their involvement even after retirement from a professional career or serious leisure. Retiring from something that has been a lifestyle and passion rather than just a professional career is unimaginable.

5.2 The possibilities and challenges within Finnish female coaches' careers

The Finnish female coaches' careers are full of possibilities and challenges. The possibilities should be utilized and supportive actions should be designed in order to be able to get more women interested in the coaching profession, both at the voluntary and professional levels. Athletes should be induced into coaching when they are still playing or competing and not after they have quit competing or are considering quitting as seen in Erickson, Côté and Fraser-Thomas's (2007, 310) model (see Figure 2 in subchapter 4.5). Coaching or instructing experiences are important to develop an interest toward the profession and attain important experiences of success as a coach. During the deliberation stage (see Figure 1 in subchapter 4.5) of a coach's career, the many models developed for coaching should be distributed to new coaches more effectively to develop their interest the profession and gain experiences of success as a coach. More tools to develop self-evaluative skills should also be developed to help coaches in this phase of their careers, in order for coaches to be able to recognise their skills and areas of improvement. This can then motivate coaches to seek out educational opportunities in the preparation stage.

Coaching courses are a definite possibility in a coach's career. Coaching courses are often motivating for coaches and can help coaches widen their networks. The versatility and amplexness of the coaching educational system should be emphasised to coaches in the preparation stage of their coaching careers. Sport organizations and clubs should also communicate what skills and level of experience, if any, are necessary to coach at a certain level or a particular group, as being capable and qualified is very important to

female coaches. Every coach's path is unique and there are many levels of coaching. Coaches can specialize in coaching a specific age group. Coaching education should take the different paths to becoming a coach into consideration and also the fact that not all coaches are aiming to coach at the elite level.

Giving coaches the opportunity to choose the focus group at the deliberation stage of their careers can ensure that the group is not too challenging and career development is not too fast. This should be emphasised to sport organizations and clubs, so that coaches have more control over the pace that their careers advance. This phase should after all be about getting excited about coaching. Not giving coaches a choice in their focus group can lead to coaches becoming overwhelmed and even make them lose interest in the profession. Coaches are usually steered toward coaching certain groups depending on what groups are in need of personnel. It is also possible to coach as serious leisure at lower levels, and coaches should therefore also not be steered toward coaching at the elite level or adults, unless this is the group or level that they are interested in coaching.

In order to be able to continue to develop throughout one's coaching career and manage the totality of coaching, it is important to ensure that coaches have enough resources. Educating oneself requires time commitment and this can be impossible if a coach is solely responsible for a team or group of athlete, especially the coach is a volunteer coach. Decision makers in sport clubs and organizations should ensure that teams and clubs as a whole have enough staff, to make constant development possible. Mentors and coaching networks are also a way to constantly develop as a coach. Sport organizations need to help female coaches build their networks and assist them in finding mentors, especially in the part-time early coaching phase, as women tend to have smaller networks than men do. Human resource management in clubs and sport organizations should also be developed in order to help coaches balance work and private life. If work, whether it is coaching as a volunteer or full-time, has no limits, it can quickly become overwhelming and cause coaches to tire. Having more personnel resources can also help athletes continue coaching when still actively competing.

Transparent hiring practises are most likely causing the increase in female leaders at the state level in sport (Aalto-Nevalainen 2011, 50). When hiring more personnel, both voluntary and full-time, sport organizations should ensure the transparency of the

process. Non-transparent hiring practises create challenges for women because this creates more opportunities for discrimination. Not knowing what qualifications or skills are required to coach at a certain level can make coaches doubt their own capability. Transparent hiring practises may give women more information about what set of skills are required for certain coaching positions.

