



Women's sport participation in the United Arab Emirates: a case study

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**Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates:
A Case Study**

by

Niloofer Margarite Rouhani
MEd

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

July 2018



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Abstract

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a tolerant, progressive and developed Arab state having maintained its stability and prosperity over a sustained period. In the UAE, Islam has long dominated all aspects of life and so matters relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, economics, politics, and personal conduct are guided by *Sharia* (Islamic) law. However, during a period of rapid social change in the UAE, accompanied by the emergence of a pan-Arab sense of identity, Emirati's (a citizen/passport holder of the UAE) are paying increased attention to opportunities that amplify their sense of national pride.

Accompanying this period of social change in the UAE has been a dramatic increase in the participation of women in the public sphere. At a rate not seen in the past, Emirati women have become increasingly active in the public sphere, in areas such as politics, business, education and religion. Alongside this has been a surge in their participation in sport. Prominent here has been the recent emergence of the first Emirati women's football team.

Using a case study methodology, this study explores the lived experiences of elite Emirati women footballers (for the purpose of this thesis, the term 'elite' is described as female players at the top level/national level who are actually remunerated for their participation in this sport), the challenges and enablers they encountered in their journey to competing at an international elite level. Through a series of face-to-face interviews with members of the first all-Emirati women's elite football team, members of the team's coaching staff and key policy makers, the study sought to explore the social and cultural conditions that enabled the emergence of this team. A key aim of the study was to analyse the cultural shifts that have seemingly facilitated changes to gender relations in the UAE, and to highlight possibilities for future gender equality work.

Against this backdrop, the study explores the significance of sport in UAE society and its role in disrupting traditional gender boundaries. To do this, the study identifies and analyses contemporary social (religion, class and culture) conditions that facilitate, and/or restrict, women's sports participation in the public sphere of

sport. Drawing on a feminist poststructural framework, the study sought to analyse the discursive enactment of (disruptive) gender identity positions, using lenses such as ‘discourse’ and ‘power’.

With a focus on elite Emirati women’s sport, my study sought to build knowledge around the advancement of female participation in what has long been considered a masculine domain. Here, the study sought to explore the lived experience of social change through a series of face-to-face interviews with members of the first all-Emirati women’s football team and key support personnel. To maintain representational integrity, the principles of narrative methodology were employed for their ability to privilege the voices of participants while integrating contextual forces that comprised the stories they told about their experiences and the key people who participated in them. This approach supported a key aim of the study, analysing the cultural shifts that have supported changes in gender performance in the UAE and highlighting possibilities for future gender disruption.

While the results of my study convey a growing sense of opportunity for aspiring sportswomen in the UAE, it also reveals that the participant pathways were full of contestation and restriction. What we learn from the stories of the first Emirate Emirati women’s football team is that where the will is strong enough, there can be a way. While it is reasonable to assume that such pathways will become easier in the future, as the participation of women in such sporting arenas becomes less exceptional, there are factors that are likely to enable, and disable, such journeys. Prominent here is the presence of a ‘powerful’ guardian and/or mentor who can offer sustained support, and influence. In a society where males continue to have disproportionate access to social and domestic power, such support can be extremely influential. Guardians and mentors can play a crucial role in garnering the support of dominant male figures or helping to find ways to work around it!

Preface

The emergence of Emirati women into the public sphere in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates is a tolerant, progressive and developed Arab state that has maintained its stability and prosperity over a sustained period. The UAE is in the Arabian Gulf, sharing borders with Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The British withdrew from the Persian Gulf in 1971 and the Trucial States became a federation called the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These seven Emirates (an Emirate is a political territory ruled by a Sheikh and hence a citizen of the UAE is called an Emirati), which vary greatly in size, are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah. According to Khalaf (2016), the capital, Abu Dhabi, represents 85 percent of the land mass, and is the capital of the nation. The official religion of the country is Islam, noted here for its significance as the basis of the UAE's cultural, political and legal systems. Yet, despite Islam's centrality in Emirati daily life, where 'about 80% of the local population is Muslim' (Winckler 2005, p.389), other religious orientations are prevalent including 8% Hindu, 5% Christians, and some Buddhist, Sikh minorities and followers of the Baha'i Faith.

Against this backdrop, the UAE was founded in December 1971 as a federal state with a land mass of 32,278 square miles (83,600 square kilometres). The inland area is mostly desert with a few oases, and the barren Hajar Mountains run through the country. Characteristics of the climate of UAE include high temperatures and largely dry, arid conditions with very little annual rainfall – though there is a considerable period of humidity during the summer months.

In 1961 the population was estimated at 86,000 and was understood to have lacked most of the technical skills needed for a modern society to flourish (Winckler, 2005). However, the discovery of oil in the late 1950s in Abu Dhabi, and in 1966 in Dubai sparked a period of substantial migration, and in a relatively short time new immigrants made up most of the young nation's population. Accompanying rapid population growth, the commercial production of oil facilitated marked improvements in diet, health care, and general living standards across the nation.

Relative to its size and oil wealth, the UAE has a small population of 9,459,390 as of Saturday, 2 December 2017, based on the latest United Nations (Worldometers 2017), but its rapid growth is apparent given the estimated population in 1997 was 2,624,000. This influx of an expatriate population not only created an imbalance in the population composition in favour of males: 1,755,000 males and 869,000 females (Khalaf 2016), but it also resulted in an influx of various customs, religions and cultures into the UAE. From its growing dependence on expatriate labour, the UAE has become a multi-ethnic society, and Emirati nationals accounted for only 11.6% of the population in 2018 from 6,072,475 (July 2017 est.) total population (Index Mundi 2018).

Along with these significant demographic changes there have also been significant social changes. The growing number of (often Western) expatriates has, like most multicultural societies, contributed to a culturally diverse society. Within this context, one area of social life that has changed considerably over the past two decades has been that of gender relations – particularly when compared to neighbouring Arab States. The emergence of Emirati women into public life in the UAE has certainly been helped by public campaigns such as the 2006 Federal National Council (FNC) elections, as some authors note:

Many interesting developments came out of the FNC elections, which were a learning process for all the parties involved, and for none more than UAE women, who for the first time were able to run for election to the FNC. Women played an enormously impressive role, and this was an important litmus test of how far the UAE has progressed. UAE women demonstrated their ability to successfully move into the national political arena, a fact that has been reaffirmed by their active and diligent contribution to FNC sessions and legislative debates over the past year since the elections. (Al Dabbagh & Nusseibeh 2009, p. 6)

As an important social institution, sport presents an interesting lens through which to explore the profiling of Emirati women's engagement and changing gender relations in UAE society. This is particularly the case given the legacy of sport as a predominantly masculine space. While the UAE is relatively well known for its sports participation and excellence, 'this has been almost exclusively being through the masculine sphere' (Sulayem, O'Connor & Hassan 2013, p. 3). However, during the last decade, women throughout the Middle East have begun to increase their participation and profile across a range of sports. A significant catalyst for this advance has been the influence of globalization and the accompanying

developments in technology. It is through this lens that women throughout the Middle East have been able to witness and observe the participation of female athletes, from all around the world in a wide range of sporting contexts. As Stetter (2012), drawing on the work of others (Huff 2001; Khondker 2011; Murphy 2006), explains:

... the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) associated with the rise of satellite television, mobile phones and the internet has already, prior to the Arab revolutions, acquired a prominent role in the study of the changing social fabric in the Middle East and the role of Middle East diasporas throughout the world. (p. 3)

The international game of football (soccer in some countries) is the region's most popular sporting game. Football was introduced to the Middle East's top class in the 19th Century through British Missionary schools following the discovery of oil in the late 1950s in Abu Dhabi, and in 1966 in Dubai and the associated influx of British nationals (Mangan 2000). Though football participation was initially taken up by the wealthy and upper class, its popularity quickly spread amongst working-class people in the region. However, despite its widespread popularity, it was not until 1971 that a Football Association was set up in the UAE. At this time, football, like almost all other sports in the UAE, was seen as an exclusively male domain. With very few female role models in the professional sporting realm, there are limited historical accounts that celebrate Emirati women's sporting achievements in the UAE. A notable exception in the Arab world is the 400m Olympic hurdle gold medallist in 1984, Nawal El Moutawakel (from Morocco). Champions like Nawal El Moutawakel would pave the way for more women in the region to seek opportunities to participate in sport and ultimately represent their country.

However, while Arab women's sport participation grew, there were some places that remained the province of males. Whereas women's participation in football had grown throughout Europe since the late 1950s it was not until September 2009 that the UAE formed a Women's Football Committee. This gave rise to the first elite Emirati women's football team in the UAE in 2014. Comprising only of Emirate nationals, members of the UAE's elite women's football team practiced their sport each day amidst various other activities and responsibilities. As mentioned in the 'abstract', the use of the term 'elite' in this study will refer to the group of females

who are playing football at the national level and representing their country while receiving remuneration. In their discussion of women as public citizens in politics, Alsharekh and Springborg (2008) describe that the daily rigours of a public profile (like being a member of the national football team) were undertaken whilst respecting scripture and dressing modestly to adhere to local cultural and religious customs. Despite improving opportunities for Emirati women athletes in the UAE, sports participation is something that is still regulated and sanctioned predominantly by male family members in this context.

In the UAE, Islamic customs and mores regulate many aspects of life for Emirati nationals. Here, matters relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, economics, politics, and personal conduct are influenced by *Sharia* (Islamic) law. Still today, a woman needs the approval of her father and/or husband to even participate in a sporting competition, let alone contemplate playing sports her profession. Being born and raised in this society and having lived with these constructions and practices of gender, these ‘gender regimes’ are somewhat rendered as ‘normal’ to me. It has, therefore, been considerably challenging for me to step outside of the known and familiar constructs of ‘gender’ in the UAE to make sense of its past, understand the present and contemplate the future. As Eckert and Mc Connell-Ginet (2013) argue ‘gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural’ (p. 1). To some extent my interrogations of Emirati women’s participation in football in the UAE have created some tensions for me, though I undertake to negotiate these respectfully.

I reflect on my own experiences as a non-Emirati, non-Muslim woman born in Oman and now living in the UAE and being a beneficiary of the dynamic modernization process that has taken place mainly over the past 40 years. To this end, I look for my reflections to be critical (in the paradigmatic sense) and yet respectful of the challenges and opportunities experienced by contemporary elite Emirati women football players. Indeed, the more I developed my research agenda, the more I began to reflect on and question my own experiences and perceptions of gender and culture. In acknowledging my own marginality in the context of this research, my motivation has been to shed light on the contemporary experiences of

Emirati women, with a focus on sport particularly football. Such research is extremely scarce, despite the rise in participation in football amongst young Emirati women, the birth of the UAE Women's Football Association, and the increasing rise of women spectators across the UAE.

Western understandings of the broad context and issues I sought to engage in this research project are best captured in the 2002 movie *Bend it like Beckham*. This British sports comedy drama, written and directed by Gurinder Chadha, captures the story of a young Indian girl, Jesminder ('Jess'), whose love of playing football is suppressed by her parents based on her gender and culture. While the love of their daughter is never brought into question, Jess's parent's commitment to their cultural beliefs mean that they believe that women and girls should not play football. The most central theme of the movie is not how good Jess is at football but rather, it is the cultural contestations regarding her right to play. As the Director notes in his discussion of two key characters (albeit on different sides of the gender/culture divide):

Although the desire to play football is foregrounded throughout the film, it is the ability to make decisions for themselves, to be independent and take control of their own lives that is most important for both girls. (Chadha 2002, p. 3)

This tension exists around Emirati women's participation in sport in the UAE as well. As a social marker, the movie *Bend it like Beckham* captures cultural tensions very powerfully and is suggestive of how these can be respectfully managed to mediate competing interests.

Like *Bend it like Beckham*, the Saudi-Arabian movie *Wajdah*, directed and written by the first female Saudi director, Haifaa al-Mansour (2012), tells the story of a young Muslim girl (Wajdah) whose passions and interests are constrained by the cultural norms that define 'what is and is not' appropriate for her gender. Herself a Muslim, director Al-Mansour sets out to reveal cultural complexities in a way that is respectful of her culture and does not violate its values. The movie centers around 11-year-old Wajdah's enthusiasm for bike-riding, an activity forbidden to young Saudi women. Against this backdrop, the film confronts cultural barriers in portraying to the world problems pertaining to Saudi women's agency and liberty (lack thereof). The cultural issues around gender confronted in both movies articulate the issues I seek to explore through the lived experiences of elite Emirati

women's footballers in the UAE. However, like Al-Mansour, I do not seek to sit in judgement of the cultural norms of the UAE but rather seek to shed light on some of the barriers, contestations and opportunities that exist for contemporary elite Emirati women footballers.

Chapter 1: Contextualising this research

1.1 Introduction

In the western world, much attention has been paid to the issues that surround women's sport participation across recreational, school and elite sporting contexts. Despite a few exceptions (see for example Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011) most of this work foregrounds the experiences of Western women, and in particular 'white, middle-class, non-disabled girls' (Stride & Flintoff 2016, p. 677). Further, as Stride and Flintoff (2016) state, much of this research has ignored the 'real-life experiences of girls from minority ethnic communities' (p. 677), and rarely are they examined from an intersectional perspective. As Kluka (2011) writes in her foreword of the first edited collection to explore Muslim Women and Sport:

The issue of women, sport and empowerment continuously remains on the agenda of global social change. The concepts of women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming, gender equality and gender equity have been identified as key drivers for promoting women's quality of life'. (p. xvi)

In much of the work to date that has explored ethnic women's experiences in sport and physical activity, issues related to gender or ethnicity have been explored, but not both simultaneously (Stride & Flintoff 2016). Penney (2002) suggests that research that adopts a 'single-issue' lens is relatively short-sighted in that, whilst it certainly provides valuable insights into how gender or ethnicity are implicated in women's experiences of sport and physical activity, it is limited in its influence of policies or programs that address the needs of diverse young women.

Since relatively little empirical research exists to explore the multiple ways in which women of minority ethnic communities negotiate physically active identities (Flintoff & Stride 2016), this research seeks to further narrow this knowledge gap through an exploration of the experiences of Emirati Muslim women in the UAE as they pursue aspirations to be involved in elite women's football. Specifically, this work focuses on the negotiations, challenges and opportunities encountered by these young women (in their late teens to early 20s) as they mediate family, cultural and broader societal norms.

The Middle East is not a uniform and homogeneous region (contrary to popular understandings) and, as a result, nor are the women, families and the communities who comprise the region. The diverse cultures that exist in UAE today embody different ways of perceiving and interacting with the world. Hence, any discussion of religion, culture and Emirati women (from an intersectional perspective) must consider the socio-historical context/s that have shaped current ways of knowing and being. What religion says in its teachings and its Holy Book (sent down by the prophet), manifests itself in cultural practices and hence one is influenced by the other. Ramadan (2013) explains that the true Islamic teachings which society is governed by are in fact influenced by the cultures of origin and literalist readings.

My research considers the challenges and opportunities participants faced in their own understandings of their religion, culture and unique family relationships. The expectation of how Muslim young women should embody their religion impacts the participants involvement in physical activities. My research seeks to provide insight into the ways in which members of the elite Emirati women's UAE football team negotiate the tensions of Muslim Emirati women who wish to participate in physical activity but feel constrained by religion, cultures or family practices.

1.2 Social change in the Middle East: globalisation and social progress

As discussed in the preface, the UAE has experienced rapid and significant social change over the past four decades. Much of this social change can be attributed to the significant influence and impact of globalization discourses. Stetter (2012) argues that globalization in the Middle East can be considered as a 'key variable in understanding the past, present, and future of the Middle East' (p. 4).

Globalization is characterized by bringing the globe closer through dissolving the boundaries of time and space (Saban 2014). With satellite communication and internet connection, interactions that transcend national boundaries are ever present. I employ the phenomenon of globalization as 'an umbrella term for a complex series of economic, social, technological, and political changes' (Godwin 2006, p.4). Furthermore, positioning globalization in this way reflects 'the acceleration and

intensification of education, art, sports and religion, interaction among the people and governments of different nations' (Henry & Springborg 2010, p. 63). Specifically, Henry and Springborg (2010) argue that globalization in this sense, opens 'most domestic markets to foreign competition' (p. 63).

Acknowledging Stetter's (2012) point that globalization should not be considered a recent phenomenon, the cultural, educational and economic transformations witnessed in the UAE (since 1971) certainly bear markers of recent globalization influence. For example, Godwin (2006) explains the influence of the West on the education system in the UAE stating, 'the development of the UAE education system was based on the Western models and the current K-12 curriculum in the Government schools is a hybrid of Western pedagogical models' (p.1).

Globalization influences have created a technological revolution where fluidity and dynamism have helped people create 'imagined' and 'virtual' communities in the world at large, as well as in the UAE (Albrow 1997). Sabban (2014) points to the fact that 'imagined and virtual communities are spaces where people can move beyond geographical limitations to form and construct their chosen cultures and identities' (p.7). With the technological revolution and the creation of virtual spaces and places, individuals can move around and engage with others without traveling to another country. This is contrary to the past where, to communicate and exchange culture and cultural practices, one had to cross national borders. As Sabban (2014) argues, globalization can be considered as a social process that occurs within countries as opposed to something that occurs only through external and outward looking practices.

Whilst globalization has certainly been a factor in making other cultures, practices and identities more visible within the UAE, accessibility and agency to take up and adopt different cultural practices and identities, particularly in terms of (Western) gender relations, has been constrained by dominant socio-cultural relations within the UAE. Amara (2008) argues that the Middle East has certainly been keen to catch up with the West and comments that, 'the Muslim world is torn between its fascination with Western modernity 'and its struggle against Western colonial and neo-colonial dominance' (p. 67). Godwin (2006) explains that 'UAE traditional life seems to be absolutely defenceless against the influence of modernization and

westernization’ (p.10). Godwin (2006) goes on to further explain how the UAE culture has incorporated this modernization into its culture:

Whilst traditional UAE culture has changed, each new period of social development and technological advancement in Western society has also been accommodated into Islamic society. The traditional values of the Gulf region have been adaptive to the influences of globalization, so today the youth of the UAE have all the lifestyle advantages offered in the West. (p. 10)

This adaptability has led some authors to suggest that Western ideology has (simplistically) ‘blended into the Islamic and Arabic culture of the Gulf region’ (Godwin 2006, p. 11). Yet, as Saban (2014) argues, these changes have produced significant tensions and challenges for those deeply committed to historical UAE cultural traditions and practices. Saban (2014) comments that in ‘Emirati society there are values instilled by globalization which might introduce concepts and behaviours that are alien to Islamic local traditions, such as dating and sexual intercourse outside marriage’ (p. 3) which are considered forms of sinful conduct in Islam.

Globalising processes have increased exposure to other cultures (mainly Western), discourses, subjectivities and ways of being and, as I argue, this has influenced perspectives of gender, gender equity and gender relations in the UAE. Improved gender relations and opportunities for Emirati women can be considered as a marker of progressive social change. However, sport as a predominantly ‘male bastion’ has been somewhat slower to embrace this change – and familial gender relations are important in understanding this phenomenon.



Alzayani 2012, ‘Mariam Al Shehhi, 16, is a picture of concentration, even after releasing an arrow at the club’, *The National*.

1.3 The purpose and significance of the study

Given the reported physical and social benefits of sports participation for many women (Azzarito & Solmon 2009, Flintoff & Scraton 2001, O’Sullivan & McPhail 2010) improving access to sport participation is a key issue for Muslim Emirati women, particularly given that relatively little is published in this area (for exceptions see Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011). It is important to look at sport for Muslim women because ‘half a billion Muslim women inhabit some 45 Muslim-majority countries, and another thirty or more countries have significant Muslim minorities, including, increasingly, countries in the developed West’ (Offenhauer 2005, p. i). My research addresses issues of accessibility in sport participation for women in the UAE, particularly at the elite level.

Women’s sport participation in the UAE has received recent scholarly attention (see Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011) but research that foregrounds the voices of Emirati women players is somewhat scarce, particularly in the context of the UAE. The challenge that research in the Arab world now faces is in understanding the facilitators and barriers to sports participation as experienced by women in Islamic countries in general, and the UAE. My research seeks to contribute to these current understandings.

Although there are obviously some Arab women who participate in elite sport, their experiences are limited in the types of sports they engage in by both religious and cultural norms, and currently there seem to be few studies that have examined how those religious and cultural norms influence Arab women’s sporting participation rates (Bikyamasr and Franey 2012). The notion of sport in Islam is important because all participants in my study and their families are Emirati, Muslims, and so the Islamic context is central to this study. When taken together, these two key aspects of culture in this region – family and religion – provide an important and unique area of focus for examining the sporting experiences of Emirati women in the UAE. To that end, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do Emirati women in the UAE experience elite sport participation in football and how do these experiences contribute to their cultured gendered

identities/subjectivities?

2. What are the facilitators that contribute to, and barriers that impede, all women's sport participation in the UAE?
3. In what ways might sport participation by Emirati women in the UAE at the elite level contribute to gender in/equality?

By exploring the above three questions, my study seeks to accomplish two tasks. The first goal is to identify and analyse contemporary social (religion, class and culture) conditions that facilitate or limit Emirati women's sports participation in football in the UAE, particularly at the elite level. Second, my study will also analyse the discursive construction of social spaces, using concepts such as 'discourse', 'power', 'gender', 'equality' and 'equity' to better understand what limits and enables Emirati women to participate in football at the elite level. This provides valuable new knowledge about the ways in which Emirati women football players negotiate religious, cultural and familial norms that can (self) regulate their sporting participation in these contexts.