The general development toward a more professional sport culture in Finland can be seen both as a possibility and a challenge for female coaches. This can create more coaching opportunities especially for coaches who want to coach full-time. Moving from coaching, as a volunteer to coaching full-time can be very difficult due to specialization. Specialization limits the number of possibilities available for coaches to coach full-time in Finland. Specialization may also create a challenge for sport clubs to secure funds in the future, as non-specialized clubs are able to secure funding better than specialized ones. An increasing number of clubs are becoming specialized and the competition for funds will potentially become even more intense in the future.

Women's sport becoming more professional can be both a challenge and a possibility for female coaches. This can sometimes cause a decrease in female coaches (e.g. NCAA). However, at the moment the large majority of coaches who coach women's team sport at the national level in Finland are men. Women's sport becoming more professional can create more opportunities for female coaches to coach full-time. Overall, the level of professionalism in Finnish sport organizations is still at a lower level compared to many other countries, and even lower in sport clubs. The situation in Finnish sport clubs is however, understandable as their activity is heavily based on voluntarism. This comes with its own challenges. Non-professional clubs struggle to become more professional and hire permanent staff due to a lack of resources, in an increasingly competitive market, which requires a higher level of professionalism and quality of services. There is a clear need for investment in the development of sport organizations and not simply on the elite level.

Female quotas or choosing women for coaching positions based on their gender can be a challenge for the development of female coaches' careers. Being hired due to a necessary female quota can make women feel more stress due to them feeling that they have not been hired based on their skills and qualifications. Men who have been chosen

for leadership positions based on their gender do not feel underappreciated like women do. (Piitulainen et al 2003, 135.) This should be taken into account when designing initiatives to increase female coaches.

Efforts need to be taken to make the coaching profession a more visible career option within society. Coaching can be more than a hobby at all levels (serious leisure). If the coaching system and paths are developed to include more structure, more women may become interested in the profession. Development of coaches and the possibilities for women are highly dependent on the development of society and sport culture. As the position of women develops within society, female coaches will also be able to gain standing within Finnish sport organizations and clubs. Evidence of this development occurring can be seen in the appointments of women to companies' and sport organizations boards of directors and other leadership positions. These developments suggest a light at the end of the tunnel. The future is bright for female coaches in Finland.

5.3 Self-criticism and suggestions for future research

From the time that designing this study began, the aim has been to describe the career development and perceptions of Finnish female coaches. When considering the strengths and limitations of this study, it is important to reflect back on the research questions. Since answers have been given to the research questions, it can be argued that the validity of this study is at a good level. The current position of women in both Finnish society in general, as well as in Finnish sport culture were discussed in Chapter 2. The career development and perceptions of coaches were discussed to great length in Chapter 4 and finally realistic suggestions for solutions to develop the career paths of female coaches, were made in Chapter 5. As the comments of the interviewed coaches were taken into account before publishing, the level of validity of this study is improved to a greater extent.

During the interviews, I felt very privileged to be able to conduct this research, as all of the coaches were very open about their personal experiences. I was able to remain in an emic role and neutral during the interviews, although this was more challenging with the coaches who I was already familiar with. The different amounts of information

available about the coaches' backgrounds may also have influenced the interviews. However as all of the coaches were still able to discuss the themes in the interview framework, a sufficient amount of data can be said to have been collected for this type of research.

As a result of the wishes of the interviewees, the study is anonymous. In order to insure anonymity the names and sports of the coaches are not revealed. This may limit the study as no comparison between sport disciplines. Although it was possible to compare the careers of voluntary and full-time coaches as well as coaches representing individual and team sport to some extent, these comparisons were limited by the small amount of voluntary and individual coaches. What made these comparisons even more difficult were the very broad job descriptions that some coaches had. More in depth information could be collected of Finnish female coaches job descriptions as a part of further research. As this study only included female coaches, no comparison could be made between male and female coaches. This is also an area that should be investigated in the future as coaches, especially representing team sport perceived gender to be an influential factor on the development of their careers.