From a broader perspective, my study will map key socio-historical events or conditions from the past two decades that appear to have contributed to advancements in gender in/equality in the UAE. This will provide some contextual base from which to consider the experiences of the research participants. Further, through a focus on elite Emirati women's sport, my study seeks to build knowledge around Emirati women's experiences of gender equality/equity in what can be considered a predominantly masculine domain. Traditionally, Emirati women in the UAE, as in most Arab Islamic societies, had their own order in the 'harem' (women's separate sphere). Socialization in gender roles was clear and divided, with women taking their roles inside the household and men holding the power both inside and outside the household. Shaw (2008) describes the work of Emirati women in the house as 'hidden work' while fathers work was more visible given it took place in the community.

Further details of the methodological approach and methods employed in this research will be discussed below.

1.4 A relational perspective of gender

In describing the evolving field of gender studies, Connell (2002) notes that ‘a century and a half ago there was no theory of gender in the modern sense’ (p. 115), yet despite its recent history, contemporary gender studies recognise ‘gender’ as a complex social phenomenon that has been a ‘contested term historically’ (Connell 2002, p. 331). Despite its ambiguity, it is important to discuss the way in which I have understood and adopted ‘gender’ as a conceptual tool in this research.

Growing up in Oman, the notion of gender did not seem complicated to me at all: my school had boys and young women together and not segregated (which was unique in that region as most schools were segregated), and it was obvious that the two sexes were different in their physical appearance and in their capabilities. School policy allowed boys to play any sport they wished, but we as young women, were limited to certain sports such as volleyball, basketball, and gymnastics. Football, for example, was only for boys and no one, including me, questioned these normative constructions as they were so embedded in our beliefs that they appeared to us as completely natural. In this research I acknowledge that there exists significant debate in the literature about the ways in which ‘gender’ can be thought about and understood, but in this research that I conceptualise it as a relational construct. As Connell (2011) argues:

Equality between women and men has been an international legal principle since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enjoys popular support in many countries. The idea that *men* might have a specific role in relation to this principle has only emerged recently. Gender equality was placed on the policy agenda by women. The reasons are obvious: it is women who are disadvantaged by the main patterns of gender inequality and who therefore have the claim for redress. But men are necessarily involved. Moving towards a gender-equal society involves profound institutional change as well as change in everyday life and personal conduct, and therefore requires widespread social support. (p. 7)

From a poststructuralist perspective, conceptions of gender are often talked about in terms of docile bodies where ‘gender is a social embodiment and body is the object of social practice’ (Connell & Pearse 2015). Connell goes on to argue that from a relational perspective, masculinity and femininity are more similar than different and norms do not necessarily reflect simple biological dichotomy. In applying this lens to the UAE context, I consider gender here from a relational perspective for its potential to consider the gender norms, regimes and relations

forged within socio-historical discourse and power relations with gender equality issues having to have men's involvement. My research is particularly concerned with the sociocultural practices, discourses and power relations that (re)-shape cultured gender subjectivities of the female sports participants. I seek to examine discursively produced norms that perpetuate gender (in)equality such as limited activity choices for female sporting participants. Subscribing to poststructuralist perspectives, my research is particularly interested in troubling some of the taken-for-granted notions about the ways in which terms such as 'tradition', 'culture' and 'customs' are discursively produced in relation to women's elite sports participation in the UAE context.

1.5 The nature of Emirati women's daily lives in the UAE

The nature of women's daily lives in the Middle East (both inside and outside the home) has been particularly impacted by Western modernity. Before the oil era, the realms of the 'private' versus 'public' spheres in relation to where the Emirati women lived were clearly divided. Historically, Emirati women lived a dichotomous life: the public world outside the home (city streets, marketplace etc.) and the private world within the home, and women would take up different personas in each space. Sulayem, O'Connor, and Hassan (2013) explain that:

Throughout many parts of the Middle East, in the not so distant past, the lines between these two spaces were much more clearly demarcated and as a result, women were often times forced to adopt a different persona depending on what space they were occupying at any given point in time. (p. 163)

Although it is believed that 'the women's sphere is the home, and her most important task[s] are housework and looking after the children' (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 59), today, in the UAE, Emirati women increasingly participate in the workplace and share the public sphere with men. In the 1990s, the act of women's abstinence from the public realm 'is likewise based on a description of attitudes, most often the idea that women are socialized into traditional sex roles that hamper full citizenship' (Connell 1990, p. 8). Yet, today, changes in local families in relation to gender roles can lead to gaps in the duties expected from females. As Nelson (2004) explains:

Emirati women are entering the labour force in increasing numbers. The reasons for the increase relate to higher educational achievements and changing attitudes towards working women in the UAE and the region as a whole. (p. 7)

Emirati families (families with UAE passports) vary in their cultural affiliation and although some are becoming more open to impacts of modernization, the majority are still traditional and more conservative. Moghadam (2003) problematised the role of gender in Muslim families. Specifically, he comments:

While male and female roles are each respected and essential and complementary components of God's plan, men are the spiritual leaders and decision-makers in the family. It is women's role to support men in their position of higher authority through altruism and self-sacrifice. (p. 115)

Emirati women in the UAE are entitled to fulfil active roles in society and become effective partners in the development process – a rhetoric that is heralded through the UAE Constitution and the UAE Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs. Specifically, Article 16 of the constitution points out that:

Society shall be responsible for protecting childhood and motherhood and it shall be responsible for assisting them and enabling them to help themselves for their own benefit and that of the community. (UAE Ministry of State 2008, p. 3)

The UAE's achievement in terms of opportunities provided to women is perhaps best typified in the evolution and growing prominence of Emirati women as partners and contributors in this nation-building process. Emirati women are today at the forefront of the workforce in the UAE in both the government sector as well as a growing number in the private sector (UAE Ministry of State 2008). Within the constitution of the UAE, women enjoy the same legal status, claim to title and access to education. Further to this, they have the right to practice the profession of their choice. Since the Constitution was adopted women's participation in society has advanced considerably. The role of Emirati women in the UAE has grown in line with the country's development.

As Wilson (1999) argued over a decade ago, 'The Supreme Council members in UAE have been committed to improving women's lives since the beginning of the Federation' (p. 41). Women account for 42 per cent of the nation's workforce, 66 per cent of Government sector jobs and 38 per cent of decision-making positions (UN Women 2016). The percentage of female employees participating in the workforce quadrupled between 1980 and 1990, with the total number of UAE

Emirati women working in all fields reaching 100,000 in 2010. The UAE has given increased attention to the position of women in general and their role in sport over the past fifteen years:

Although there is great diversity of women's experiences within and between each Emirate, the trend over the last fifteen years has indicated a movement towards an improvement of opportunities for women. (Gaad 2011, p. 214)

Increased opportunities for women in sport have not been restricted to UAE or the Arab region but seems to be true internationally as well. Sarah Juggins of the UK Sports Journalist Association explains that in the past two to three years, there has been a bit of a shift in perceptions about women's sports. As others have pointed out, 'The 2012 Olympics did a great job in putting sportswomen on the front and back pages, and in some cases, they have remained there' (Repucom 2015, p. 23).

As others describe, the role of Emirati women in the UAE has changed quite quickly because of various modernisation processes (Gaad 2011). Specifically, Randeree and Gaad (cited in Gaad 2011) argue that:

Up until the 1940s, the Bedouin (desert dweller) and tribal lifestyle were the norm, centred on herding, wider agricultural activities, fishing and pearling. Bedouin values influencing women's lives were rooted in patriarchal notions of the male-dominated family, which included 'honour, chastity and the seclusion of women'. (p. 213)

At this point in time, Emirati women were far from being 'free subjects'. Their understandings and knowledge were a product of their environment. Drawing on Foucauldian constructs, Hook (2001) explains that 'knowledge is a matter of the social, historical, political conditions under which, for example, statements come to count as true or false' (p. 8). What Emirati women understood of their cultured gender roles was somewhat limited by the context of Arab culture in which they lived, the mentality of the Bedouins in that period and their own perception of what was 'normal'. Drawing further from Foucault, it is important to recognize that Emirati women of this generation were products of what was thinkable and knowable, accordingly 'the notion that what people could know was always limited by their contexts' (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2000, p. 7).

How women are treated in an Arab society is often largely based on interpretations of religion. Drawing on Akbar Ahmed's work (an Islamic scholar who studied at

Princeton and Harvard), Goodwin (2003) considered the role of women in the Islamic world as coming down to a simple equation: ‘the position of women in Muslim society mirrors the destiny of Islam: when Islam is secure and confident so are its women; when Islam is threatened and under pressure so, too, are they’ (p. 46).

Although it is believed that Islam permits its male and female followers ‘to practice sport as long as it does not lead to the neglect of religious and other duties’ (Jawad, Al-Sinari & Benn 2011, p. 29), there are still some who believe that sport has been ‘associated with play’, and hence is ‘a distraction’ to those religious and familial duties, and therefore, ‘not worthy of time, commitment and dedication’ (Dagkas, Jahromi & Talbort 2011, p. 18). Acknowledging Shaw’s (2008) assertion that families in the Middle East are far from homogenous, it is plausible that the experiences of Emirati women participating in sport rests in part in the shifting gender relations of power within families. These gender relations have been addressed in the UAE taking into consideration the cultural sensitivities:

In the UAE, a big issue ... is that they’re very concerned about the impact on their culture and being able to sustain their cultural practices ... It has become not just about education results; it has economic and cultural implications, and the quicker we understand the connections between these, the more impetus there is to take action. (Ayson 2014)

The broader social context of the UAE and the way in which this constrains gender relations and Emirati women’s roles in society more broadly has been taken up in the above section. In this discussion below, I consider the ways in which these changes have permeated the context of sport.

1.6 Introducing women’s sport participation in the UAE

In the UAE, Emirati women began to participate in the global sports domain in the late 1990s in areas of shooting and equestrian – both of which were regarded to be conventional sports practiced in the UAE (Hedenborg, 2014). Historically, the first Emirati woman athlete to represent the UAE formally was Shamma Al Muhairi when she participated in the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok in the air pistol shooting event. After four years, and at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, Al Muhairi led a

full Emirati shooting team and another woman, Shaikha Maitha, competed in the Karate event. In 2005, after Doha permitted participation of Emirati women in the West Asian games, Al Muhairi became the first-ever Emirati female gold medallist for her country, in the 25m air pistol action (Abulleil 2015).

My point is not to lament Emirati women's participation (or lack thereof) in elite sporting spheres, but rather to highlight that their participation at the elite level has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Ayub (2011) argues that whilst similar trends characterize women's football participation, she specifically highlights the pervasiveness of family influence as enabling or prohibitive in the pursuit of elite sport participation. Specifically, she comments:

While there are more national level women's soccer teams representing Muslim countries on the international stage today, the overall participation of Muslim women in this still male dominated sport is relatively low and their participation is oftentimes accompanied with strict guidelines from parents. (p. 47)

Research indicates that strict parental guidelines often are the cause of low participation in sport and being less active, especially among Muslim women. As Maxwell and Taylor (2010) suggest, 'many women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Muslim women, are proportionately less active in sport and recreation activities in Western countries than the corresponding generic female population' (p. 465).

Women's participation in sport in the Middle East has been the subject of intense debate (Sulayem, O'Connor & Hassan 2013), particularly with respect to the role of religion (Islam) in normative constructions (see for example Hargreaves 2000b). To understand the Islamic world, one needs to decode the way that society perceives women. Goodwin (2003) argues that 'the manner in which Islamic culture relates to women reveals much about how that society is structured and how it relates to a host of other issues' (p. 27) such as the role of women in patriarchal societies.

Sulayem, O'Connor and Hassan (2013) point out that Qur'anic scriptures have often been drawn on to fuel two different arguments: on the one hand, the scriptures are used as a basis to exclude women from sports participation with some Islamic scholars stating that women's participation in sport is a 'deviation from religion and teaching' (Amara 2008, p. 548). On the other hand, some use the scriptures to

support and facilitate women's sport participation. The work of Benn, Pfister and Jawad (2011, p. 2) provides one such example where they suggest that females playing football does not appear to be inconsistent with Islam. Perhaps part of the story of Emirati women's agency is their ability to make this case for the ways in which football participation can align with Islamic principles. This leaves the realm of gender norms as the cultural arena where the idea of women playing football meets the greatest resistance, presents the greatest challenge, and must therefore be carefully negotiated. Research indicates that in Muslim Arab countries 'while male and female roles are each respected and essential and complementary ... men are the ... leaders and decision-makers in the family' and it is the women's role 'to support men in their position of higher authority' (Moghadam 2003, p. 115). The patriarchal notion of the Middle Eastern family has had 'profound implications on the status of women within the family and in society' (Moghadam 2003, p. 25).

The place of female athletes in the Middle East has been the subject of recent attention (Sulayem, O'Connor & Hassan 2013). These authors point out that whilst women's sporting participation certainly seems to have experienced some growth, this has not occurred 'beside men but rather, beside other female athletes from around the world' (Sulayem, O'Connor & Hassan 2013, pp. 156-157). The proliferation of 'women only' sporting spaces in Arab countries (due to religious customs and culture) are viewed as strategically necessary because they offer a safe environment in which women can not only participate in various sports but also a place where they can share experiences and reclaim individual and collective voice(s). As Dagkas, Jahromi and Talbort (2011) argue:

Women's bodies and public visibility is a central concern in Islam ... There is an emphasis on the importance of respecting religious needs and creating an environment in which Muslim girls can learn new skills and develop physicalities without religious transgression. (p. 19)

A feminist perspective might consider that women-only spaces exist to challenge the existing gender order. It is not the spaces we should worry about but the importance of observation in the exercise of power. Not so much the external 'gaze', as Foucault calls it, that can see everything constantly (such as in prisons and factories), but the gaze women have created for themselves: constantly self-

monitoring and self-controlling their bodies. Women tend to ‘punish’ themselves when they deviate from the norm and women football players are no exception.

Notwithstanding the influential role Islamic politics have played in shaping culturally sanctioned activities for Emirati women in the UAE, sport participation has rapidly increased in recent years (Sulayem, O’Connor & Hassan 2013). As an example, Emirati women’s participation rates have significantly increased in organized sports such as swimming, gymnastics and figure skating. The last three Arab-Muslim nations that began sending women athletes in their delegations to the Olympics (London 2012) included Qatar, Brunei and Saudi Arabia. This, however, was due to the notification issued by the International Olympic Committee that did not allow countries to take part in the Games in the absence of female athletes. In contrast, the UAE had passed this ‘progressive test’ four years earlier when they allowed Sheikha Maitha bint Mohammed Al Maktoum and Sheikha Latifa bint Ahmed Al Maktoum to represent the UAE at the Olympic Games in taekwondo and show jumping at Beijing in 2008.

To assist women in their advancement in sport, the UAE has subsidized access to fitness and physical activity centres. These centres also have approved child care centres. Besides Emirati women, expatriate women (women living in the UAE not holding a UAE passport) can also use these gyms for an annual membership fee. Other private institutions exist that cater to expatriate men and women. Within these institutions, Emirati women are significantly underrepresented due to the gender mix. The UAE government is also keen to entertain many residents (women included) in its public sporting events. One such occurrence is the Standard Chartered UAE Marathon, which attracts large numbers (in 2015 more than 25,000 runners participated, many of them women).

Similar events are Colour Run, the Electric Run and We Run UAE. The UAE government has been keen to finance and subsidise sport in the UAE by providing cycle paths at Nad Al Sheba and Al Qudra in Dubai in 2015. Cycling has been popular in the UAE for the past 10 years, but designated tracks have never been provided until now. These high-quality, traffic free tracks, along with the mentioned events have helped raise the participation rate of UAE male and female residents in sport.

According to estimates, there are about 850 kilometres of cycle paths in Dubai, while Abu Dhabi have plans to extend their network of cycling tracks to 900km in the Capital by 2030 and build about 450km of tracks in Al Ain. (Rizvi, 2016)

The Government, through its strategies and finances enacts a crucial function in endorsing and developing sport in the UAE and Dubai with Dubai Sports Council (DSC) being the leader for sporting events and other related activities in Dubai. Companies based in Dubai including Emirates Airlines, Dubai Duty Free, and DP World are important players in the international sports sponsorship sector, with Dubai being a city whose name is consequently associated with sport.

The UAE encourages all clubs in the country to play a vital role in promoting women's sport. For example, in 2012, the Shaikha Hind Women's Sports Tournament aimed to involve some 23,000 female Dubai Government employees in basketball, volleyball, handball, chess, badminton and table tennis. The tournament representative told a local paper:

Women's sports may be a new concept for our region and it will take time to catch on, but we need the clubs to start playing a bigger role in promoting sporting activities among women. This tournament is a start so that we can lay a solid foundation for women's sports in Dubai. It is now left up to the clubs in Dubai to step in and explore possibilities on how they can assist in furthering sports and sporting activities among women in Dubai. The clubs in Dubai need to start thinking seriously about pursuing a similar model in tapping talent among girls just like they do for the boys. In this way we will be able to sustain the national team in women's sports as well. (Gomes 2012, para. 4-6)

Hence, my dissertation takes this broader context into account while exploring the experience of individual Emirati women football players within this larger backdrop of the significance of sport in the UAE society and the relationship of sport with Emirati women's progress in society and gender relations in the country. Ultimately, while studying gender, it is important to also consider the meaning and position of sport in the UAE. As others have argued, previous failures to consider the fundamental relationship between sport and the social construction of gender has resulted in an incomplete, sometimes distorted, analysis of the historical and contemporary importance and meaning of sport (Messner & Sabo 1990, p. 288).

1.7 Football in the UAE

In a recent positive trend, women's sport participation in the Arab world (particularly Saudi Arabia) has become a priority area for Sports Council sectors and has also been recently included on the UAE Olympic Committee agenda. Further, through their website on Women and Sport, the International Olympic Committee demonstrate the significant achievements of the Olympic movement in relation to gender equality in sport, yet they are cognizant that there is still a long way to go. For example, in 2012, the UAE had two female athletes selected to represent their country in the areas of athletics and weightlifting (Reuters, 2012).

The UAE's elite football team comprised of all women, Muslim and Emirati was formed in 2014 as a direct result of the ruler's request and the nation's desire to be one of the first Arab nations to have an all Emirati women's elite football team. Yes, the Arab nations are quite a bit behind European countries in this sports domain, but this is not surprising given Europe's decidedly less repressive gender norms, ideologies, and policies. However, given the UAE's overall cultural and religious power structures have changed only slightly in the areas of business, politics, and education, it is somewhat unexpected that they would take the lead in the creation and advancement of Emirati women's football – an unquestionably masculine sports domain. Honey, captain of the team, described Palestinians' conservative attitudes (also true for UAE's attitude) towards women playing football:

It's a tough game. It's for boys and not for girls, and you should not play this rough-and-tumble game; you will be like boys. Don't just follow the ball; find a good man to marry! And look to the future! (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 169)

The UAE's national women's team was unlike the Qatari national women's team, which was established 'in response to the successful 2022 World Cup bid' (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi 2014, p. 1757). The bid exerted external pressure on Qatar to avoid the embarrassment of hosting a world cup while not actually having a national women's team. In contrast, the UAE's creation of an elite Emirati women's national football team appears to be more driven by a competitive desire to 'facilitate nation-building' through sport (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi 2014).

Before the UAE was formed in 1971, British soldiers played local male teams and many UAE male nationals who had studied abroad returned to their country and developed the game locally among men only. In 1971, the governing body of the football in the country, the UAE Football Association (UAE FA) was formed with Sheikh Mubarak Bin Mohammad Al Nahyan, the former Minister of Interior, as the first President. The UAE FA was affiliated with FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) in 1972 and in the same year, the UAE men's national football team, nicknamed Al-Abyad (The Whites), was formed. The team declared their first victory in that same year against Qatar in the 2nd Gulf Cup held in Riyadh. Anecdotal accounts of how the name The Whites (the men's team) and The White Ladies (the women's team) originated suggest that they have been pragmatically constructed given the team's uniform is white. This is not unusual for the region – the Bahraini team are known as The Reds with a red uniform, and the Kuwaiti team are known as The Blues with a blue uniform. It is also possibly coincidental (or not) that these colours are also featured on the national flags for each of these countries.

In 1974 the UAE joined the Asian Football Confederation and the Union of Arab Football. Following this, regular and more organized football started as the game gained momentum with new football clubs emerging in Dubai and Sharjah. Al Ain, Al Jazira, Al Wahda, Bani Yas, and Al Dhafra are the major football clubs in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi where the Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC) organizes Abu Dhabi Sports Council Community Football League. These top clubs participate in the annual football calendar which features UAE Pro League (established in 1973 and considered the highest football competition), President's Cup, Etisalat Cup, and UAE Super Cup (Etisalat Super Cup). Each of these competitions and leagues exist to support participation in men's football in the UAE.

The UAE also has a juniors' men and women national team, the U-17 national team and the U-20 national youth team which qualified for the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 1991 in Italy and FIFA U-20 World Cup in Malaysia in 1997 and in the UAE in 2003 for both men and women. Abu Dhabi is also home to many academies and football schools that aim to nurture the skills of the younger players aged between 7 and 16 years. For example, the Manchester United Soccer School was launched

in 2010 and specifically seeks to introduce young players to the techniques and skills used by the players of the UK-based Manchester United football club through a 10-week paid course. Further, the Inter-Milan Football Club which launched the Inter-Milan Football Academy in 2011 provides training workshops and coaching clinics for coaches of professional clubs alongside training 9-12-year-old. There is also the Etihad Manchester City FC Soccer School and the Street Kings Football Academy for boys and young women ages of 7 to 14.

An increased focus on the provision of these kinds of clinics, schools and programs that seek to improve participation at the grassroots level for both boys and young women, has occurred alongside increased elite level participation. For example, the UAE has played host to the AFC Asian Cup and the Gulf Cup in 1982, 1994 and 2007. More recently, in 2009 and 2010, the UAE hosted the FIFA Club World Cup and FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup. The growing profile of football in the UAE has contributed to increased participation rates and in the next section, I discuss the implications this has had for Emirati women's football participation.

1.8 Women's football in the UAE

In mid-2009, the UAE Football Association under the auspices of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC), formed its first ever Women's Football Committee (WFC). The aim of the committee was to provide pathway opportunities for women players and to create a national women's team that would formally represent the nation in international football events. The committee established a women's football league in February 2012 for under-13 and under-16 women with eight teams in each category from the different educational zones in the country. Officiating the new league were 17 women referees prepared by the WFC. To encourage local talent, 15 of the 20 registered team members were Emirati nationals and five expatriates, and all their families were welcomed to the matches so that they could watch and support. The ADSC is also home to other amateur leagues for men, women, corporates and juniors U-12 and U-14. For example, Khaled (2015b) reports:

Last month saw the start of the 2015 IPIC Women's Football League season. Organized by Abu Dhabi Sports Council, and the FA, the eight-team league is

made up of established local clubs, B teams and independent expatriate sides.
(para.8)

The country's oldest club, Al Nasr (established in 1945), introduced a women's football team in 2015 for the first time, which followed on from the formation of the first ever UAE women's elite football team consisting of all-Emirati women players in 2014. The WFC commenced with a mere 20 Emirati female footballers six year ago and presently reports over 2,000 players in the association (Abbasher, 2010). One of the youngest is a player on the national team, Mariam Daoud (16 years old), and a local paper reported, 'she has risen through the U14 and U16 ranks to join the senior squad. Her case is an indication of the FA's intent to nurture Emirati female players from a young age, as reflected in a squad full of native talent' (Khaled 2015a).

In terms of the emergence of an elite women's national football team, this was established in 2009 shortly after the establishment of the WFC yet as pointed out earlier, this team comprised players of neighbouring countries who were granted temporary UAE citizenship for representing the UAE in women's football. The team's first international match occurred against Palestine (where they won 4-2) in the 2010 West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Women's Championship tournament. This team was successful in winning the 2010 and 2011 WAFF Women's Championship but is yet to compete in a final tournament of the Asian Football Confederation. The establishment of the all-Emirati elite team in 2014 meant that previous members of the women's team who were from other nationalities could now no longer represent the team. In 2018, the White Ladies will compete in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Asian Cup qualification for the first time as a qualifying round to the 2019 FIFA World Cup.

Despite broader structural changes that have sought to facilitate Emirati women's participation in football in the UAE, little research exists to explore the ways in which these opportunities have been taken up. Further, little research examines the socio-cultural factors that shape these experiences for women in the context of the UAE. Moghadam (2003) reminds us that Muslim women are far from homogenous and differ in terms of intersectional categories such as class, ethnicity, education, and age (amongst others). Women move in different socio-economic and cultural arrangements and as such there is no 'typical' Middle Eastern Woman.

Although somewhat utopian, it is my contention that the UAE can better utilize women's sport to influence personal and social values and attitudes towards women athletes, with a view to opening spaces through which more equitable gender relations can be realized. As such, my dissertation attempts to analyse the social and theoretical mechanisms behind the changes that have occurred in UAE society over the past twenty years through the lens of women's participation in football. In short, a key aim of my dissertation is to analyse the cultural shifts that have led to changes in gender relations in one specific context in the UAE, football, to highlight possibilities for future gender justice work.

My introductory section has attempted to contextualize my work within the broader gender project of women's sport in the UAE. The remaining sections of this chapter will explore the purpose and significance of this dissertation, outline the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my study, and present an overview of subsequent chapters.



The National 9 September 2009, 'The UAE women's seven-a-side football team celebrate after winning the Armed Forces Officers Club 13th Open Sports Festival tournament'.

1.9 Research methodology and theoretical lens

In this research, I draw on feminist poststructuralist theory which offers a lens for understanding limitations and possibilities of Emirati women's experiences shaped by unique power relations and power structures. This perspective is a theoretical orientation that includes a wide range of positions and views. It challenges the idea

of a genuine or 'truthful' standpoint from which women can claim their rights. Hence, I employ this lens to understand and analyse women's experiences in relation to power structures and relations, discourse and patriarchy. As Philips (1998) argues, 'Power finds a shifting and unstable expression in network and alliance that permeates every aspect of life' (p. 205). Weedon (1997) defines feminism as 'politics directed at changing existing power relations in society' (Bhui 2009, p. 128) and says what feminism bring to poststructuralism is the ability to address questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender might be transformed.

Many social relations and subject positions (subjectivities) are produced through various workings of power, 'a major emphasis in poststructuralist theory is power: the power to name, define, and give meaning to reality' (Duquin 1994, p. 298). I provide an account of the discourses prevalent in the UAE that frame and position women and the possibilities and limitations they encounter. These discourses will frame what I will discuss because, as Foucault (1976) explains, experiences allow us to 'construct knowledge and thus govern, through the production of categories of knowledge and assemblage of texts, what is possible to talk about and what is not' (p. 53).

The advantages of using a poststructuralist method include 'an ability to respond more contextually and strategically to shifting frameworks of power and resistance; and a fuller recognition of multiplicity and difference amongst women' (Philips 1998, p. 204). These differences among the elite women players will be analysed and this lens will provide possibilities to establish and think about how I represent the stories of the women's lives.

Within this framework, I choose to compile my exploration of women's participation in sport in the UAE within a case study framework with capacity to support dimensions of the data set. The case was primarily built on six players of the UAE's elite football team whose experiences were captured through a series of face-to-face interviews. There were a series of two interviews, each with a slightly different focus: the first interview focused mainly on biographical details to understand how the past histories and lived experiences of the participants shaped their views around gender, sport and their context. The second interview examined

how they came to be playing football and explored the factors they perceived to be facilitators or barriers to their participation. The second interview asked participants to reflect upon the kinds of experiences that motivate them to continue in their sport and to identify their perceived challenges as female football players in the UAE.

I also present an analysis of women's involvement in sport in the UAE through the lens of two coaches of the first all-Emirati women's football team and four administrators. Similar face-to-face interviews were conducted with those who have been instrumental in the increased opportunities for women's sports participation in the UAE in the context of football. Among them are the voices of two males (namely a key administrators and members of the coaching staff for the elite team) because of their contribution to, or potential influence on, the advancement of women's football in the UAE. I acknowledge that some feminists might consider the inclusion of men's voices in the compilation of this case study a limitation since they may believe men do not possess the 'feminist consciousness which is rooted in the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as, a woman' (Stanly & Wise 1993, p. 161). Yet, in adopting a relational perspective of gender to my work, it is an important signifier that this gender equity work is not only the responsibility of women, but men also. The results and findings of my study will provoke targeted policy discussions around women's cultured gender experiences in sporting contexts.

1.10 A personal narrative: my positionality in this research

A key driver in my motivation for undertaking this study is my own experience of living in a predominantly Muslim country. As an active, non-Muslim, young woman living in Oman, I participated in the school netball and gymnastics team from the age of eight (in 1977). Oman's situation at that time was unique. Until 1970, Oman was 'one of the least known countries in the world' (Rippenberg 1998, p.144). Many women during the 1970s in Oman appeared to like their lives and did not question the restrictions imposed on them. In fact, they did not feel as if they were living in a context of 'sheer suppression' (Wikam 1982, p. 5). However, the post-1970s renaissance had immense influence on the lives of women as they were exposed to some opportunities they had not previously experienced. Cultural

differences in the treatment of boys and young women were challenged as schooling opportunities grew (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 130). Further new opportunities for women's involvement in society emerged through the establishment of organizations such as the Omani Women's Association in 1972.

The Omani Women's Association was initiated in Muscat as a non-government organization (NGO). This association was set up to offer facilities to women trying to seek help for child care, education, and job training. More recently, the organization provides programs pertaining to Capacity Building, Women's Empowerment and Voter Education (WEAVE) and Women in Information Technology. The organization also regularly conducts debates and discussions pertaining to women-related themes. The main job of the Omani Women's Association was to try and enhance social awareness amongst family members, particularly children, who were considered potential drivers of future change.

Similarly, these opportunities also became available for women in my school in Oman. I was on the school gymnastic team and dreamt one day of being a professional gymnast. However, I soon learned that my future in this sport was limited, albeit for different reasons than lack of opportunity. After the age of 11, the school coach told me that it is not 'right' for a girl to expose herself in leotards on the school stage after a certain age: the age of puberty. That put an end to my gymnastic days. Experiences such as mine acted to reinforce that there were societal expectations about the role of women in this context. Schools in the 1970s had to ensure that 'progress was respectful of Islamic requirements for separation of the sexes after puberty' (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 129). At the time, such development 'received the support of the Omani people, keen to retain customs, traditions and heritage that reaffirm values and beliefs' (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 129).

After the 1970s, Oman underwent a period of modernization like no other time in its history. However, this was not reflective of typical patterns of modernization: it was mixed with tradition. As others have pointed out, 'Material modernization was the initial (superficial) display of transition, it only acted to restructure and identify how to construct nations and to strengthen them by according them 'contemporary' procedures and developments' (Al-Aziri 2012, p. 118). So,

although the rest of the world might have assumed Oman was experiencing significant social change particularly with respect to the gender order, social structures in Oman remained (and to this day) remain ‘firmly rooted in patriarchal value(s) largely defined and enforced by social relations of kinship, tribe and religious teachings’ (Al-Aziri 2012, p. 118).

Hence, leotards (as traditional gymnastics clothing) were not allowed as they were considered too tight and revealing. However, such was not the case for boys as restrictions around what they could wear or how they could participate in a sporting context (culturally or religiously) did not appear to apply to them. They were not only allowed to wear what they pleased but also encouraged to play whenever and wherever they wanted.

Unlike the women, boys were encouraged and even expected to excel in sport as they were the future of leagues, clubs and the face of the nation in international sport. Although I discontinued my gymnastics, I was able to continue my netball activities for a few more years. Despite my disappointment at having to give up my participation in gymnastics and sport more broadly, I did not question these conferred presumptions and power and I accepted it as the norm. My reality was ‘socially constructed’ as the ontological belief goes. ‘Silence was the rule’ (Foucault 1990, p. 3) as many women in Oman’s society at the time, including me, did not question such assumptions. On reflection, I acknowledge these constructions as a product of my cultural and social environment in Oman at the time.

As Hargreaves (1994) argued, ‘Culture is conceived of as a ‘lived experience’, constructed and changed through the interaction of men and women who make, resist and transform meanings, values and behaviour’ (p. 12). Considering these sentiments, I now wonder if the power relations experienced within the school context were characteristic of those in wider Middle East society and that if, to this day, ‘Omani women have to deal with tough social, financial and political impediments’ (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, P. 128). At age 25, I moved from Oman to the UAE and realized that women here faced similar challenges. I realized that I had viewed many aspects of my circumstances and limited opportunities as a

woman as 'natural' and as Weedon (1997) describes, 'the appeal to natural is one of the most powerful aspects of common-sense thinking' (p. 4). On the other hand, if one merely follows the natural and fails to validate or test the same, it would not allow any transition in the times to come. Thus, the aim of my research is to challenge what is regarded to be normal and introduce possibilities for change.

Drawing extensively on a wide range of sources such as media texts from newspaper articles, my study provides a contemporary analysis of the current social conditions informed by religion, class and culture that have shaped relevant changes and progress as well as developments in the way in which women, gender and women's rights have been comprehended in the previous two decades in the UAE. My research includes investigations and discussions of the literature pertaining to the main aspects of the lives of the women, and the inferences that are made from these studies. Since the popularity of sports knows no boundaries, transcending generations, cultures and of course gender, my study will look at the gender in/equities and equal opportunities in the UAE and questions if it is the result of social or historical conditions. It will also look at the vital and effective role women have played in society and sport throughout the history of the Emirates. My own story is an integral part of this exploration.

This chapter is a starting point for the reflexive approach I intend to adopt in this study and I seek to provide an overview of the issue my research seeks to explore. This chapter has considered factors that shape women's sports involvement in Oman and provided an overview about the ways in which the Omani context (complete with its own histories and cultures) positions men and women. I have argued for the need for greater comprehension of the methods in which culture and context can influence gender relations and cultured gender subjectivities, specifically in the context of sport in the UAE. A brief overview of the research methodology and theoretical lens that will guide my study was discussed. The following chapter provides a review of selected literature with a view to highlighting how the proposed study seeks to contribute to, and extend our understandings of, women's sports participation in a non-western context.

The following literature review will highlight several limitations in the area of women and sport participation in the UAE to date. I will address the shortcomings

in the literature by systematically examining various factors that may impact issues of access and participation in relation to women's sport in the UAE.

1.11 Overview of the thesis

Chapter One looks at globalization in the UAE where it has allowed access to other cultures and the way people in the UAE think about their own social relations and cultural practices. Chapter Two reviews the current literature in terms of what is currently known about female sport participation, especially in the UAE. It also looks at limitations, barriers and factors that assist women in participating in sport. Chapter Three examines methodological considerations, including cultured gender subjectivities, and how that helps understand the cultured gender relations through the participant's voices. It also explores the approaches to data presentation and analyses and ethical considerations inherent in this work. Chapter Four presents the data through a series of narratives constructed from the interviews with six players in the elite UAE women's national football team, two of their coaches and four administrators. The following chapter (Chapter Five) presents the analyses and discussion of key data themes and the final chapter (Chapter Six) provides some insights, implications and conclusions considering the research questions used to frame this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review key literature that has informed the development of this research. I will provide an overview of general themes to provide a more nuanced account of what is known about my Muslim elite football participants and the specific facilitators and barriers for them in the context of football. I examine the role of socio-cultural factors such as religion, family and gender for the role they play in enabling or constraining women's sporting participation.

Prior research has examined the phenomenon of women's football generally, but several gaps remain in this area of research. Firstly, most of my work foregrounds the experiences of white, western women, and in particular 'white, middle-class, non-disabled girls ... and much of this research has ignored the real-life experiences of girls from minority ethnic communities' (Stride & Flintoff, 2016). Secondly, there is a scarcity of research that considers how young women themselves play a role in facilitating (or not) their progress in the football domain. Finally, the specific positive and negative implications on the lives and identities of the women players who participate in football in Arab countries is, yet another area not explored in the literature. Research in the Middle East, such as the research of Qatari women footballers (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi 2014) looks at 'the way sport has been positioned as an enabler for both family cohesion and women's empowerment' (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi 2014, p. 1756), but it does not look at the agency of the women themselves as key enablers in the emergence of the sport and their own participation in it.

Although current sociological research has explored young Muslim women and physical activity, typically focusing on sport, there is 'little consideration of the way in which the family intersects with young Muslim women's understanding of, and participation in, physical activity' (Maxwell & Taylor 2010, p. 87).

Family can be a profound and powerful institution in Arab societies, given that women are usually dependent upon the family for economic, emotional and social

support. There is a scarcity of literature that examines the tensions that arise for women within these contexts when their aspirations and actions conflict with normative familial expectations. As Gaad (2011) comments, ‘traditional family attitudes towards the role of women have to change to enable women to contribute more fully to life in the UAE’ (p. 213).

The following sections explore the sociocultural context of the UAE before attention is given to what is currently known about women’s sport participation in the Arab states. This discussion seeks to highlight the ways in which this research can extend these understandings, particularly in the context of the UAE.

2.2 Women’s sport participation in the Arab states

While establishing the women’s stories is important, understanding them in the context of their country and the greater context of the surrounding Arab countries is essential to being able to understand their challenges in sport and specifically in elite football. The Arab Muslim countries are ‘anything but a uniform and homogenous region, particularly when it comes to the situation of women’ (Seikaly, Roodsaz, & Van Egten 2014, p. 19) and attitudes in Muslim Arab countries towards sports-women vary from Arab country to country because ‘the category Muslim is heterogeneous’ (Hargreaves 2000a, p. 46).

In recent years, there has been limited research on some Islamic Arab states. One such example is Benn, Pfister and Jawad (2011), who present a collection of accounts by contributors about the experience of Muslim women in sport in various countries such as Oman, Bahrain and the UAE among many others in their edited collection, *Muslim Women and Sport*. Insights into the various situations, histories and power relations influencing the women’s lives in these accounts is valuable and considered the ‘first international publication in the field of physical education and sport studies’ (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 1). Many of the specific contributions explore the various policy contexts that have shaped Muslim women’s sport participation across various Arab states.

In the context of the UAE, Gaad (2011) provides some insights into the ways in which females with learning difficulties experience barriers to social inclusion.

Specifically, Gaad (2011) highlights that these barriers originate in cultural beliefs and practices but there are also resourcing issues (financial and human) that limit opportunities for women with disabilities to participate in sport in the UAE. Gaad (2011) comments, ‘the UAE and Arab-Gulf culture has had a negative influence on gender relations and the lives of people with disabilities’ (p. 213).

In the same collection (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011), the experiences of Palestinian women footballers are explored through research conducted by Schaller in 2005/2006 when he was the special coach for the goalkeepers of the Palestinian women’s football team. Schaller explains that there are complex challenges ‘encountered by young women who play a male-dominated sport like football in a Muslim society’ which is based on religious beliefs, relations between Islam, gender and sport (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 170). It is not the religion that forbids women to play but mainly culture and societal obligations. Gieb-Stuber and colleagues (2011) explain, ‘Islam does not forbid sports for women in principle, but there are reservations about modern sport, especially where religious and social obligations are concerned’ (p. 175).

Also common among different studies of sport in the Arab region is the fact that Muslim female football players need the consent of their parents, specifically a male relative: ‘they have one important principle in common: activities of women and girls require the approval of their nearest male relative’ (Gieb-Stuber et. al 2011, p. 175). The case of Nadine, a member of the Palestinian’s elite women’s football team is a great example of how ‘changes in the family’s situation can have abrupt and serious consequences for young women’ (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 175). Nadine’s father unexpectedly passes away and Nadine is at her uncle’s mercy as to whether she will be granted permission to play football or not. Although her uncle, who supersedes her father as her guardian, allows her to continue to play, he enforces a headscarf (Nadine played without a headscarf before) and ‘besides having to cover her hair, she was not allowed ... to go out without being accompanied by an elder brother’ (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 176). Another common theme in the studies is that it is not only the family that the women football players must deal with but the extended family as well:

The extended family also plays a role in determining a girl's activity ... comments made by grandparents or other close relatives expressing concern about the potential masculinization of the girls and that this might impair their chances of future marriage. (Gieb-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 177)

The closest study on Muslim female football players in the Arab states has been the recent masters dissertation by Carroll (2013) focusing on barriers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's female sport participation and another study on the elite female Qatari football players by Knez, Benn and Al Khaldi (2014). While it is valuable, the former study by Carroll (2013), who does not live in Saudi Arabia, relies only on secondary data (interviews made with ten Saudi women at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology as well as with seven sport professionals carried out by Carroll's contacts in the Kingdom). Another shortcoming of this study is that these secondary sources do not interview the players themselves, they only interview women at the university and sport professionals. The latter study by Knez, Benn and Al Khaldi (2014) 'explored the negotiation of opportunity to be members of Qatar's first national women's football team' (p. 1755). This study's primary data source included interviews with six out of 12 squad members. The semi-structured interviews were considered an important methodological consideration of this work in helping to explore 'women's experiences and influences on their opportunities and journey to membership in the national team' (p. 1755). An equivalent detailed primary data source from the UAE has not been identified in the literature. This research aims to fill this gap by including the voices of the first women's all-Emirati elite football team in what appears to be the first UAE case study to explore this issue.

Collectively, these few contributions that have specifically explored sport participation by Arab Muslim women have highlighted the pervasiveness of cultural practices and discourses that impact on gender identities. As Hargreaves (2000a) argued over fifteen years ago, Arab Muslim women who have made it to the elite level have been viewed by the Western media as examples of a 'fundamental break with tradition, a signal of courage, new possibilities, changing attitudes and new-found freedoms' (p. 46). These women can face different reactions back home in their Arab Muslim countries such as being symbols of national and Arabic pride or they can face opposition from Islamic fundamentalists depending on the Arab country they are in. For example, when Nawal Al

Moutawakel won Gold in the hurdles title in the 1984 Olympics, in her hometown, Morocco, 'she was a figure of national triumph and Arabic pride, a sign of radical womanhood made possible by forward-looking government' (Hargreaves 2000a, p. 46). Most of her training was in Morocco and she received great support from her family and immense opportunity and support from her government providing her with much needed sponsorships. On the other hand, Hassiba Boulmerka who won gold for the 1500 meters running at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992 returned home to Algeria and 'was booed and jeered by a section of the population commonly referred to as Islamic fundamentalists' (Hargreaves 2000a, p. 46). Hence, the challenges and opportunities Muslim women face in sport in the Muslim Arab world is strongly linked to politics and religion which vary in implementation from country to country.

One such challenge for women in every Arab Muslim country has been decisions around the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, or hijab, when playing sport. Although many Muslim sportswomen who identify as religious do not see dress codes as a barrier to sport participation (and in fact often view physical activity positively), for others, not being able to wear the headscarf in football seemed to be an issue. Exacerbated by increasing numbers of women participants, in June 2012 FIFA's International Football Association Board (IFAB) reviewed their previous policy that banned the wearing of headscarves due to safety concerns and to limit opportunities for individuals to incite religious statements (cited in 2010–2011 FIFA rule book). As Ayub (2011) highlighted, 'in April 2010, FIFA banned the Iranian girls' youth national soccer team from competing in the Games' (p. 43). This discrimination towards Muslim women who choose to 'cover' was taken seriously and the subject of much debate as many believed FIFA's decision had 'thrust religion directly into the forefront of international football' (Ayub 2011, p. 45).

Although the lifting of the ban should have made all Muslim women happy, it seems to have upset some, such as a group of moderate Muslim women in Italy who, in their letter to Zurich-based FIFA stated that:

Allowing veiled women to play soccer is seriously wrong. We express our deep dissent for the discriminatory choice which evidently was made to please some of

the powerful of the future World Cup host country, reference to the 2022 World Cup soccer championship. (*Adnkronos International*, 2012)

Despite allowing the headscarf in football, Muslim women in Arab countries faced other challenges. In Oman, women in the early 80s continued ‘to face formidable social, economic and political barriers’ (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 128) but women’s opportunities began to shift, and Oman become a ‘regional trailblazer’ in relation to providing women much needed opportunities by early 2000 (Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 127). They report that many rural areas in Oman opposed women’s visibility in the public sphere when playing sport. Like Iran, women in Oman face the challenge of lack of facilities even to this day although today, women are gaining permission to attend all sporting events as spectators. Some research has seen the shortage of facilities as the ‘main barrier to women’s participation in sport’ (Jahromi 2011, p. 119), yet as others point out not only do these facilities need to be available, they also need to be ‘a culturally complementary sport infrastructure that allows for sport participation to occur within culturally acceptable parameters’ (Maxwell & Taylor 2010, pp. 465-466). Usually, this includes the provision of ‘secluded’ spaces so that women can participate away from public spaces where others can see them. The parameters refer to the inclusion of female-only sport settings and adherence to certain agreed-upon dress codes. Qatar, on the one hand, has overcome the lack of facilities issue and instead declares time as well as costs of facilities to be a constraint for women’s sport participation. The Scottish Sport Council factsheet 2008, (tradename ‘sportscotland’ has been collecting data since 1987 on sport participation by adults in Scotland) explained that at the turn of the century the two main barriers to women’s participation in sports have always been time and cost (p. 2). With many of the football players either working full time jobs or being full time university students, time is a big challenge.

Al-Ansari’s (2011) extensive research in Bahrain discovered that women in the Kingdom do seem to have opportunities to participate in sport but they do not hold high positions in sport management and that is due to the culturally accepted fact that those positions are the domain of men. As Al-Ansari’s (2011) argues, ‘women rarely get the support of their female counterparts when it comes to elections for higher managerial positions’ (p. 89).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the other hand, interprets Islam through its senior Muslim clerics who consider women as second-class citizens (Rawand, 2015). In various studies of traditional Arab society (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, Gaad 2011, Hargreaves 2000a) it is believed that women's roles are limited to motherhood and that women live under the authority of men:

The difficulty as far as feminist interpretation is concerned, is in two allegorical traditions that utilize the story of women's creation from man to make claims about women's inferiority and her limited social and economic space. (Rawand 2015, p. 22)

In Saudi Arabia, Sharia law (Islamic law) governs the country. 'Muslims believe that justice and equality are intrinsic values and cardinal principles in Islam and the Sharia' (Mir-Hosseini 2006, p. 629) but the prevailing interpretation of the Sharia law does not necessary reflect the values and principles of the Sharia law. Similarly, in the UAE, Article 25 of the constitution states that all individuals are equal before the law, without distinction between citizens of the Union about race, nationality, religious belief, or social status. This article makes no mention of sex or gender as a ground for discrimination. Furthermore, national laws and policies are void of any prohibition on gender-based discrimination (Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates).

The movie *Wajdah*, produced by the very first female Saudi director, Haifaa al-Mansour (2012), referred to in my preface, contradicts the existing notion in Saudi that religion is against women. Nine-year Wajdah uses religion (signing on to the school's Koran recitation competition) to raise funds she needs to buy a bicycle (forbidden to women in the Kingdom). The movie challenges deep-rooted Saudi traditions and projects the reality in Saudi Arabia that families fear supporting their daughter's ambition because of society's repercussions. Wajdah's mother does not allow her to buy a bicycle nor ride it fearing society's reaction since they see women riding bicycles as dangerous to a girl's virtue. However, the movie does not project the reality: that even if families do support their daughters with their sporting and physical activity ambitions, the state does not provide the necessary facilities for them, nor even the equipment needed for playing. In Saudi Arabia, women's cleats do not exist.

In the middle of all this, the UAE is starting to see the early signs of women's participation changing at the elite level. The country's efforts to grow women's football started by establishing the first UAE Women's Football Committee in September 2009 which led to the establishment of the all-Emirati elite team in 2014. The base for this team came from the Abu Dhabi Women's Football Club which started playing in 2004 with eight of its members being Emirati. However, to date, there is no literature that investigates, as primary data, if these Emirati elite female football players themselves view sport infrastructure in their country, their dress codes or any other factors as barriers to their participation just as the above-mentioned countries have. All the literature available is based on data provided in the country or interviews with people other than the players themselves.

2.3 Understanding the socio-cultural context of the UAE

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of key themes in literature about the economic, religious and family dimensions of the cultural context of the UAE. If we believe that 'the way we think is related to society, politics, economics and history and is also related to very general and universal categories and formal structures' (Luther, Huck & Patric 1988, p10), then it is important to provide an overview of the cultural context of the UAE to make visible the structures, traditions and cultural practices that inherently shape participant perceptions.

2.3.1 The political and economic context of the UAE

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to provide a detailed analysis of the various political turns that have contributed to the make-up of modern day UAE society, it is important to signpost that whilst there have certainly been advancements in terms of the status and role women play in the UAE, much of this has occurred in more recent times because of modernization processes (Gaad, 2011). Heard-Bey (2005) explains that although the Emirati contingent within the UAE is small in population, it has strong local culture. Specifically, Heard-Bey (2005) comments that this culture is based on the principles of Islam and this 'dominate[s] the cultural, moral, social, economic, legal and political' aspects of

daily life' (p. 135). Although UAE legislation is founded in Islamic tradition and scripture, Gaad (2011) explain that gender inequality 'has socio-economic and political roots as opposed to religious roots ... there is a wide gulf between Islam and cultural practices misconstrued as Islamic' (p. 213). This then warrants a closer analysis of the economic conditions that shape the gender regime of the UAE.

The economic systems of the UAE, over the past few decades, have witnessed development and progress, with effects on the social framework, the character, and ability of the state and the standing of the women. The UAE is an instance of quick and fruitful advancement in the context of both the infrastructure and economy of the nation and the development of its individuals. The crucial aspects of social transition that are generally analysed include the financial framework and, related to that, class and property associations. The discovery of crude oil in the 1960s helped the UAE's economy evolve and most of its financial development relied on revenues earned from oil, following which the federal state was founded in 1971 in the Arabian Gulf. Growth in the UAE was also based on liberal trade policies where a stable government structure created an open business environment. Godwin (2006) explains that 'the overall economic outlook for the UAE is for continued growth with faster development than any other major Gulf state' (p. 3)

The ranking of the women in society has progressed as per the nation's development, post the establishment of the federation in 1971, when economic development flourished and was directly responsible for the progress of the women in the nation with greater access to education. This economic status of the country had an impact on the thinking and status of the women, as Moghadam (2003) points out: 'Economic development alters the status of women in different ways across nations and classes' (p. 22) and makes people more aware, allowing women equal chances to progress where they can access more resources and flourish. The UAE has been lucky in how the wealth of the nation has been used:

The royal family ... the Al Nahyan ruling family has distributed and invested the wealth derived from the nations' natural resources into the infrastructure of the nation ... This wealth distribution method allows UAE citizens access to a vast array of telecommunication technologies, health care, education and financial support ... (Godwin 2006, p. 4)

With wealth being invested in education, a knowledge-based economy emerged ‘in which education is highly valued and women, at least in the major cities such as Dubai, have taken new opportunities to address the equity imbalance between the sexes, although there is still a long way to go’ (Gaad 2011, p. 213). The equity imbalance addressed in relation to access to education has ultimately led women to have a greater presence in the workforce both in the government and in a rising number of firms in the private sector. ‘Women today constitute a vital part of the nation’s workforce and actively contribute to the country’s government and economy’ (UAE Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008). This same report refers to the UAE government statistics where women fill two-thirds of all public-sector posts with 30 percent in senior and decision-making positions.

2.3.2 The cultural context of the UAE

Globalization (explained in detail in chapter one) happened rapidly in the UAE, causing an influx of foreigners which brought the total population of the country to around six million, wherein only 16.5 percent were Emirati nationals (Gaad 2011, p. 212). In 2017, this figure has slightly risen: Emirati nationals now constitute 19% of the population (*UAE Interact* 2017). With the influx of cultures into the country, ‘cultural relativism, the view that all cultural practices and beliefs are equally valid’ (Office of Public Discourse 2009, p. 5) has become more important and has added great worth to the UAE. While the native Emirati population has been influenced by the influx of new and different customs, religions and cultures, it has maintained its own strong local culture ‘where the fundamentals of the Islamic faith dominate the cultural moral, social, economic, legal and political aspects of life’ (Gaad 2011, p. 213).

Within the sporting context, many scholars have addressed the religious and social concerns of Muslim women in sport. As Israd (2009) points out, these authors have ‘detailed varying observances which illustrate the struggle women face in reconciling being Muslim, being a woman, and being an athlete’ (Israd 2009,

p. 4). Since all my players are self-identified Muslim, it is important to look briefly at the role of religion in the lives of these women.

2.3.3 Religion and families in the UAE

Experiences for female Muslims vary from country to country and most research investigating Muslim women's sport participation, as Pfister (2008) explains, looks at Muslim women who have relocated to Western countries. All men and women who have committed themselves to the Islamic Faith and its principles are referred to as Muslims.

For Emirati women and men, Islam is not only a set of beliefs and values but the basis on which all decisions of daily life are made. 'Islam is a way of life, a set of principles, values, and beliefs, a shared frame of reference that gives meaning and purpose to everyday living' (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 2). Individuals inherit their religion, values and cultural identity from their family units. Culturally, Arab Muslim women 'are considered to be 'carriers' of the values and belief systems within society, and the honour and respect of their tribe/family' (Knez, Benn, & Alkhaldi 2014, p. 1765). Hence, what women do and the way they act has a direct reflection on their fathers, brothers and the entire family unit. That is why some believe that there is no justice for Muslim women 'as long as patriarchy is justified and upheld in the name of Islam' (Mir-Hosseini 2006, p. 629).

Today, many Muslim families in the UAE are concerned with the changes that result from globalization and modernization (elaborated in Chapter One) and are concerned with foreign influences that do not conform with their values and traditions. Globalization is a force pulling on the UAE local family and introducing foreign elements into the conservative social fabric of society. Stetter (2012) explains:

The encounter between 'new' cultures of consumerism and participation and 'traditional' value systems has not only sparked a debate on the role of Islam (and religion in general) in the modern world but also triggered research on the changing status of gender and patrimonial family structures in Middle Eastern societies. (p. 4)

This exposure has some women trying to push boundaries of tradition and culture as familial constructs whilst trying to maintain the core values of society and religion. However, women are challenged in some basic principles such as justice and equality because of the way the law, dominated by Sharia law, interprets these values which does not necessary reflect the principles stated in religion. New opportunities and new spaces opening to women in the UAE in the fields of education and employment are also creating additional challenges for Emirati women. Yet, to date, how these opportunities connect with the masculine sphere of football in the UAE remain under-researched.

2.4 Gender relations in the UAE

Although gender sometimes just refers to either being masculine or feminine; it is more complex than that and it is experienced not just as individual but as a ‘cultural-social product’ and something we do and perform rather than something we get through a socialization process. Butler (1999) states that gender is socially constructed and not something we have or are born with but something we do and perform. Notwithstanding the extensive body of literature that explores biological determinist views of sex and performances of this such as in early psychoanalytic work that focused on sex-role theories, this research adopts a perspective of gender as a social construction. The ways in which a poststructuralist perspective has informed my view of gender is that it draws my attention to the complex relationship between power, knowledge and gender. Since this perspective ‘acknowledges that assumptions about gender are embedded ... in areas like values, formal and informal practices’ (Hoeber 2007, p. 368), I look at the traditional power structures in the UAE and critique the assumptions in Emirati society that are taken for granted. I also establish a context where all participants in this study produce new meanings and practices for female football players. Operating from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, this research ‘seek[s] out marginalized voices to disrupt the status quo and surface understandings’ (Hoeber 2007, p. 368) and hence provides a methodological basis for the in-depth sets of interviews with the players, coaches and administrators included in this research.

In contrast to what McIntosh (1988) says regarding the State playing an indirect role in the oppression of women, the UAE has played a direct role in championing

women and providing better opportunities. In quoting McIntosh, Young (1981) indicates about the state that it, 'plays a part in establishing or regulating systems, such as family and wage labour, in which women are oppressed' (p. 13) but in the case of the UAE, the state has established a constitution where women are defended and protected. The concept of gender roles in the country and what women can and cannot do have been embedded in the upbringing of Emirati people so that they are normalised and accepted as the status-quo. In the previous six years, the UAE has been shown to be a leader in women's development in the Arab area and has appeared for the same in the Global Gender Gap Report (Dubai Women's Establishment 2012). The UAE offers equal assets to both men and women in the domains of health and education, and on an annual basis its performance has been consistently rising in the domain of female financial involvement, and particularly empowering women in the political domain. The Global Gender Gap Report analyses differences relying on gender inequalities and the equitable spread of assets to women in contrast to men in the domains of health, education, political empowerment and financial involvement. However, the domain of sport and particularly football in the UAE is not analysed in detail in the literature. Also, not analysed is how women's progress in the UAE in such a masculine domain even became possible, given the dominant ideologies about gender and women's position in society according to culture and religion:

Islamic feminists are giving legitimacy to social action by Muslim women who are creating new agendas, for example in living more public lives, entering the workplace and contributing more visibly in their communities. (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 4)

2.4.1 Gender, identities and sport

Based on the existing cultural and gender norms discussed above, no research in the literature to date points to the issue of how the elite female football team consisting of Emirati, Muslim women have been able to circumvent established beliefs within their culture, especially since religious values are central to their way of life. As Al-Sinani and Benn (2011) point out, 'through the modernization process, the role of religion has stayed central to the way of life' (p. 127). Across

the world, religions have traditionally played a defining role in cultivating the values of a community.

The fact is that Islam does not advocate subordinating women in terms of sport participation, but Muslim women in the Middle East might be subordinated and discriminated against by a system of norms and Sharia laws. ‘Muslims believe that justice and equality are intrinsic values and cardinal principles in Islam and the Sharia’ (Mir-Hosseini 2006, p. 629). However, the prevailing interpretation of the Sharia law does not necessary reflect the values and principles of the Sharia law. Muslim women have historically participated in sport:

Globally, Muslim women have a long and rich history of participation in sport. There is documented evidence of the Prophet Mohammed challenging his wife, Aisha, to a running race, with Aisha winning and subsequently being challenged to a second race. (Knez, Benn, & Alkhalidi 2014, p. 1757)

Although research such as Knez, Benn and Alkhalidi (2014) confirms the fact that participation in sporting activity is not a violation of Islamic principles, ‘women do (however) face discrimination and relative invisibility in the field’ (p. 1757).

Prior studies have not explored if and how women are able to negotiate and redesign their cultural freedom in the context of the UAE. Knez, Benn and Alkhalidi (2014) argue that ‘there are multiple ways in which Muslim women can and do manage, interpret, and negotiate religious and sporting identities in their sport participation’ (p. 1757), but they do not explain the specific strategies through which the women asserted their identities. And the enactment of such strategies as within the realm of the family and its role in the process is completely absent.

According to researchers, several conventional Islamic customs are impediments to the entry of women to the athletic domain. Samie and Sehlikoglu (2015) explain that some of these barriers consist of: the need to be totally uninvolved with males while exercising, uncooperative conventional apparel including the ‘hijab’ (an Arabic word meaning ‘cover’ also called conventional headscarf or veil), ‘krimar’ (covers the complete upper body), and ‘niqab’ (hides the face; generally worn along with the ‘krimar’), familial pressures and duties, fasting when Ramadan is on (conventionally, one keeps a fast from sunrise until sunset) and the fact that sport may conflict with the nominated times of prayer (conventionally, Muslims

pray five times a day). A crucial point here is that Islam is not what segregates women from sport. Instead, it is the failure of the leagues to adjust to Muslim athletes or the absence of suitable facilities that impede them from being involved.

Kandiyoti (1994) states that women ‘can bargain with the patriarchy and shape it according to their own needs but without revealing their true motives’ (p. 3) and I agree that women can and do bargain with the patriarchy in the UAE (the notion of patriarchy is explored further below). However, other research supports Moghadam’s (2003) sentiment that Muslim women are not subordinated by their system of laws and religious cultures and that recent societal changes have prompted an opening up of spaces for women in terms of sport and physical activity. These authors argue, ‘... that the religious cultural arena has become more welcome and open to women’ (Gross, Davies & Diab 2012, p. 3), yet the evidence that this is more than rhetoric is yet to be established.

2.4.2 Cultured gender identities in the Muslim sporting context

Prior literature has not addressed the nuanced ways in which Arab and Muslim women understand and question notions of gender as natural or socially constructed. In my research, I utilize the stories of women footballers in the UAE to unpack those thought processes as they describe their entry into participation in this sport at the elite level.

Women footballers in the UAE, by their very existence, challenge the social order of gender, or as Connell (2009) puts it, the ‘gender order’. Connell (2009) describes the gender order as the patterns of gender arrangements that operate within societal contexts. Further, she explains that the gender order is constructed through specific organizational *gender regimes*, but Connell points out that these are not fixed and can and do change. This study seeks to understand if and how women footballers challenged their role as women in UAE society to achieve their status to play the sport for which they hold such passion. Many Emirati women in the UAE have sought to broaden their identity beyond the notions society has placed on them, as Moghadam (2003) explains:

Some women reject religion as patriarchal; others wish to reclaim religion for themselves or to identify feminine aspects of it. Some women reject traditions and time-honoured customs; others find identity, solace, and strength in them. More research is needed to determine whether social background shapes and can predict political and ideological affiliation, but in general women's social positions have implications for their consciousness and activism. (p. 10)

I believe that gender (especially in my case of women footballers in the UAE) needs to be understood as a relational category beyond specific physical or social attributes. Gender is a lens for viewing the position of women in relation to family, in relation to religion, and in relation to culture. It is the contention of this research that the key to greater understandings of what is possible for women in the UAE lies in understanding the context in which the decisions of these women are framed.

Isard (2009) claims that, 'Individually, girls and women make decisions for themselves based on their values, obligations, expectations, affinity to sport and whatever else it is that makes them who they are' (p. 18). However, this stands in contrast to the experience of women in the UAE where they do not make decisions for themselves. Rather, the men in their lives determine and influence their decisions. Prior studies have not considered the impact of who makes decisions, given how men tend to exert such a large influence over women's decisions or the ways in which women negotiate these influences. Importantly, in addition to greater understandings of the wider societal contexts, what is also needed are more nuanced accounts of the ways in which society and structural relations in the UAE community play out in the lives of women living there.

There is much that goes into such decision-making processes, and how exactly such manoeuvring happens and the environment in which any such decisions are negotiated is an issue not discussed in the empirical literature as others explain.

Despite the intense efforts of many agencies and organizations, and numerous inspiring successes, the picture [in terms of gender equity] is still disheartening, as it takes far more than changes in law or stated policy to change practices in the home, community and in the decision-making environment'. (Claros & Zahidi 2005, p. 2)

It is this 'decision-making' environment of the players that I explore in my study – the thinking process of these women who were able to bring about change in their situation: the change from not being able to play in this 'male-dominant' game to being able to play *and* forming an elite team just like the men's team.

Focusing on the issue of gender is important in looking at how the Emirati women footballers in the UAE performed gender and challenged traditional gender norms in a society where male domination and repressive gender ideologies are so prevalent and feminine and masculine domains are so segregated. Scholars, in their attempt to make sense of the concept of ‘gender’, have produced extensive literature on the sociology of gender. Some of this literature as it relates to Arab women and the way they embody gender will be explored in this section because the issue of gender is present under the surface. As Connell (1990) argues, ‘Gender is a collective phenomenon, an aspect of social institutions as well as an aspect of personal life, and is, therefore, internal as well as external to the state’ (p. 5). Hence this aspect of the personal lives of the women footballers in the UAE, which has not been explored before, will be explored in this study. I try to create ‘little stories’ where ‘local explanations’ of the UAE women elite footballers have not been explored in the literature before although the big stories of women in UAE in education and work have been explored extensively (for example see Abdulla, 2005).

2.5 Concluding remarks

Gender and feminist theorists discuss how patriarchy is reinforced through family dynamics and I have discussed how researchers show that this is particularly the case with Muslim women in Arab countries, particularly in the UAE. My research points to the hierarchy that exists in UAE society and how modernization has affected the gender roles within the country. An examination of if and how the elite Emirati women football players in the UAE have managed to exert agency to disrupt these norms and relationships of power can contribute to a better understanding of how cultured gender norms can be successfully disrupted in productive ways. My study will explore if and how Emirati women engage in reconstructing cultured gender identity in some way – that is, it explores their subjectivities and the processes that have shaped them as they become a ‘subject’. Although gender is a social construct, I ask questions about how these Emirati women enlist culture, particularly in the domains of religion and family, to accomplish what no other women in the history of the country have been able to

accomplish – become part of the elite football team – a sport considered masculine not just in Arab countries but the world?

Prior studies such as Ayub (2011) and Sulayem, O'Connor and Hassan (2013) have pointed out that a decentralization of power in the home is occurring, and this could have created opportunities for a redefinition of gender for these women to exert their agency. However, these studies did not explore the consequences for women who did exert such agencies in the world of sport in the UAE, and my study addresses those issues as well. There is still limited research on the topic of sport specifically in the UAE (for an exception see Gaad 2011) and hence my dissertation fills this gap by exploring issues for Emirati female athletes in the UAE who have encountered many facilitators as well as barriers to participation, including issues related to religion, family and changing cultured gender dynamics and identities.

In the next chapter, I discuss feminist theorists who explore gender. I address Foucault, who suggests that discourse is 'power' in creating any change, and so I propose that these Emirati women athletes are using discourse in some way to reach the highest level of a male dominated sport, namely football. In doing so, they reconstruct cultured gender by convincing their families and society that women can also enter the domain of football. I examine in the next chapter contemporary social (religion, class and culture) conditions that enabled Emirati women in the UAE to reach elite level football and the potential of sport to be a catalyst for social change. I discuss feminist poststructuralist theory which offers a lens for understanding the limitations and possibilities of women's experiences as shaped and influenced by unequal power relations between men and women. Ideas of power, patriarchy and discourse are presented followed by methods and the case study strategy taken.

The aim of my study is to examine what impeded and assisted the participation of young Emirati women elite football players in the UAE. Through a case study framework, I explore the experiences of six elite football players, two coaches and four administrators from the UAE. I then discuss how their progress has been possible within the context of such repressive cultured gender ideologies which separate masculinity and femininity into such distant domains legitimized by religion and culture.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Sport has long been considered by scholars to be a microcosm of society in which power relations, marginalization and social exclusion take place (Wickman 2008, p. 11). Dr. Zaki Badawi, head of the Muslim College in London, explains that social progression and change can be very much linked with gender equality, specifically commenting, ‘change in the Islamic world can be assessed by the treatment of its women’ (Goodwin 2003, p. 27). Society’s perception of women provides insight into the understanding of the Islamic world. To understand how society is structured, one can look at the way the Islamic culture positions women and the spaces that it opens for them to access power and assert agency (Goodwin 2003). The status and profile that women have in a society often depends on the level of gender equality and gender equity that it observes and practices. To understand gender relations, the experiences and voices of women need to be contextualized alongside the dominant cultural beliefs and morals of the society within which they exist.

Western conceptualizations of equitable gender relations remain incomplete, and perhaps misguided by aspiration. To gain a better understanding of how gender is played out within dominant social relations it is crucial to pay attention to the political, economic and cultural contexts that enable or constrain them. An extension of this involves an opportunity to interrogate the ways societies/communities have historically engaged or dealt with ideologies that have been imposed on them, that are in contestation with their own cultural norms and values (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 2).

My contention in this research is to dispel any misguidance and misconceptions there might be about women’s role in the sport arena and to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers and opportunities offered to women in the UAE to participate in sport, through their own voices. To be sure, my research seeks to explore issues of accessibility, albeit lack of, sports participation for Emirati women in the UAE. An aim of my research is to better understand how the UAE can nurture female sport to positively influence social perceptions towards female athletes. In

its broadest sense, my research looks to open new social spaces through which more equitable gender relations can be forged.

This chapter is divided into seven main sections starting with a discussion of my study's theoretical foundations and poststructuralist approach to discourse. Subsequent discussions outline the selected methodology and methods, and the reasons that underpin these selections. The remaining sections of this chapter explore approaches to data representation and analyses and the ethical considerations inherent in this work.

3.2 Theoretical foundation

Sport has long been recognized as a vehicle through which social change and/or progress can be facilitated. 'Women's involvement in sport can make a significant contribution to public life and community development' (UN Women 2016, p. 3). In acknowledgement of this point, my study seeks to identify and analyse contemporary social (religion, class and culture) conditions that enable this potential to exist as it does in the UAE today. Empirically, this will be enabled through a suite of interviews with current female Emirati national citizen athletes and other men and women administrators (champions) who have helped pave the way for this social turn in the UAE. It is hoped that this new knowledge will enhance the UAE's understanding of Emirati women who actively seek to participate in sport and the challenges they confront in pursuing this endeavour.

To this end, the questions that propel this research orientate around how Emirati women in the UAE experience sports participation in general and enter elite level football. Here, I explore how these experiences contributed to their cultured gender subjectivities and analyse the complex processes through which individuals make sense of themselves and their relationships. Within this analysis, I also looked at the social, cultural and political factors that might enable or constrain Emirati women's sports participation in the UAE and in what ways their participation in sport might impact the ways gender equality is thought about and practiced in the UAE. To analyse and interpret these research questions, my focus will be drawn to what participants in my research said about the power relations within their

communities and families, and where, and through whom, they gathered support to pursue a sporting career. Specifically, the research questions guiding my study are:

1. How do Emirati women in the UAE experience elite sport participation in football and how do these experiences contribute to their cultured gender identities/subjectivities?
2. What are the facilitators that contribute to, and barriers that impede, all women's sport participation in the UAE?
3. In what ways might sport participation by Emirati women in the UAE at the elite level contribute to gender in/equality?

For the purpose of my research, the principles of narrative methodology are employed for their ability to privilege the voices of participants while integrating contextual forces that comprise the stories and experiences and the key people who participated in these stories. This approach sits within the broad suite of research activities associated with qualitative research (Stake 2008). Within this framework I chose to compile my exploration of Emirati women's participation in sport in the UAE within a case study framework. The attraction here was the capacity for case study to support the partial, provisional and dimensions of the data set. In the context of my research, the case was primarily built on six Emirati women athletes from the UAE's elite football team who were recruited to participate in a sequence of two interviews. Interviews were semi-structured in nature, comprising a range of open-ended prompt questions. The interviews were designed to draw out aspects of the biography that led them to becoming football players, their experiences of playing the sport, how they perceived themselves as Emirati female athletes in UAE society, and the place of 'significant others', including family, in their sports participation. Interviews were conducted between December 2014 and May 2015 to accommodate their sporting seasons.

The theory that I found most helpful in this research was feminist poststructuralist theory, informed by theorists such as Foucault and Weedon, and their focus on concepts such as discourse, power, gender and equity. Throughout my research, I seek to examine the way these concepts are played out and understood in UAE

society while analysing relationships of power and gender equity in Emirati women's football. Feminist poststructuralist theory offers a lens for understanding the limitations and possibilities of women's experiences, as shaped and influenced by unequal power relations between men and women. Although feminism and Foucault's intellectual fields clash over ideas like 'power', I look at how the latter is part of the former.

3.2.1 Feminist poststructuralist theory

Feminism can be understood as 'a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society' (Weedon 1997, p. 1). It is a theoretical orientation that includes a wide range of positions and views. Feminism involves several objectives including:

Conviction in the critical cultural and social value of women's work, words, and cultures; assistance for the cultural, ideological, structural, and linguistic modifications that will enhance women's productive growth and development; and valuation of differences themselves. (Gray-Rosendale & Harootunian 2003, p. 22)

Using Weedon's (1987) definition of feminist poststructuralism, it is 'a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and identify areas and strategies for change' (p. 40). Feminist poststructuralism challenges the idea of a genuine or thoughtful location/standpoint from which women can claim their rights. What feminism brings to poststructuralism is the ability 'to address the questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class, and race might be transformed' (Weedon 1987, p. 20).

Some feminists consider men not to have the appropriate embodied gender subjectivity to accurately represent feminism or feminist research (Gilligan 1982). Crotty (2003) writes of Stanly and Wise (1993) explaining that men do not possess a feminist consciousness. While acknowledging this limitation, in the compilation of this case study, I include the voices of several males (including a key administrator and some members of the coaching staff) because of their contribution to, or potential influence on, the advance of women's football in the UAE. It is easy to assume that their voices corroborated the views or experiences

of the women players. However, Gilligan (1982) argues that women and men often think differently and have different ways of seeing the world and relating to the world. I sought to be mindful of this when the participants talked about themselves, their lives and their perception towards their society and sport.

Looking at the concepts of power, discourse and gender through the lens of feminist poststructuralist theories ‘helps us understand the basis of existing power relations and to develop strategies for change’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 144). Working with feminism and Foucauldian vocabulary is appealing here because it provides the possibility to establish and think about how I approached the task of narrating the lives of Emirati women elite football players in UAE. Drawing on Nancy Hartsock’s work, McLaren (2002) explains that ‘some poststructuralist theories such as those put forward by Michael Foucault fail to provide a theory of power for women’ (p. 2). Foucault’s concept of ‘power as everywhere’ is criticized by feminists as leaving no way to distinguish the differences in power between those who are governed and those who govern. Feminism considers cultured gender power relations as essential. What worries some feminists is Foucault’s rejection of norms and the fact that he does not promote legal and institutional change, hence breeding passive rather than active women who want to get involved and be part of their own change. Foucault’s notions of power and change will be further discussed in section 3.2.2 of this chapter.

There is, however, overlap in concerns and approaches between feminist and Foucauldian theorizing and there are practical applications of Foucault’s ideas that promote feminist aspirations. They both identify the body, for example, as a site of power, they both view power as local and emphasize discourse while criticizing Western humanism’s privileging of the masculine.

Recognising that Feminism takes up many forms, I do not attempt to characterize all the forms since ‘a movement of such intricate diversity resists categorization’ (Crotty 2003, p. 162). One of the main characteristics of Liberal feminism that appeals to me is its focus on equality: men and women having the same rational capacities and therefore being treated equally. Given the same opportunities, women can realize their full potential and not be subordinated by men. Liberal

feminists assert that it is important for the state to provide women full inclusion to politics that can protect their rights and provide them with equal opportunity to be as ‘disruptive’ as is necessary. Liberal feminism advocates working within institutions to mobilise change and reach equality: something Foucault, they claim, does not promote. The opportunity to mobilise change and what the state provides for women to pursue this are both lenses that I intend to employ in the presentation and analysis of my data across the next two chapters.

3.2.2 The idea of patriarchy

The aspect of feminist theory I focus on enables me to identify existing inequalities through ideas like patriarchy. The term ‘patriarchal’ ‘refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interest of men ... patriarchal power rests on the social meaning given to biological sexual differences’ (Weedon 1997, p. 2). According to St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), a poststructuralism reading of patriarchy ‘offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those poststructuralism itself might create’ (p. 6). By extension, St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) argue that feminism, as a Western social movement, ‘has had a profound influence on the daily lives of women and men by challenging patriarchy at every turn’ (p. 2).

Patriarchy was understood in early radical feminist work as a key source of oppression. In response, feminists developed a strategy to ‘reclaim women’s bodies and often some degree of separatism’ (Weedon 1999, p. 4). Patriarchy is seen by Weedon (1999) as a set of institutional structures and ‘representational practices which ‘rest’ on the social meaning given to biological sexual differences’ (p. 2). Hence, she suggests that if patriarchal relations are ‘structural’ then they exist in institutions and social practices of society. What Moghadam (2003) mentions about the Middle Eastern family has not changed much over the years in that family ‘is a powerful signifier, and there is a strong conservative trend to strengthen it and reinforce women’s familial and maternal roles’ (p. 104). In the UAE, as in many other parts of the world, patriarchal structures can undergo significant challenge

and change because of other institutional changes, such as economic and political developments.

3.2.3 Foucault's notion of power

Foucault's conception of power departs from the traditional notion where it exists to describe those 'in power' and others as 'oppressed'. In this re-conception, power operates as a network, operating through discourses to affect institutions and day to day practices. Within this framework many feminist scholars recognize Foucault's work to be beneficial for understanding the ways that power operates practically and discursively to privilege particular (masculine) ways of being and knowing. Embedded in the social sciences, Foucault's notion of power is understood as fluid and dispersive and not concentrated. Operating within discourse, Foucault (1977) explains that power does not function 'at level of conscious intention or decision' (p. 97). Within this construct he argues that power cannot be readily located or isolated and cannot easily be overcome or resisted. Believing that there is no place outside of discourse, Foucault (1977) asserts that resisting or diluting one source of power only creates another source of power. He gives the example of feminism in society trying to overcome masculinity or women's empowerment, wherein cultured gender forms of power can remake themselves.

Foucault (1982) explains that relationships of power are modes of action that do not 'act directly or immediately on others. Instead, they act upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or future' (p. 789). To this end, Foucault does not see power as independent and one-sided and therefore, not an inherently negative concept. He believes power cannot be possessed by one individual or a group of individuals but rather is a relational construct between individuals and groups. He believes that within that network of power relations, forms of truth and knowledge are always produced.

For Foucault, power exists only when it is exercised, and it penetrates all aspects of social life 'by producing and reproducing individuals' subjectivities' (Foucault 1977, p. 29). He argues that power is not imposed from the top of a social hierarchy nor delivered from a fundamental opposition. Rather than inflicting people with

power directly and intentionally, Foucault believes power emerges when individuals act on their daily activities in accordance with certain norms, especially norms of power (i.e. when individuals act to normalize themselves within the structure of power). He does state however that not everyone in society responds in the same way to social norms and knowledge. As a non-uniform construct, it is acknowledged that individuals and groups react to, and absorb, power differently.

Like any other social group, Emirati women soccer players in the UAE must function within norms, within which they negotiate and assert forms of power. Within this context, agency can be thought of as the ability to respond to and negotiate the effects of discourse. The subject is produced within a situation constraining and enabling its agency at the same time:

Poststructuralism opens up the possibility of agency to the subject through the very act of making visible the discursive threads through which their experience of themselves as specific beings is woven. (Davies 1993, p. 12)

Although critics say Foucault's theorizing often focuses on his apparent underdevelopment of the place of human agency, I believe that Foucault does recognise that action and resistance is possible through our capacity to identify and question the objects and conditions that constrain us. The issue is that we do not always recognize those conditions as they are mobilized through discourse and embedded within the known and familiar. For example, Foucault claims that fitness movements have created the norm of self-discipline and self-denial that serves the capitalist state by creating docile bodies. This 'truth' creates a normality around the privileging of bodies wherein all bodies become sites of regulation and domination. The 'truths' that Foucault talks about are socially produced forms of power (each society having its own unique ones) that are not neutral but have a regulating effect across populations. In fact, these 'reigns of truth' and 'general politics of truth' become rules that control what is thinkable and knowable.

Sitting within the conceptual frames of poststructuralist thought, power is not simply seen as a repressive force but also as a potentially productive one. In this way, power is omnipresent and not something that is simply possessed unilaterally and can therefore be taken away:

The principles of feminist poststructuralism can be applied to all discursive practices as a way of analysing how they are structured, what power relations they produce and reproduce, where there are resistances and where we might look for weak points more open to challenge and transformation. (Weedon 1987, p. 136)

Within this framework, poststructuralism ‘theorizes subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict’ (Weedon 1987, p. 21). This disunity and conflict is produced through a whole range of discourses which are not fixed. As such, ‘poststructuralist theory argues that people are not socialized into the social world, but that they go through a process of subjectification’ (Davies 1993, p. 13).

3.2.4 Poststructuralist approach to discourse

Poststructuralist texts can often be ‘unclear’ and ‘hard to read’; we can find ourselves ‘lost in the play of discourse’ (St. Pierre & Pillow 2000, p. 477). As such, my research examines how discourse (language and meaning) has impacted the experience of elite female footballers in the UAE. St. Pierre argues that poststructural critique ‘is applicable to any ordinary event or process allowing us to think differently about that occurrence’ (St. Pierre & Pillow 2000, p. 479). To guide this critique of the ‘ordinary’, I use a feminist poststructuralist lens to focus on the voices of all participants in this study and their experiences as Emirati elite women footballers in the Arab world.

Feminist poststructuralism asserts that discourse is the formatting basis of society where it affects the very essence of the thoughts of its members. ‘Discourse and the ways in which it produces subjects, is a central focus of poststructural theorizing, and as such, so is an analysis of power’ (Barrett 2005, p. 80). This theory uses the concept of discourse ‘to explain the way in which power has been exercised on behalf of specific interests’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143). The application of this theory lends itself to interrogating the ways in which language and culture are influenced by things such as religion, media and sport. Languages ‘define and legitimize what is true or false, normal or abnormal and good or bad’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143). To this end, language plays a central role in the subjectivities of women football players and the ways they are positioned with socio-political and cultural norms. Engaged more broadly, ‘poststructuralist theory is about the ways in which power, subjectivity, social organizations and language are inter-related’

(Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143) inviting feminist scholars to use the concept of discourse ‘to explain the way in which power has been exercised on behalf of specific interests’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143). Poststructuralist theory recognizes the centrality of language as ‘the locus of construction of subjectivity - the place where ourselves are constructed’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143).

Discourse is the historical and cultural production of knowledge and beliefs through which individuals in a culture regulate behaviour, according to Foucault. ‘Through examination of the discourse it is possible to uncover what determines actions and thoughts and how the making of choices is permitted within its own rules’ (Miller 1993, p. xiii). Exploring the utility of discourse Fairclough (1995) points out that language impacts our social life and is a clear part of it; it is central to shaping our values. How these values and impacts are communicated is where discourse comes into play. As such:

Discourse illustrates how language, socially constructed rules and regulations govern who is able to speak, who will be hushed up and who will not be able to make their voice heard in a certain context or according to a certain issue. (Wickman 2008, p. 9)

Foucault argues that the way culture normalizes people and bodies is through meanings created by widespread practices which are the result of discourse. As such, Foucault’s framework provides a sound conceptual foundation from which to explore what is thinkable and knowable around elite Emirati female soccer players in UAE, including the meanings that are attached to their bodies and what they can do and say. This invites a deeper understanding of these women through power relations and the discursive forms of subjective representation on offer to them within the dominant discourses. Of course, there is never only one discourse at play; there are always different and sometimes conflicting discourses colliding together to create new realities, but then the victory of the more powerful discourse appears the objective reality (Wright 2004). Recognizing that discourses are not ‘closed systems’ women in UAE are able to reform and remodel the ‘said and the unsaid’ of UAE discourse (Ramadan 2013). Through their own agency, subjects can create new truths and perceptions while adjusting old ones.

3.3 Methodology

Case study methodologies are typically located in the qualitative research paradigm as a bounded form of inquiry. The key strengths of case study approaches are seen to be in their ability to: i) provide deep understandings of settings and complex issues, ii) allow for contextual factors to be accounted for in the lived experiences and behavioural conditions of individuals and, iii) present ‘data of real-life situations providing better insights into the detailed behaviour of the subjects’ (Zainal 2007, p. 5).

Those critical of case study approaches point to the idea that investigators ‘fail to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures and that subjective judgments are used to collect the data’ (Yin 2009, p. 41). Yin describes this as a ‘lack of rigor’ where sloppiness is followed by systematic procedures on behalf of the researcher where equivocal evidence or biased views influence the direction of the findings and conclusion. As case study methods are based on several assumptions such as ‘the assumption of uniformity in the basic human nature although human behaviour may vary according to situations’ (Kothari 2006, p. 114), the implication of this assumption for my study will be visible in Chapter Five where I analysed data to identify the uniform patterns of behaviours with all participants in this study. Another assumption of case study methods I will take into consideration in my research is the study of the natural history of the development of the UAE in the past 40 years and what circumstances led to the changes evident for Emirati women in society today.

Since one of the ‘poststructuralist’ points are to question assumptions of ‘truth’ and taken-for-granted notions of ‘normality’, it is important not to allow preconceptions to infiltrate the collection and analysis of data. The methodological tools that allow me to do this work are embedded in the concept of reflexivity. During my study, I undertake the ‘pursuit of knowledge’, as Foucault would describe it, within the confines of what is knowable and thinkable at this time. In doing so, I take on responsibility for collecting and interpreting views and experiences of women soccer players, in the UAE, a subject that has not been researched in any detail to date. Foucault reminds us that the pursuit of knowledge is double-edged, and that in the attempt to represent others we must be persistently on guard, continuously

reflective and conscientiously look at our own thought, knowledge, action and practices so that we do not inadvertently amplify some voices while marginalizing others. As Crotty (2003) warns:

We have to take, to the best of our ability, the standpoint of those studies and we must discipline our own viewpoint on the situation and articulate the viewpoint of the actors we are studying clearly and accurately. (p. 9)

3.3.1 Case study strategy as a mode of inquiry

The ‘case’ at the centre of my study is a group of Emirati women soccer players between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three who have reached an elite level in football in the UAE. The defining characteristic of the case study approach is its focus on just one ‘object’ (a phenomenon, event, happening or group within a particular context) that is to be investigated. In carrying out this case study, I explored the lived experiences and perceptions of six Emirati women from the UAE football team. This research will create new insights and knowledge about the case of women’s participation in elite level sport in the UAE.