Analysis of the interview transcripts was a very long and tedious process. I do however feel that more time should have been spent on coding the data, in order to make the data analysis process more straightforward. I also have to recognize that my own experiences as a coach may have influenced my interpretation of the data. This can be said to be one of the limitations of the study. On the other hand, my own background was beneficial during the interview process and being able to recruit a sufficient amount of coaches to interview. As the numbers of female coaches are low, especially in team sport, recruiting coaches with a sufficient amount of experience could have been a difficult task without any existing coaching networks.

This thesis provides a detailed description of Finnish female coaches careers. However, as it is a qualitative study, the findings need to be investigated quantitatively, in order to be able to make general conclusions about Finnish female coaches careers. This research is still only a scratch on the surface of this topic. Quantitative research should investigate the influence of age on career perceptions and compare this to the changes that have occurred in Finnish sport culture. Finnish sport culture is in a state of flux, and

the effects of it on female coaches' careers should be investigated in order to design more effective initiatives and policies. It would also be interesting to research the effects of the current economic crisis on coaches' careers, as most still work in the third sector. A model of female coaches' career development in Finland should also be developed as a part of further research. In order to do this, the speeds at which coaches advance from one phase to the next in terms of age and years of coaching experience, should be investigated. This study only looked at the perceptions that coaches had about their pace of advancement. Models can help clarify the unique characteristics and requirements of Finnish female coaches' careers to potentially interested coaches.

It will be interesting to see whether or not the sport associations and organizations involved with the WTRC –project make use of this and other research to design initiatives to involve more women in coaching. It is in the hands of the specialized sport associations and NGO's, what actions should be taken to improve the situation and whether to attempt this as individual associations and organizations or co-operate. This research has been extremely interesting and I feel that I have been able to increase my level of expertise in this field to a great extent.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interviewee recruitment E-mail

Hyvä vastaanottaja!

Teen pro gradu -tutkielmaa suomalaisten naisvalmentajien työurista Jyväskylän yliopiston liikuntakasvatuksen laitoksen kansainvälisessä maisteriohjelmassa (Master's Programme in Sport Management and Health Promotion). Etsin haastateltavakseni naisvalmentajia, jotka ovat valmentaneet joko nais- tai miesjoukkueita tai sitten yksilöurheilijoita vähintään SM-tasolla. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään naisvalmentajien työuriin vaikuttaviin tekijöihin suomalaisessa urheilumaailmassa. Tutkimuksesta saatuja tuloksia käytetään naisvalmentajien työurien edistämiseksi, yhteistyössä ”Valmentaa kuin nainen” –hankkeen kanssa.

Haastattelun toteutus:

- 1 Haastattelu kestää 1–2 tuntia.
- 2 Haastattelu sovitaan haastateltavan aikataulun mukaan.
- 3 Mikäli sopivaa ajankohtaa ei löydy, Skype- tai puhelinhaastattelu on myös mahdollinen.
- 4 Haastattelut nauhoitetaan ja litteroidaan.

Haastateltava saa itse päättää siitä, käytetäänkö tutkielmassa hänen nimeään tai muita tietoja, joista hän on tunnistettavissa. Tutkielma raportoidaan englanninkielellä. Raportointi voidaan tehdä myös niin, ettei haastateltavan nimi tai hänen valmentamansa laji tule ilmi. Haastatteluaineistoa käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja se tulee olemaan ainoastaan tutkijan käytössä. Aineisto tuhotaan käsittelyn jälkeen asianmukaisesti. Haastateltava voi kieltäytyä osallistumasta tutkimukseen ja hän voi missä vaiheessa tahansa perua osallistumisensa tutkimukseen ilman, että keskeyttämisestä aiheutuu hänelle seuraamuksia.

Mikäli olet kiinnostunut haastateltavaksi, laita minulle sähköposti viimeistään 20.01.2016 osoitteeseen hanna.h.olkinuora@student.jyu.fi.

Annan mielelläni lisätietoa tutkimuksesta.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Hanna Olkinuora

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Appendix 2. Interview framework

Taustatiedot

Ikä

Siviilisääty

Nykyinen työnimike

Koulutus

Aikaisemmat valmennustehtävät ja työnkuva niissä lyhyesti (etsi tieto itse tai kysy etukäteen).