To develop a deep understanding of the lives of elite Emirati women footballers in the UAE, we need to explore the experiences they have gone through to get to this level of playing. Beyond the sporting pathway that facilitated their journey are the relationships they have had with family, friends, school and community. In developing the richness of this case study, I have gone ‘into sufficient detail to unravel the complexities of a given situation’ (Denscombe 2007, p. 36). To strengthen my case study, I used a variety of data sources, including interviews with the Emirati players and coaches and the sports Council officials (administrators), observations of events and collection of documents from local newspapers (Stake 2008).

Although this case cannot be representative of all UAE Emirati females who seek a path to elite level football, there are aspects to the findings that will be generalizable into other ‘like’ spaces. Ultimately, it is up to the reader, not the writer, to make informed judgments about how well the findings compare in other circumstances.

3.3.2 The site

Abu Dhabi is the capital city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and was chosen as the first site for my interviews. As well as being the capital city, Abu Dhabi is the largest of the seven emirates in the UAE, housing main federal government offices as well as the home of Sheikh Khalifa, ruler of the UAE. The city of Abu Dhabi, besides being the centre of political and industrial activities, is also the centre of major cultural and commercial position. Hence, it only makes sense that the home of the UAE Emirati elite women football team organized by the UAE Football Association is also located in Abu Dhabi. Most of the members of the team whom I interviewed live in the capital city and do their training there. This site was chosen to suit the players and to further ensure their comfort, the participants were given options to interview in Arabic or English. Some of the interviewees were more comfortable talking in their mother tongue (Arabic) while others chose to speak in their second language (English) since they had either studied abroad or their schooling was mainly in English.

The first series of interview I conducted on the 1st of November 2014 and eleven team members were part of this interview. It was in this initial series of interviews where I established that some of the prospective participants were under 18 and hence I could not continue with the interviews. Some others were very shy and did not say much. Some were also new to football and many had never been interviewed before. Based on this first set of interviews on (28 December 2014), where I established age and willingness, I saw the need to conduct a second set of interviews in Dubai months later (27 May 2015) in which I carried out in-depth questions with six of the Emirati players whose interviews I eventually used for my study.



Claus 2015, 'A group photo of the UAE and Latvian women's national teams', *The National*.

3.3.3 The participants

The UAE elite Emirati women football team was selected as an appropriate focus for exploring the issues connected to the emerging public profile of women in sport in the UAE. The experiences of members of this team were identified as a robust source of primary data collection for this research endeavour. Team members were well known via the media, so it was easy to locate them. The administrators were identified via consultation with the Dubai Sports Council. Previous UAE women's teams, such as the one that won the Western Asia Football Federation (WAFF) championship in Abu Dhabi in 2011, were created for short periods for specific, non-FIFA-sanctioned competitions. However, members of the elite UAE Emirati women's national football team involved in my research – also called the Whites Ladies – held a 73rd FIFA ranking at the Aphrodite Cyprus Cup to become part of global women's football. They are second only to 54th placed Jordan in the Middle East and occupy the number one top spot among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The player participants were aged 18-26, and all were Muslim Emirati nationals (holding Emirati passports) living in the UAE. Given the sensitivities that might exist for some players about the degree to which their family endorsed their football participation, the research design specifically sought to interview participants over 18 years of age who were able to provide their own informed consent to participate in this research. Six Emirati women players were recruited to participate in the

research after ethics approval was obtained (Appendix A). The six players were identified using a purposive sampling technique and were recruited by their coach. Once participants were identified, consent forms and plain language statements were prepared in both Arabic and English and shared with participants (Appendix B). I translated all documentation regarding the ethics process into Arabic so that participants were comfortable reading and understanding them when signing.

A second source of data collection involved interviews with key administrators and coaches whose demographics are detailed in Table 1 below.

Role in the UAE Women's Team	Name	Gender	Age	Brief Description	Role
Player NB. ALL players are Muslim Nationals	Gigi	Female	26 years	Does not wear headscarf, Bilingual (English, Arabic), lives in Al Ain (2 hours' drive from Abu Dhabi)	Player. Drives to the capital in her own car. Mother supported her playing.
Player	Naomie	Female	19 years	Does not wear headscarf. Bilingual (English, Arabic). Brought up in Dubai.	Player and Captain of the elite team. Father was her biggest supporter.
Player	Shireen	Female	18 years	Wears a headscarf. Only spoke Arabic. Lives in Al Ain.	Player. Mother supported her playing.
Player	Bushra	Female	20 years	Does not wear headscarf. Bilingual (English, Arabic).	Player. Lost her father as a child. Mother supported her. At high school, she won the best goalkeeper of the year two consecutive years.
Player	Hala	Female	22 years	Does not wear headscarf. Only spoke Arabic.	Player. Mother supportive,

					father accepting her game.
Player	Ayesha	Female	24 years	Wears a headscarf. Only spoke Arabic. Lives in Dubai.	Player. Mother knows and is supportive, but father is unaware that she plays. Even uses an assumed surname. Day time job is at the Dubai Public Prosecution's Office.
Coach 1	Sam	Male	47 years	Tunisian Nationality; with the Tunisian women's team (2004 to 2008)	Member of the coaching staff. UAE Elite Women's Team – <i>The White Ladies</i> since August 2014
Coach 2	Hedi	Female	28 years	First female in Middle East to get her 'A' License. Does not wear headscarf. Won the best goalkeeper in the Arab world at the age of 19.	Assistant Coach UAE Elite Women's Team – <i>The White Ladies</i> since Jan 2015 Also, member of the coaching staff- Al Wahda Club
Administrator	Abeer	Female	Mid 30s	Wears a headscarf. Only spoke Arabic. Lives in Abu Dhabi. Widower, Mother of 3.	Board member for the UAE Football Association, Secretary General of Women's Football Committee (Abu Dhabi Sports Council)
Administrator	Ary	Male	Mid 30s	Preferred to speak in Arabic. Part of his role and his team's	Abu Dhabi Sport Council: General Coordinator of the Women's

				role is mainly to increase awareness in the community promoting and marketing the game of football for women in UAE.	Football Committee and general team manager for all national teams: U-14, U-16 and the elite team
Administrator	Khan	Female	22 years	Preferred to speak in Arabic. Wears a headscarf. Lives in Abu Dhabi. Started her job 6 months before the interview.	Support staff (Administration) for National Team and U/14 team. Abu Dhabi Sport Council
Administrator	Dr. Asia	Female	Mid 40s	Wears a headscarf. Preferred to speak in Arabic. Lives in Dubai. Mother of 5.	Deputy Head of Organizing Committee and Conference Director – Dubai Sports Council

Table 1: Summary of Research Participant's demographics (all pseudonyms used)

3.4 Methods of data collection

My qualitative method was essentially descriptive with interpretations and meanings. The great strength of this approach is that it can illuminate issues and make visible possible explanations. It is essentially a search for meaning - as is all research. In case study research, all evidence is of some 'value' and this value includes the trust we build with participants (Stake 2008).

The primary source of data for my research project orientates around the sequence of interviews with Emirati female players as well as interviews with coaching staff and administrators. This data is complimented by the recording of my personal reflections in a journal and the collection of media commentary and other public domain information about women footballers in the UAE.

3.4.1 Interviews

Recognizing that my study is guided by feminist poststructuralist thinking, its main themes orientate around cultured gender equity and the place of Emirati women in sport. To answer my research questions, I established a data set comprising of two semi-structured interviews with each of the six elite Emirati women football players, one set of semi-structured interviews with each of the two coaches of the elite Emirati women's team and four administrators connected to the women's game.

Schostak (2006) describes the semi-structured interview method as gaining experience, concern, values and beliefs through individuals directing their attention towards each other and as a result, finding the person's ways of seeing, thinking and acting. One-on-one, in-depth interviews enabled me to explore the challenges women encounter in their participation in sport. I investigate the accessibility, support and equal opportunity within different sports systems to gain insights into the accessibility and opportunities for women in sport in the UAE. While the semi-structured interviews are guided by a clear set of themes and issues, they are flexible in terms of the order in which issues are considered. Within this structure the aim is to encourage participants to speak more widely about their issues as the open-ended questions allowed me to delve more deeply on points of interest.

Interviews 'involve a set of assumptions and understandings about the situation which are not normally associated with a casual conversation' (Denscombe 2007, p. 173). My interviewees clearly understood that my interview was an open meeting intended to produce material from my research and that it was recorded. Since people construct meaning out of live events, I intended to listen patiently and sensitively and invite these stories by the way they frame their opening questions and follow up interviews. I used an iPad to record the interviews as well as a reflective journal to record impressions, reactions, interactions and other experiences/events that might occur during the data collection period. Though less methodical in nature, such information can be a useful source of supplementary data.

With my focus on Emirati women's participation in football in the UAE, my choice was limited to the all-Emirati elite women's national football team, which is the only Emirati female elite national team in the UAE. Following an open recruitment process in which I invited members of the team to participate in my study, I chose six members of the team out of the total of thirteen. These players were all Muslim Emirati females aged between eighteen and twenty-six. Their coach initially asked all thirteen to talk to me in the initial interview in Abu Dhabi but after that interview I realized that some who did not want to talk would not be helpful in giving the in-depth information my research required. Therefore, I sufficed with the six who were willing and excited to talk to me. All six interviewees participated in two interviews each, undertaken in two different sites in accordance with their training schedule.

The first interview was held on 28 December 2014 in the capital city of Abu Dhabi. The focus of this first interview was mainly on biographical details of the players to understand how the past histories and lived experiences of the participants have shaped their views around gender, sport and their context. This was prior to the commencement of the sporting season and it examined how they came to be playing football and explored the factors they perceive to be facilitators and/or barriers to their participation.

The second interview, conducted after the midway point of the season, was held in Dubai on 27 May 2015. This interview explored their experiences of the season to date. It asked participants to reflect on the kinds of experiences that motivated them to continue in their sport and to identify their perceived challenges as Emirati female football players in the UAE. Further, to allow for greater understanding of the UAE sporting context, four administrators were recruited and interviewed. These interviews focused on exploring the historical, socio-political and cultural factors that shape Emirati women's sport participation in the UAE.

Semi-structured interviews require a willingness to be 'open' both on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviewers must accept that they are not fully in 'control' of the conversation and that their role is to 'lead' the interview, by opening spaces where the participant's experiences, curiosities, concerns and interests can be explored (Schostak 2006, p. 13). To do this effectively, particularly in the cultural context of the UAE, there is a need to have a strong sense of trust and

mutual respect between myself and the interviewees. A considerable aspect of this is that I am a female who, like them, is raised in the local culture and I am native to their language. This is an important factor as Denscombe (2007) explains:

Research on interviewing has demonstrated fairly conclusively that sex, the age and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal. (p. 184)

This level of familiarity invites them to be comfortable with their feelings and experiences and to be assured that they will be respected, and this did not stop them from speaking of things they thought I might know. They trust that sharing their insights on how they deal with religious beliefs in pursuing their sport will be heard and dealt with in a culturally appropriate manner. The participants were also familiarised with the confidentiality procedures of my study. It is interesting that several the participants mentioned that no one had ever asked them about their personal journey of how they got to where they are in football. Some had been previously interviewed by the media, but the focus of their communications was on their games and their respective performances, never about their family, their journey or their lives outside of football. Demographic information of the participants, such as education, age, experiences, and family support are included in the first interview.

According to Gough (2008), educational researchers need to work with their research participants as part of a story-telling practice. While facts are an important element of these stories, we give them meaning by storytelling practices that contextualise them. It is important that participants in my study can tell their stories and in the process of the interview are supported to deconstruct their experiences and (re)imagine possible future directions. The data presented in the thesis seeks to shed light on participant's professional and personal lives, and their aspirations for the future. Of course, in accordance with the post-structural framework that guides this research, the participants' stories are not fixed or stable and there is no unitary 'self' through which they can interpret themselves or the world (Weedon 2004).

To support the interviews undertaken with the Emirati players, I also conducted interviews with key administrators and coaches. These interviews aimed to gain deeper insight into the context in which the players participate in football and

existing policies within sport in the UAE. Interview schedule and questions were customised for players, coaches and the administrators (Appendix C) in both Arabic and English. Among the core themes explored through the interviews were questions related to gender identity and how body image is affected by participation in the sport and the place of femininity within the culture of football. Further to this, is the identification of forms of inequality that are perceived within the culture of football; the importance of factors such as family, society and economic status in providing women access to sport; women's increased mobility in the public sphere and how UAE society might benefit from the women's participation in sport; the place of religion and the limitations regarding veiling (or covering up); and, what factors currently limit women's participation in sports in in the UAE and what might be done to off-set these.

3.4.2 Transcripts

Prior to commencing each interview, candidates were informed that the interview was being recorded on an iPad and that they would be given an opportunity to review the transcripts once they are ready. Participants were assured that they would be able to add/delete anything in their transcripts to ensure their accuracy. The transcripts provided me with a written record of the interviews which made it easy to map and revisit conversations. Where there were issues that required further interrogation during the analysis phase, the transcripts were corroborated with the original recording.

While the participants were informed that their real names would not be used in any correspondence, total anonymity is difficult to guarantee. Given that they are either members of the only Emirati elite female team in the UAE, coaches or support staff/members of the Dubai Sport Council, changing their names alone will not ensure that all aspects of their identity are unidentifiable. All participants acknowledged this through a signed consent form and had no issues with this potential vulnerability.

The transcription process was further complicated during the first set of interviews with the participants opting to sit in pairs as a mode of support. They made this easy

for me, by taking the questions in turn and not talking at the same time. I also recorded general notes during the interviews referencing body language (facial expressions and hand movements) which were not captured on tape. This proved valuable when I revisited the transcripts and looked at my notes as to how the participants felt or acted during a part of an interview. Further to this, every time I returned from an interview, I voice recorded my own thoughts on my phone as I drove home. In doing so, I recorded my observations, my feelings and my reflections on the interactions I have experienced as part of the research journey. This goes beyond the interviews to when I watched them during practice and games.

I invited the participants to speak in the language they are more comfortable with and if they felt they could better express their views in Arabic, they were free to do so (since Arabic is their first language). I did all the transcription work myself. I was extremely careful to minimize any change in meanings and/or intent in my translation from Arabic to English. Some words and expressions do not naturally transfer between the two languages, at which time it was important to attune myself to the purpose and context of the point being made within the wider conversation. This required diligent translation work that took a long time but was crucial to capturing the feelings, insights and experiences each participant shared with me.

As Hatim and Mason (1997) indicate through their work, all acts of translations are seen as communications. It is important to note that the questions in my interview schedule were not used verbatim but more as prompts to guide our conversation. As well as capturing what was said, I also noted their emotions when they said it, in the form of their body language. Here I was guided by Hatim and Mason (1997):

...idiolectal feature which is conspicuous as a characteristic of someone's casual speech style may also play an important part in literary character portrayal. Features of politeness which are the common currency of face-to-face interaction may also be perceived in semi-technical, literary or sacred written texts. And ability to draw inferences is a universal of human verbal communication. Approaching texts (as written or spoken records of verbal communication) in terms of an overall, context-sensitive strategy is, we believe, both durable and meaningful as a way of developing translation competence. (p. vi-vii)

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3.4.3 Media clippings and reflective journal

Like elsewhere in the world, media plays a very active role in the cultural representation of sporting bodies in the UAE. The media in UAE, as it does around the world, tends to trivialise female athletes. The techniques operationalized to do this work include 'devoting a disproportionately smaller amount of time to their performances as well as by highlighting their physical attractiveness' (Wickman 2008, p. 38). The UAE media has been particularly careful in placing images of female athletes in their papers because 'traditionally, sport and exercise are sites where the objectification of the body has been promoted' (Wickman 2008, p. 39).

In recent times the UAE has been happy to send Emirati female athletes and teams to compete at the Olympic Games. At the 2012 London Olympics Emirati women became ambassadors of UAE and their performance became a symbolic representation of the new opportunities being giving to women and the strive toward greater gender equity. 'To be a successful athlete is comparable to be a good society member. In that manner, society shapes sport and reciprocally, sport shapes society' (Wickman 2008, p. 39). The active promotion of Emirati female athletes in the UAE is designed to encourage more young women to participate in sport, and to help convince families and parents of the potential benefits of an active participation in sport. Set against this, is a warning:

It should be noted that women within sport also contribute to the exclusion of women who do not fit their ideal of what it is to be a 'real' sportswoman. The messages produced through media portray idealized notions of normality in which 'others' including disabled people are seen as deficient in some way. (Fitzgerald & Jobling 2004, p. 75)

Although women in sport has come to the forefront in UAE media over the past five years, the gender playing field is far from even. As Pilon highlights in terms of the international context:

Broadcasters have not valued women's sports equally, thus resulting in less money filtering down to players. The thinking among entertainment executives is often that ratings will be lacklustre, interest will be low, advertisers won't clamour to buy commercial time between the plays. (2015, p. 2)

3.5 Narrative representation

Lieblich and Josselson (1997) argue that 'what makes a good piece of narrative work is a combination of original story and intellectual perspectives, quality and originality of narratives' (p. xi). Narrative work allows individuals to think and write with freedom and creativity. It is important to draw meaningful conclusions from the narrative work which is there to uncover, describe and interpret the meanings they give to experiences. These experiences can have different meanings for different individuals, although it might be the same event. The different interpretations and meanings the individuals bring to them are often connected to their history and/or life story and it is important to respect a person's individuality.

Lieblich and Josselson (1997) quote Rosenthal regarding the development of multicultural identity: a dynamic process where people have nationality stamped on their passport 'but in fact national identity is shaped and reshaped by their personal history as well as the history of the world during their lifetime' (p. xii). Becoming who we are is a life-long process involving coming to terms with the various components and conflicts associated with culture and national identity.

Drawing on narrative techniques and Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, I will analyse the data collected through the interview process by looking into the basic way these Emirati women athletes in UAE have made sense of their world. The language the women use will be important to understand their perceptions and how they position these within the wider social and cultural parameters of their lives. This will help to deconstruct notions of discourse and power and how these women understand and practice their lives as elite female athletes in the UAE.

Following my preliminary enquiries, before conducting the interviews, (through reading of documents and gathering newspaper articles) I will draw up a list of so-called 'examinant' questions and issues reflecting my interest, and a formulation of my language. From this, 'immanent' issues will be distinguished, such as themes, topics and accounts (not of a merely personal matter but a matter of social or communal significance) of events that appear within the data collection period. The practice of interpreting the 'examinant' questions into 'immanent' ones is done seeking those 'examinant' questions in the telling of the story and the language the participants used. As In quoting Mishler, Bamberg (2006) explains, 'as long as interviews are used as the method par excellence to collect and analyse how people represent their experiences and understandings of events and aspects of their worlds (p. 13). I will note overlapping issues and make notes of the language the Emirati women use. There are multiple realities within a social environment and subsequently, multiple ways of interpreting them. Narratives give an opportunity to understand these alternate realities by locating the meaning and beliefs that underlie actions and in turn, by enabling an understanding of the individual and the role played by affinity groups in validating and normalizing behaviours. I will also keep in mind that it is important to find the not so obvious reasons in people's feelings, perceptions and experiences. This involves attempting to comprehend how people understand themselves and their settings.

My research is also shaped and limited by the setting in which it is carried out and by the participants who will be asked to contribute their accounts and experiences. Legal parameters prevent me from exploring issues, such as sexuality and sexual identity. As such, issues related to their personal lives or same sex relations in women's sports and the UAE are beyond the scope of this study due to religious, cultural and legal implications in the region.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Case study methodology, and narrative representations of interview data, involves accounts of other people's lived experiences. The ethical dignity and privacy of those lives must be protected. It is vital that the consent of subjects to participate in such research is obtained and they are assured that their details will remain

anonymous in the data collection, thereby ‘protecting participants from any harm that may ensue from their participation’ (Josselson 2007, p. 537). That is why attention was given to choosing the right site for interviews as mentioned in the sections above so that participants felt comfortable in their space.

Since one of the features of feminist post-structuralist research is an emphasis on ethical considerations, ‘both feminist and post structural frameworks view ethical practice in this context; where the personal is political, and the self is constituted in relationship to others’ (Menhennet, p. 1) I informed all participants in this study that their identities will remain confidential and anonymous, insofar as I could grant this given the unique (and small) group to which these participants belonged. This was an important factor for these Arab Muslim women and their families. Every name in the transcripts was changed: the participant’s name as well as family and friend’s names, council names and even places they lived were changed. A codebook was maintained ‘so that the researcher, if necessary, can reconstruct the original data, and the researcher should double check the method of disguises before publication’ (Josselson 2007, p. 542). I also provided participants with the option to withdraw from the research. During the initial contact, a thorough explanation of what the research entailed, its purpose and how the information would be used was explained to participants. If the participants wished, a copy of the transcript was offered to them to verify the information.

It is important in narrative work to have a ‘ethical attitude’, taking responsibility for choosing whatever is best for the participants and minimizing harm for them, ‘a stance that involves thinking through these matters and deciding how best to honour and protect those who participate in one’s studies while still maintaining standards for responsible scholarship’ (Josselson 2007, p. 537). Of course, there are complexities and dilemmas with any methodology, particularly those of the narrative kind. ‘If we do not fully understand the narrative of the people involved, we may create ethical dilemmas out of ethical situations’ (Rubin 2002, p. 5). There will be a great deal of reflection and revision before the research can be completed, to ensure that representations of the participants are compiled in a robust and ethical manner and that defensible conclusions can be drawn (Josselson 2007, p. 539).

3.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter explored approaches to data representation and analyses and the ethical considerations inherent in this work. The principles of narrative methodology were employed here for their ability to privilege the voices of all participants in this study while integrating contextual forces that comprised their stories and their experiences. Yet it is important to locate these narratives within their broader sociocultural context and as such, the case study methodology which relied on multiple sources of data facilitated building the evidence base about this phenomenon within the socio-cultural context of the UAE. The theory I found most helpful was feminist poststructuralist theory informed by theorists such as Foucault and Weedon, and their focus on concepts such as discourse, power, gender and equity because I examined ways in which these concepts were played out and understood in UAE society while analysing relationships of power and gender equity in women's football.

Chapter 4: Building a picture of Women's football participation in the UAE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data and findings from two sets of sixty-minute interviews conducted one-on-one with six Emirati women football players of the UAE women's elite national team. This will be followed by a representation of my interviews with two of their coaches and four administrators in sixty-minute face-to-face interviews. Each interview conveys a unique and specific story, and each story draws on the social context around it. Interviews were conducted in the language the participants were comfortable in (either Arabic or English). All four administrators are in influential positions related to Emirati women's football in the UAE and are major decision makers, with three participants part of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council and one part of the Dubai Sports Council. All interviews were carried out between 28 December 2014 and 27 May 2015 in two different sites: Interview one was conducted in Abu Dhabi while interview two took place in Dubai.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the narratives distilled from the participant interviews, or as Riessman (2008) calls them, 'narrative occasions' (p. 23). Specific attention was paid to creating safe and supportive environments for the interviews to enable participants to feel comfortable in sharing their stories with a shared sense of power within the conversation. This was an important consideration in undertaking this research, given that many of these women had never participated in an interview before. With this in mind, I made sure that my questions were open-ended to not restrict the answers of all participants in this study. Further, I encouraged participants to explain and qualify their answers through inquiring dialogue and prompts. Hence, the interviews were less influenced by a framework, and participants were able to answer using their own language, Arabic (as I had translated all my interview questions into Arabic). This created an additional challenge through the research design as I was then required to transcribe and translate all interviews personally because it was difficult to obtain the services of a professional transcriber who could translate the interviews from Arabic to

English. This was exacerbated by the fact that several the participants had heavy Emirati accents. Having lived in the UAE for the past 24 years, understanding and translating this heavy accent did not pose a problem for me. A further tension existed within the translation process itself – sometimes words in Arabic have differential meanings, cultural significance and an inability to transfer to an English equivalent at all. As others highlight in their commentary about Islamic and Arabic texts, ‘any attempt to make a scholarly reinterpretation ... is challenged by the fact that the text loses its aura (pure essence of meaning) once translated from the Arabic’ (Jawad, Al-Sinani & Benn 2011, p. 31). As such, my role as the researcher has been adopted reflexively to facilitate an ongoing interrogation of the translated data, in order to- wherever possible- ensure that attempts to reinterpret the participant’s narratives are considerate of, and committed to, preserving the integrity of meaning being conveyed. This approach aims to convey as true a representation as possible of the participant’s perspectives.

Each participant had a different, unique and individual story to tell, and so in presenting the data I look to avoid any temptation to generalise their experiences. I will present each player’s, coach’s and administrator’s story separately to allow their individuality to come through. To achieve this, I allocate each participant a pseudonym and present a compilation of their story using direct quotes. Although each story is complex and unique, and each player distinctive in their own family situations, some similarities exist between experiences and it will be the work of Chapter Five to bring their stories and experiences into relation to analyse and make sense of them considering the research questions.

As a helpful starting point in contextualising the participants’ experiences of women’s football in the UAE, Table 2 (a & b) below provides an overview of the UAE’s football clubs with women’s teams and women’s training centres.

Abu Dhabi Country Club	Al Wahda Club
U13	U13
U15	U15
Senior	U17
	U23
	Senior

Table 2a: Football clubs in the UAE for women

No.	U13	U15
1	Private schools	Umm Al Quwain
2	Ras Al Khaimah	Ras Al Khaimah
3	Sharjah & Ajman	Sharjah
4	Fujairah & East Sharjah	Fujairah
5	Dubai	East Sharjah
6		Dubai

Table 2b: Training Centres in the UAE for women

4.2 The Players

Emirati women football players in the UAE face many religious and cultural sensitivities that must be negotiated as part of their continued participation in the game. Although religion is distinguished from culture as explained in Chapter Two, women athletes are often required to navigate norms about cultured gender ways of being a Muslim, Emirati woman (their subjectivity) that are almost always regulated by families through the observance of faith-based rules. This opening caveat is offered prior to presenting participants' narratives to (re)problematize the challenges that exist in conducting research from a poststructuralist and predominantly Foucauldian perspective in a cultural context where questions and interrogations of this nature have been almost entirely absent. As discussed in earlier sections of this thesis, however, there is a sense that this is changing, and public commentary and critique around women's participation in society (viewed through the lens of football participation in this research) is becoming more legitimate and commonplace.

In the following section, I present the narratives of six Emirati female Muslim nationals aged between 18 to 26 years. At the time of the interviews, all six were members of the elite UAE women's elite national football team. The age of the 11-member team varied from 16 to 28 years of age. These Emirati women have come a long way (in terms of social progress) and in the words of their previous coach, Coach Connie Selby, they are 'pioneers'. Coach Selby was the head coach of the UAE Women's Soccer Team (2005-2010) and Head of Women's Football for the Oceania Football Confederation. When I commenced this research in April 2013, the Women's Football Committee (WFC) had already been formed by Abu Dhabi

Sports Council (in 2009) and players in the national women's team were from various Arab countries such as Oman, Jordan and Qatar coached by Hassan Ajenoui (who took over as their new coach in September 2011)¹. Once these women became part of the UAE national team, they were given a temporary UAE passport so that they could be named as nationals, or Emiratis. In May 2013 however, the Women's Football Committee issued a decree that all players of the elite national team must already have a UAE passport and not be a nationalized citizen. The other reason for this decree was that FIFA's new regulations was that members of the women's team had to be originally from the country they represented. As a result of this change in policy, the first ever Emirati elite UAE women's national football team comprising only of UAE passport holders was formed in May 2014. Many other sports still do not have a full Emirati membership such as the national Women's Cricket team established in 2007. It is important to note here that 'Citizenship rules in the Arab states often include express provisions linking citizenship to religious belief, creating a separation of rights between first- and second-class citizens (e.g. naturalised citizens), and reveal the importance of paternal jus sanguinis (line of descent)' (Gray 2015, p.8).

Two subordinate types of nationality are also provided by Federal Law 17/1972: nationality by affiliation and nationality by naturalisation, which may only be granted by an affirmative act of the Minister of the Interior. Nationality by affiliation refers primarily to the process under which women may acquire citizenship through marriage: a woman may, upon marriage to an Emirati national, acquire Emirati nationality after a period of three years and upon approval of the Minister of the Interior. Nationality by naturalisation is provided for in a series of different articles. Citizenship may be acquired: (1) by persons of Omani, Qatari or Bahraini origin who have lived continuously in the UAE for a period of three years, and individuals from Arab tribes who have immigrated to the UAE from neighbouring states and have resided continuously in the UAE for a period of three years (Article 5); (2) by any other Arab who has lived in the UAE for at least seven years prior to submitting naturalisation application (Article 6); (3) by any person who has resided continuously in the UAE since or before 1940 and is proficient in the Arabic language (Article 7); (4) by any person who has resided continuously in the Emirates for a period of twenty years after the promulgation of the law (Article 8); and (5) by any person who has rendered honourable service to the state, irrespective of period of residency (Article 9). In all cases, naturalisation is contingent upon the approval of the Minister of the Interior, provided that the applicant has a source of income, is well respected by the community and has not been convicted of a serious crime. (Gray 2015, p.10)

According to Abulleil (2015), a journalist for *Sport 360*, Emirati women in the UAE first entered the international sports scene in the late 90s in sports such as shooting and equestrian. Both sports were sanctioned for women's participation and

considered as sporting disciplines ‘traditional’ to Emirati culture. While this was far from a watershed moment, ‘Emirati women’s engagement in sporting activity as participants, administrators or leaders had, up until this point, been virtually non-existent across the seven states’ (Gaad 2011, p. 216). Indeed, the sporting landscape in the UAE (like elsewhere) continues to be largely the domain of men and boys – ‘where male-dominated sports and major international sporting events are extensively pursued and televised’ (Gaad 2011, p. 216). Yet, at the time of conducting this research, there had been increased opportunities for women’s sport participation brought about largely by Shiek’s public endorsement and active encouragement (e.g. see Gedeon, 2015). Presented below are the narratives of some members of the UAE’s first women’s football team and the stakeholders (coaches, administrators etc.) that supported them.

4.2.1 Gigi

Dream anything you want but dream big! (Gigi, INT 1)

Gigi is a 26-year-old elite player for the national football team. She is one of the more senior players I interviewed and one of two who spoke fluent English. This data is based on the interviews conducted, in English, with Gigi: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Gigi, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Gigi, INT 2).

Though she identifies herself as an Emirati Muslim, Gigi chose not to wear the head scarf. Gigi lives in Al Ain—a two-hour drive from the capital Abu Dhabi—where she commutes to and from for her football practices. Although the Abu Dhabi Sports Council provides a bus fare for players who do not live in the capital to support their attendance at every practice, Gigi chose to drive to the capital in her own car. She comments:

The Abu Dhabi Sports Council really helps us by offering us private bus rides from our areas down to Abu Dhabi, but I choose not to take up this offer. I feel the time to myself is so valuable: I think in private, play my favourite music and talk to my friends a lot on the phone (she says with a chuckle). I mainly think about the sense of immense responsibility I have as a member of the first ever UAE women’s elite national team and my role in giving back to my country. I am lucky my father allows me to drive on my own; I know some of my school friends

who are not allowed to drive alone out of Al Ain. They always must be accompanied by a male member of their family if they want to drive out of Al Ain. So, I want to use the opportunity I am given here. (Gigi, INT 1)

Gigi is a well-spoken, committed woman and because she is one of the older players, she often adopts the role of mentor for many of the other players. Across my time with the team I noted in my reflective journal that other players regularly seek her out to ask her advice. For example:

I just finished my interview with Gigi and it is interesting that three other players came to her to ask her things they would normally ask a coach. The first player has an ankle sprain and was asking her if she would continue to put the ice pack on her ankle. The second and third player came together and asked her if they can stay an extra hour before they return home. That surprises me because Gigi has no title such as coach or mentor ... (Reflective journal, 28 December 2014)

Gigi is the oldest sibling in her family with two younger sisters and a brother and through her mentoring of her siblings and team mates, appears comfortable with this sort of leadership role (albeit an informal one). Gigi explains that her role as a team mentor is more enjoyable than being the eldest sibling in her family. She comments:

The pressure of being the oldest in the family and having two other sisters who copy everything I do is immense. Anything they do wrong, my father says, 'see, they learn from you!' But everything they do right, I get the credit too which is fair. I like it when my siblings look up to me especially my sisters. It's the same on the team, I have other sisters (from other mothers) who are younger and ask my advice and want to know what I think about things. It's the same on the team but on the team, there is no father to blame you if things go wrong (chuckle). Giving advice to others gives me a sense of being useful to others and I feel good about it. (Gigi, INT 1)

Gigi grew up in Al Ain, the Emirate's second city rich in heritage and considered as an 'Oasis City' (Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority 2015) as it is green and has many farms and local produce. Gigi explained that growing up in Al Ain in the 1980s was not easy for a girl, especially for one who wanted to play football. She started playing football at the age of four with the boys in her neighbourhood and she says it was not always a happy experience. Gigi recalls that 'only boys typically played in the neighbourhood, not the women' (Gigi, INT 1). Despite this, Gigi would regularly make her way to the vacant block where the local boys would be playing football. She recalls how the boys would make fun of her:

The boys would tell me: 'Why do you bother playing? You know you don't have a future in this game! You will not get anywhere with this. We, on the other hand, have it all going for us with this game! We can play for our country, you can't'. I would come back home crying to my mother, broken-hearted. My mother's heart would break for me, but she was always my comfort saying, 'fight for your dreams and you can achieve the impossible'. These words rang in my ear all my life! Whenever I face a challenge, her soothing voice could be heard saying 'you can achieve the impossible'. (Gigi, INT 1)

While Gigi's interest in football started early, it was not until she was 12 years old that formal participation opportunities started to materialise. Gigi recalls this as a defining time for her where her passion for football and desire to play at the highest level (which was at this time perhaps in a school or university representative side at best) saw her seek out opportunities to continue her involvement in the game. Gigi reflects that it was probably her passion for the game that helped her through the incredibly difficult experience of losing her mother. As she explained, 'it was at the time of my first win at a game that my mother fell ill, was admitted to hospital and died soon after' (Gigi, INT 1). Gigi explained further that this occurred before her first major tournament:

The day of my tournament, I went to the hospital to visit her and she asked me, you are playing, today aren't you? I replied, how can I play when you are here and so ill? I told her. I was horrified because I felt that I am not only losing my mother but my major support! While lying in bed, my mother told me that not only did I have to go out there and play that tournament, but I also had to win it! Later that afternoon, I went to my tournament and not only did I play well, I scored for my team and we ended up winning the game. My mother passed away before the end of that tournament that day and although I didn't get to tell her I won, I dedicated my win to her. I knew winning was what she wanted me to do and that she would be smiling down on me. Everything I have, every success, every strength I have is because of my mother. (Gigi, INT 1)

Over the next few years, Gigi sought solace in her sporting endeavours and, as she explained, 'Although I play other sports and I play them very well, my passion and love has always been football and football only' (Gigi, INT 2). Her talent as a sportswoman was highlighted in her recollection about being approached by the UAE women's skydiving team while playing for the football team in 2011. She explained:

I had no experience in parachuting but as soon as I jumped, I knew I wanted to do more of it. I don't find parachuting as dangerous as football actually! In football you can break your leg or even swallow your tongue, but it is not as easy to do that in parachuting. Although I continue to parachute, my passion is still football and it is my only dream. (Gigi, INT 2)

Gigi's initial pathway into organised football participation was through school football tournaments. As she explained, her school football participation further fuelled her passion for the game, particularly when she was appointed as the team captain. This was unusual for schools in the UAE at the time as most schools did not have female football teams and if they did, they would not have formal, organised tournaments. Gigi received encouragement from her coach at school, an Egyptian woman who gave her reason to continue. The coach told her to 'dream anything you want, but dream big' (Gigi, INT 2). Gigi's first competition was when she was in high school and the Al Ain university's women's team came to her school for a tournament. It was extremely exciting for her to experience a game with another team. This was the start of many games to come and eventually, the women could play at the university pitch. Gigi reflects on this as a '*daring step*' because it was the first time these school women were permitted to participate on a ground outside of their school.

In addition to her school, Gigi identified her family as a key enabler of her continued involvement in the game. Gigi commented that she has always loved being around her family and appreciated the fact that her mother was always able to convince her father to give permission to go out and play football. Her mother's support strengthened and legitimated Gigi's involvement and paved the way for broader family support of her endeavours. At the same time, Gigi felt she had gained a second family by joining the country's elite football team – a sentiment repeated by other players also. She explained that 'our team is our family, we have each other's back and we are there for each other. We learn attributes such as hard work, diligence and loyalty' (Gigi, INT 1).

Following one of my observations of the player's practice game in Dubai, I wrote the following in my reflective journal which supports Gigi's statement:

Today's practice game took place in Al Ahli stadium in Dubai from 7-9pm. Most of the women I had interviewed had come to this practice to which I was invited. I was struck by the close friendship among these women. One of them had hurt her ankle from the last practice and was sitting in a corner looking sadly at the game which she could not join. Throughout the two hours practice a team member sat beside the injured player comforting her and massaging the ankle to help heal. The closeness and sisterly-bond observed here tonight, brought to reality what the women had told me before that 'we feel we have gained a family'. (Reflective journal, 28 December 2014)

All players work hard, and Gigi is no exception. Gigi trains three times a week, she watches what she eats, and she loves reading all she can about her sport. 'I believe it is important to educate ourselves about our sport. My team supports me in all that just like a family' (Gigi, INT 2). Gigi's father was not as supportive as her mother when it came to her involvement in sport. Unlike her mother, her father 'was totally against my playing' (Gigi, INT 1). Gigi explained:

My father was very well-known in his community and among the Bedouins. He was a Bedouin (desert dweller) and a leader of his tribe. He would say that 'everyone knows me, and you will embarrass me by playing this boy's game'. I played despite my father's opposition because my mother always had my back. I knew I could get away with it with my mother's support. Eventually, the leadership (Sheiks) in this country started hearing about the way I play, they were determined to support me. The Sheiks knew all tribal leaders and they would get together with them in a majlis (gathering) once a month. So once when they were meeting the tribal leaders, they pulled my dad aside and asked and encouraged my father to support me. After that, my dad had no choice but to obey them. They were his leaders and he looked up to them and so my father accepted my situation: a female football player! (Gigi, INT 2)

Although Gigi's father never really became a big fan of her playing, her mother said that she should 'leave your father up to me and I will convince him' (Gigi, INT 2). Gigi especially relied on her mother's support when she went to play with other teams. These games were in open pitches as opposed to closed indoor pitches when opportunities to spectate can be controlled. Outdoor pitches meant that they would have no control over who would watch the game.

When I asked Gigi about what she would want to change in the game of football at this stage she said she would not want to change anything.

If you had asked me this question four years ago, I would have had a long list of things that need to change. But today, I wouldn't change a thing! Four years ago, we didn't have an all-Emirati women's elite team in our country nor did we have a U-14 and U-16 team. People's mindset four years ago was so different to what it is today. Back then, society was not receptive to the idea of us as Emirati women playing football: considered to be a male dominated sport. However, today, we have the U-14 and U-16 team as well as the woman's elite team and that is all because of the shift in mindset of the UAE people. (Gigi, INT 1)

From Gigi's perspective, this significant cultural change was the result of many factors and had certainly been a gradual process. According to Gigi, first and foremost was the overt support from the Country's leaders: the support of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, who was

elected as the President of the United Arab Emirates on 3 November 2004, His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the fifth son of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and first President of the United Arab Emirates. Further, Gigi considered the sponsorship of Hafsa Al Ulama, Chairwoman of the UAE Women's Football Committee, and Amal Bu Shalakh, board member of the UAE Women's Football Federation, also as instrumental in this support. Gigi explained:

Everyone is going in the same direction and has the same vision creating laser-focus and execution allowing us to overcome every obstacle. This unity of vision and work helped us become the 73rd internationally, second in the Arab world and first in the Gulf Countries. The way everyone works together to create this reality is the very teamwork football is about. One hand cannot clap; you need both hands. (Gigi, INT 1)

Despite the support for women's involvement in the game, continuity in opportunities (clubs and tournaments) and growth in participation numbers have not increased exponentially. Previously in 2011, the UAE only had ten Emirati nationals (players with UAE nationality) on the team; the rest were from neighbouring countries and as a result the team had to cease playing until they were able to recruit all Emirati players. In fact, Gigi commented on her immense frustration when the UAE ceased to have an elite women's team in 2013. As Gigi explained, this was because of a new decree that came out in May 2013 and stated all UAE football teams must consist of all UAE players which meant no player can be a non-Emirati. Gigi explained:

It took us one year of awareness campaigns and hard work to recruit UAE women. We even went to the malls and had posters up and started promoting the game for all who walked by. We would stop UAE women who were walking by and asked them if they wanted to play. We even stopped parents in the mall and talk to them about the importance of their support. By mid-2014 we had the senior team also all UAE nationals. Women athletes in the UAE are now treated like professionals whereas before they were not. We receive a salary from the government; we get respect and support like any athlete in any other country. (Gigi, INT 1)

Gigi revealed that in the previous year she got offers from the US, Spain and France to play football in their respective countries. Gigi commented that, 'It was very flattering to have been noticed by other countries' who had scouts attend her games. Gigi explained that despite these opportunities she was committed to her role within the UAE team, 'I had sacrificed many things in my life to get to where I was, and I

wanted that sacrifice and effort to be for the sake of my country and not for another country' (Gigi, INT 2).

In 2010 when the elite team went to the US, Gigi was the official spokeswoman of the team. It was a challenge because Gigi got the impression that other teams were quite critical of their capacity and performances and she felt that she was continually defending the team. Gigi commented that, 'Yes, the other teams played better but they did not have the challenges we did' (Gigi, INT 2). Her team returned from that trip more determined than ever to improve their performance and world rankings. Gigi commented:

I am so proud that as a country, we managed to have an all-Emirati elite football team. My advice to a new player would be: love your sport and keep playing. Your passion and love for the game will help you overcome every obstacle. (Gigi, INT 2)

For Gigi, this experience has been about achieving her dream and she continues to be an active member of the elite UAE women's football national team.

4.2.2 Naomie

As a child, I loved my outdoor time; it was sacred to me as it was doing what I love best: playing football. (Naomie, INT 1)

Naomie presented herself as a confident, goal-oriented and focussed 19-year-old. As she indicated, she was more comfortable expressing herself in English (as opposed to Arabic) and at the time of the interviews, Naomie was the captain of the Emirati elite women's team. This data is based on the interviews conducted, with Naomie: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Naomie, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Naomie, INT 2).

Like Gigi, Naomie is an Emirati Muslim who does not wear a headscarf. Not wearing a headscarf is absolutely her choice and although some parents force their daughters to wear a headscarf, Naomie's parents allow her to make that choice. She joined the Al Wahda Club in the capital city of Abu Dhabi just under two years ago and in recognition of her potential, the club provided Naomie with the opportunity to join the national team. Naomie was a beneficiary of the new decree that required

national teams to be comprised of Emirati Nationals. A key strategy of the elite team was to send talent scouts to local women's club games and Naomie was identified as a prospective player based on her talent and passion for the game. The offer to join the women's elite team was forthcoming following strong endorsement from the local club coach who identified Naomie as one of her best players. Naomie is well respected on the team for her tactical nous and her rise to success at such a young age. Prior to joining the elite women's team, she had been playing football at the top level for just under a year. Like Gigi, Naomie's love and passion for sport had been evident from an early age:

I remember when I was around seven years old I was asked what I want to be when I grow up. It has always amazed me that other women would say 'doctor' or 'teacher' but for me it was always clear: an athlete. I wanted to explore the world of sport and experience as much of it as possible including football. I was not one of those women who had a ten-year plan all laid out by the time they are eight years old!! But I did know for certain that I wanted to explore football as a game and as a profession. (Naomie, INT 1)

Naomie grew up in Dubai, the second largest of the seven Emirates that make up the UAE. As a bustling, cosmopolitan, multicultural metropolis, Dubai's educational pathways are most characterised by the provision of private schools – most of which use English as their predominant language of instruction. Naomie attributes her excellent knowledge of the English language to living in Dubai and attending a private school. Naomie's school was somewhat progressive in their provision of sporting opportunities for women. Naomie recalls, 'my school had a women's team for all kinds of sport such as football and volleyball, this was not the case in all Dubai schools, and not normal in other Emirates' (Naomie, INT 1). Naomie considered her school pathway opportunities as integral to supporting her development to becoming a professional football player.

Naomie indicated that she was five years of age when she first started playing football. For Naomie, who had male cousins living in the same apartment building, it was typical for her to meet up with them in the common garden and play football together. Naomie recalled:

My cousins and I were regular neighbourhood players! We played daily, and it was more important to us than doing our homework which brought some concern to my parents, because they wanted me to complete my homework after all. My cousins and I did not have any facilities, so I remember we would use two rocks to indicate our goal area. I remember going to the neighbourhood garden and

playing every single day as soon as I came back from school. That was our priority! I see children these days always on their PlayStation and I am surprised as to how much their parents allow them to miss out on the outdoors. The outdoors is a whole new world that these children will never experience. As a child, I loved my outdoor time; it was sacred to me and I spent it doing what I love best: playing football. (Naomie, INT 1)

Since the patriarchal family and traditional kinship systems characterise much of the UAE culture, Naomie explained that her parents were her biggest supporters. Naomie recalls that this was especially the case with her father who never opposed her routine of playing outdoors daily:

In fact, I remember every time I came back from playing in the neighbourhood, my father would ask me, 'did you have fun? Did you learn to play better?' From an early age, he taught me that playing football was about having fun and learning, not about winning or losing. This understanding has stayed with me to this day and it is my guiding principle in my games. I know I am lucky to get my father's support for this. Fathers in our culture are not typically happy with their daughters playing a 'boys game' in the outdoors where they can be 'seen'. I am grateful to him and this makes my life easier since I do not have resistance that I have fight. (Naomie, INT 1)

Unlike Gigi, Naomie reflected positively on the influence her father had on her passion for the game. Naomie highlights that her father was incredibly supportive, a sentiment not common for women growing up who wanted to play football at this time.

By the time Naomie reached grade five in school, she recalls her school having a girl's football team that played tournaments with other schools. Naomie considered herself fortunate given many schools did not have official football teams for women, and many did not participate in tournaments with teams from other schools. Naomie remembers being the youngest on her school team and although her teacher initially did not want to allow Naomie to join the team (due to her age), they eventually accepted her due to her persistence and talent. In fact, after she joined the team, played and won a few tournaments, the teacher was respected for having allowed Naomie on her team. Her football career continued throughout her schooling years and Naomie has been a member of the U-11 team as well as the U-14, U-16 and later a U-19 team. Naomie reflected fondly on the value of these experiences:

This is not an easy game. I sometimes ask myself if I should quit but then I remember my childhood dream and my pride in representing my country. I train

on certain days with my club and on other days with my national team. Demand on my time can be overwhelming sometimes but I manage it. What is difficult is to balance all that with my studies. However, I know I have always promised my parents that as a gratitude to them allowing me to play what I love, I would attend to my studies which was their main concern. They never wanted my studies to be sacrificed for my football. To balance my time and to have a positive mindset are essential requirements to be able to continue in this game. My greatest achievement is that I have inspired my sister, three years younger than myself, to start playing for my club in Abu Dhabi and my sister hopes to join the national team like me one day. (Naomie, INT 2)

The skills of balancing her time and having her parent's support is extremely important to Naomie, particularly as she sometimes must travel with the national team. Naomie reflected on their recent trip to Cyprus, where they played with eight other national teams who were much more advanced than the UAE team, as being a key turning point for the team. The experience the UAE team gained on the Cyprus trip was of great benefit to the UAE team. Naomie commented, 'We had a great time and learnt a lot' (Naomie, INT 2). The UAE team stayed to watch the finals series in Cyprus which Naomie said was 'a great learning opportunity' (Naomie, INT 2). Naomie believes that it is important to play stronger national teams because that helps her team develop better skills and build up their stamina. Finally, Naomie explained that she is often asked what advice she would give to young women wanting to play football:

To give their heart to the game and always think positively. A new player shouldn't get bogged down by those who oppose women playing football, but she must feel uplifted by the many who support us especially those in authority such as those in the Football Association and the Sports Councils. Football brings minds and hearts together and helps families be open minded. The benefits to playing football are unlimited. (Naomie, INT 2)



Khaled 2015a, 'Members of the UAE team look at a programme ahead of the Aphrodite Cyprus Cup campaign', *The National*.

4.2.3 Shireen

*My mother has always been the one who has encouraged me to play football.
(Shireen, INT 1)*

Shireen is an 18-year-old player who, unlike Gigi and Naomi, does wear a headscarf, long sleeve stretched shirt and long pants under her football uniform. Culturally the option to ‘cover up’ forms an important part of Shireen’s participation story – in short if she was not able to cover herself she would not be permitted to participate in football (or other like pursuits). Shireen’s interview was conducted in Arabic given her lack of confidence to participate using English, and every effort has been made to represent Shireen’s sentiments in the English language through this discussion. This data is based on the interviews conducted, with Shireen: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Shireen, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Shireen, INT 2).

Like Gigi, Shireen grew up in Al Ain, and through her interview it became apparent that she had a very strong sense of connection to her home town. As she comments, ‘It was also the home of the first president of the UAE and the current president Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed’ (Shireen, INT 1).

Shireen’s narrative around her entry into the game indicated that her participation in football started at a young age. Shireen explained:

I was five when I started playing. My house was next to an empty piece of land and that was imaginary football field! At that young age, I would go on my private ‘imaginary’ football field with my brothers and their friends and we played football for hours. My older brothers were my first coaches because they taught me the rules of the game. I am grateful to them because they never saw me and my capabilities as any different to theirs. I know other women are not so lucky where the males in their family (whether they are the brothers, fathers or even uncles) resist them doing certain things. Not only did my brothers accept me as a football player at a young age, their acceptance made their friends accept too. This was huge for my self-confidence at that age. (Shireen, INT 1)

Unlike others involved in this research, Shireen did not have school teams at elementary level and there were no clubs in Al Ain for women to play in. The boys’ school, on the other hand, in the same city, had their own official teams even at an elementary level. For Shireen, her first formal induction into the game came through her middle school experiences where organised ‘practice games’ were arranged

against other girl's school teams – in fact, many of these organised 'practice' sessions were integrated with women's college and university football teams in Al Ain and Abu Dhabi.

Shireen's father had no problem with her playing football in school if it was a 'girl's only' school team. Once the tournaments started in high-school, Shireen's father was worried she would be 'seen' by men and that was not something he considered as 'culturally acceptable'. Shireen explained that her father's logic was based on a perception that in school, she was surrounded by other women and she was therefore safe. In contrast, Shireen's father considered that participation outside of school would include male spectators and therefore she was not safe, and it was not culturally and religiously 'right' for her to play while men watched. Her mother, on the other hand, rejected this perception and advocated for her daughter's football involvement. Shireen explained:

During the first year, my father only allowed me to play games that were in my home town of Al Ain. Proximity was important to him as he did not want me to travel long distances just to play a game. He also felt that the further I went from home, the more 'unsafe' and 'exposed' I would be. So, when I was younger and played only in Al Ain, that was not an issue for me. But in high school and university, I needed to go to other Emirates to play and that was an issue for him. However, that's where my brothers came through for me once again. They always talked to my dad about how confident I was and how it was ok for me play especially since I wore the Hijab. I was lucky as, alongside my brother's support, I had my mother's constant support as well. She has always encouraged me to play football. After years of my brothers and mother talking to my dad, he allowed me to travel to the other Emirates and play my games outside my home town of Al Ain. (Shireen, INT 1)

After two years of playing for the university football team, Shireen desperately looked for a football club to play professionally but she could not find one. In the absence of a professional football pathway, she started participating in volleyball and cycling. She was very good at cycling and this talent was recognised in her invitation to join the women's national cycling competition. As Shireen indicates, 'despite a passion for football, in the absence of any viable options, I took up cycling at the national level – I enjoyed it, but I certainly wasn't passionate about it' (Shireen, INT 1).

Despite these alternative sporting interests, Shireen's mother was continually attuned to her daughter's wish to pursue her football career. Shireen's mother was

instrumental in pursuing a ‘contact’ she made who was employed by the Al Wahda Club, a club renowned for their introduction of a women’s football team. The Al Wahda Club was somewhat unique in their promotion as a professional club that actively sought women’s involvement and specifically promoted themselves as ‘inclusive’ on the basis that women could train and play while covering their heads, arms and legs as required by the cultural traditions of their families and faith. They further supported women’s involvement with the provision of ‘women-only’ transportation to training and official competition games and tournaments.

Shireen’s mother was active in advocating for her daughter with the club leaders and not long after that, Shireen got the break she was waiting for with the football club – an invitation to participate in the women’s only team. As Shireen recalls, ‘It was a dream come true’ and she was extremely happy. Shireen acknowledged that by now, no other sport meant as much to her as football did. The fact that the club allowed women to be covered during games and practice, helped Shireen’s father accept her decision to become involved as a professional athlete in a women’s football team. Shireen explained:

Al Wahda club were the game changers for me: we got to play full 11-a-side football rather than five-a-side and seven-a-side teams that we were used to participate in like in school and university. My mother came through for me, again! When she found the lady, who worked at the club, she used the opportunity to open a door for me. That’s typically my mum! Always there for us! That door she opened for me, basically gave me the future I dreamt of. Now, having formed the elite team, we are being trained professionally, paid a salary and treated as professional players by all those who deal with us. Most important of all, I have my father’s blessings and not resistance. If I have my headscarf, he is happy, and I am happy too because I feel secure and protected with my headscarf and I enjoy wearing it as I have worn it from the age of 12. (Shireen, INT 2)

Upon reflection about the factors that facilitated her own participation in the game, Shireen identifies her brothers as instrumental in teaching her some tactics as a goalkeeper when she was young. She believes that is the reason she was selected for the elite team years later. Shireen commented that, on her first trial for the elite team, the thing the coaches were most impressed with was her style of catching the ball and she attributes this as a key factor in their decision to accept her as a goalkeeper.

To facilitate her participation in both practice sessions and game-play, Shireen makes full use of the club’s bus-ride offer to/from the capital city (Abu Dhabi).

Despite this additional support, Shireen is conscious of the travel time required (up to four hours for one trip) and she is mindful that her parents worry about her given the extended time she spends on public transport. Further, although the club provides the players hotels when they have week-long training camp to help them minimise the impact of extensive travel obligations, Shireen comments that this is still is a challenge for families to accept. Shireen outlines the fact that women on the team living in Abu Dhabi do not face this challenge. She explained:

My biggest challenge now is that I live in Al Ain and I must travel all the way (a two-hour drive) to the capital city of Abu Dhabi to play a game. So, managing my time and balancing practice and studies is a big issue. I am in my last year of university now and my study load is heavy. I train in the evenings at seven to accommodate my day-classes at university. What is great about the club, is that during exam period, they allow me off-time training to focus on my studies. The club is extremely supportive of our education as they want us to succeed in all aspects of life. In fact, the club supports us in many aspects: they also provide us accommodation in Abu Dhabi when we have consecutive days of training. Some of us have relatives in Abu Dhabi and prefer to stay with them than to stay in a hotel ... and the club allows us to do that. The club not only allows us to stay with relatives or friends, but they even provide a shuttle ride from the practice to our relative's home in Abu Dhabi where we decided to stay. (Shireen, INT 1)

Although Shireen is grateful for the support her club provides, she does compare the opportunities they as women football players have in UAE at the elite level to the opportunities men have. She believes that men have more opportunities in terms of being able to start playing early in school where they get to play for clubs at an early age. They also can join leagues at a young age. Shireen believes that parents never have an issue with boys playing. They are always supportive of them. In fact, parents encourage their boys to be part of the clubs and play football early on because being part of a league or club helps keep their boys stay away from idleness and sloth. Shireen perceives that parents in the UAE often worry that their boys could join gangs, be on drugs and get into all kinds of mischief that can occur when boys have too much time on their hands and do not utilize their spare time wisely. Shireen considers that women are unlikely to have the same issue because if they do have any spare time, they will be staying at home learning to cook and clean and be a good housewife for their future husbands.

As a qualifier, Shireen does explain that there is much to be optimistic about as a young woman (and footballer) in the UAE:

I believe that society's mindset has shifted in recent years for women playing sport and especially football. Although I believe boys still have better opportunities to start early and therefore get a head start from us, we are lucky that things are more on our side now than they have ever been. Of course, we, as the first elite team, have had great impact on that change in mindset because we proved it can be done. We proved that we do not have to give up our Hijab for any game. The other contributors to society's mindset change, I believe, is of course the constant encouragement and support we get from all the Sheikhs and princesses in the UAE. Their support is constant and unfailing. (Shireen, INT 2)

Shireen's advice to young Emirati women who would like to get into football in the UAE is not to stop at the first challenge she might face. She needs to be persistent and know that football will not 'expose' her to her male counterparts. On the contrary, a female footballer can be covered, respectful and most importantly, she can be a professional in her own right.

4.2.4 Bushra

Any girl who has passion for this sport, should pursue that passion and work on convincing her parents and stop at nothing to make her passion her profession. (Bushra, INT 1)

Bushra is a 20-year-old player who does not wear a hijab or headscarf. Like Naomie, her parents leave the choice up to her and she believes that the headscarf is not a must by her Holy Book. This data is based on the interviews conducted, in Arabic, with Bushra: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Bushra, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Bushra, INT 2).

When I met Bushra she presented herself as confident, energetic and vivacious. Unlike other participants, Bushra never participated in sport as a child and only played football during her last year of high school. As Bushra explained, each time she joined a sporting team she ended up quitting quite soon after – 'not because I couldn't do it but because I was worried my studies would suffer' (Bushra, INT 1). Bushra was extremely committed to her education and felt that sport (and the time required to commit to training) would create a significant distraction from her study. Bushra lost her father when she was young and unknown to her, until later in life, he used to play and coach a football team in Dubai. Bushra explained her initial pathway in to the game:

I fell into this game quite by accident! Last year, during my final year at high school, I attended a game at the request of my good friend. At that game, the goalkeeper of the team did not show up because she was severely ill. No one else was there to take the goal keeper's place so they asked me to just stand at the goal and temporarily be the goalkeeper. I reluctantly accepted and was the goalkeeper for that entire game. The coach of this school team approached me after the game and said, 'You are a natural. How long have you been playing? Where have you been all this time? We need someone like you!' The coach could not believe when I told her that I had never played before. I explained that my commitment was first to my studies and that is why I had not taken up any sports. Although I was not interested, the coach tried to convince me that I have a real talent latent in me and that I needed to pursue my talent. After many attempts, and over a period of several months, the coach finally convinced me to join the school team. I recall my first game being with a school in Fujairah in which my team won. I remember the sense of joy and accomplishment at that win and it became an addiction after that just wanting to win every game ... (Bushra, INT 1)

It appeared this incidental and happenstance induction into the game would prove a significant and defining moment for Bushra – soon after this first game the Abu Dhabi women's team scout identified her at another game and an offer to join this representative team was forthcoming. Bushra accepted the invitation and her involvement in this team facilitated the start of her participation in many football tournaments with other Emirates. Bushra's talent was recognised and rewarded through a series of awards relatively early in her career – after only a few games with the Abu Dhabi women's team Bushra was awarded the best goalkeeper of the year award within her representative team. In the following year, Bushra was awarded the best goalkeeper of the year award at a national level – a coveted award, particularly given her relative inexperience in the game.

Despite her relative success in the sporting sphere, Bushra reflected on her ongoing tension between wanting to pursue her sporting interests whilst balancing this against maintaining her high academic standards in her study. In the final year of high school, Bushra felt her studies did deteriorate given the competing demands on her time to attend practices/training and play in tournaments. Bushra explained that she had to postpone many final exams as their timing conflicted with key tournaments and games. Whilst Bushra points out that there were some teachers who were supportive in these instances, there were others that were not, given they became easily frustrated by Bushra's decisions to prioritise her sporting involvement over her studies. Despite some teachers' continued lack of support and flexibility, confusion over why she would want to pursue a football career, and

limited comprehension about the increasingly demanding training schedule her sporting involvement required, Bushra continued to juggle the demands of both sport and school – ‘I was committed to having them both’ (Bushra, INT 1). Bushra explained further:

These teachers always told me that the games would do me no good in my life and that I would need my studies more than my football. I had to beg my teachers to reschedule my final exams. As my last year of high school came to an end, much to my mother’s delight, I passed with flying colours and graduated from high school with an average of 77%. In the UAE, you need above 70% to enter university and I had proven to everyone that football did not prevent me from getting in to university. (Bushra, INT 1)

A lack of understanding about Bushra’s desire to pursue her involvement in women’s football was not only confounding for her teachers – Bushra’s mother was amazed that her daughter was following through with a sport and was also good at it. Bushra explained that she did recall a specific conversation with her mother who was curious about her involvement in football, ‘She really wanted to know why now and why this game’ (Bushra, INT 2). In response, Bushra showed her mother the two small trophies she had recently won as best goalkeeper and said, ‘I love this game and in football, I found my passion’ (Bushra, INT 2). Bushra explained that, ‘As soon as I said that, my mother broke into tears and she told me that I had inherited this talent and passion after my father’ (Bushra, INT 2). Bushra was confused as she did not know her father very well; he had passed away when she was very young. Her mother told her that her father used to be a football coach. Bushra reflected on this revelation:

I ran to my mother’s room and I started going through some boxes my mother kept of my father’s possessions. I came across a picture of my father on the football field and my mother explained that my father used to train my older brother and my cousins when they were living in Bahrain (before we moved to the UAE). After looking at the pictures and finding out this fact about my father, I felt even more motivated to play and follow in my father’s footsteps especially since my older brother, whom my father had trained, had quit playing after our father passed away and none of my other siblings were interested in the game. I felt they had let my father down by quitting what he was so passionate about and I was not about to do that. (Bushra, INT 2)

Six months after Bushra started playing for her university team, a friend from a football camp asked Bushra's team to play a friendly game in the military officers'¹ club. Bushra's team accepted this invitation and during that game, unknown to Bushra, two coaches from the women's national team attended the game to scout for new players to recruit. Bushra's team lost that game but after the game, one of the national team coaches came to Bushra and told her that they wanted her to join their elite team. Bushra explained, 'I was so excited, I immediately accepted without thinking about it and without having spoken to my mother' (Bushra, INT 2). Although optimistic about her enthusiasm, Bushra recalls that the coach was quite insistent on her needing to consult with her mother and brothers prior to officially accepting the offer. Cultural customs common to much of the Arab Muslim world dictate that key decisions such as this would require consent from either a girl's or woman's father or husband before she could pursue the offer. Bushra explained that she told the coach she would be able convince her mother and that her mother was a supporter. Bushra described the process of 'convincing' her mother:

I went home that day and discussed with my mum. She told me that I should be content with the level I was currently playing and that I should not overcommit myself to a National team. My mother told me that my studies at university needed focus and that my whole future was ahead of me. I told my mother that football is my future and that it was all I ever wanted. All the hard work I had been putting in had paid off in this offer and I must take it. Seeing my determination and knowing she could not change my mind, my mother agreed assuring me that I would soon get tired and feel that I has overcommitted myself. 'Don't come running back to me when you feel how big of a responsibility this is and you cannot cope. Don't run back to me because I will just say: I told you so!' my mother told me. (Bushra, INT 2)

In her discussion about her initial experiences as a member of the national women's football team, Bushra indicated, 'My mother did have a point' (Bushra, INT 2). To attend the scheduled morning practice/training sessions, Bushra had to wake up at six o'clock in the morning. Once at training