Valmennusuran alku / the beginning

Millainen on urheilutaustasi? (Miten päädyit juurin **sinun** lajin pariin?)

Kuvaile uraasi urheilijana / aktiiviliikkujana (päälaaji)

Kuvaile valmennusurasi alkua?

Miten valmennusurasi sai alkunsa? Miksi lähdit mukaan valmennukseen? Miten valmennusurasi on edennyt?

Kuvaile tekijöitä mitkä vaikuttivat valmennusuraasi sen alussa?

Onnistumiset ja pettymykset (haasteet ja edistävät tekijät) / the best of times and the worst of times

Millainen valmennusurasi on ollut?

Miten saavutit valmennustehtävän lajisi korkeimmalla tasolla Suomessa (kansallinen taso)?

Kuvaile etenemistäsi valmennusurallasi?

Minkälaisia ajatuksia ja tunteita valmennusurasi herättää sinussa?

Kuvaile onnistumiasi valmennusurallasi.

Millaisia onnistumisia olet kokenut? Nautitko valmentamisesta / nykyisestä toimestasi?

Esimerkkejä.

Kuvaile haasteita valmennusurallasi.

Millaisten haasteiden eteen olet joutunut? Miten käsittelit haasteita? Miten haasteet ovat vaikuttaneet urasi etenemiseen?

Kuvaile valmennusurasi aikana esiintyneitä esteitä (sen etenemiselle)? (Millaisia?)

Tulevaisuus ja uran päättäminen

Kuvaile ajatuksiasi tulevaisuudestasi (yleisesti)?

Millaisena näet tulevaisuutesi valmentajana?

Millaisia tavoitteita / unelmia sinulla on? Kuvaile etenemismahdollisuuksiasi?

Miten kuvailisit potentiaalista valmennusurasi päätöstä? (Milloin, Miten etc.)

Oletko kokenut paineita lopettaa valmentaminen? (Millaisia)

Oletko koskaan harkinnut tekeväsi jotain muuta kun valmentamista?

Tekisitkö jotain toisin?

Appendix 3. Consent form
Jyväskylän yliopisto
Liikuntakasvatuksen laitos
Suostumuslomake

Naisvalmentajien työurat – tutkimus

Tutkimuksessa keskitytään naisvalmentajien työuriin vaikuttaviin tekijöihin suomalaisessa urheilumaailmassa. Tutkimuksesta saatuja tuloksia käytetään naisvalmentajien työurien edistämiseksi, yhteistyössä ”Valmentaa kuin nainen” – hankkeen kanssa.

Tutkijan yhteystiedot

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Osallistujan suostumus

Minua on pyydetty osallistumaan yllämainittuun tieteelliseen tutkimukseen ja olen saanut sekä kirjallista että suullista tietoa tutkimuksesta sekä mahdollisuuden esittää siitä tutkijalle kysymyksiä. Osallistumiseni tutkimukseen on täysin vapaaehtoista. Saan itse päättää siitä, käytetäänkö tutkielmassa nimeäni tai muita tietoja, joista olen tunnistettavissa. Raportointi voidaan tehdä myös niin, ettei minun nimeni tai valmentamani laji tule ilmi. Haastatteluaineistoa käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja se tulee olemaan ainoastaan tutkijan käytössä. Aineisto tuhoetaan käsittelyn jälkeen asianmukaisesti.

Ymmärrän että voin kieltäytyä osallistumasta tutkimukseen ja voin missä vaiheessa tahansa perua osallistumiseni tutkimukseen ilman, että keskeyttämisestä aiheutuu minulle seuraamuksia.

Suostun osallistumaan tutkimukseen:

Päiväys

Osallistujan allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Suostumuksen vastaanottaja:

Päiväys

Tutkijan allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys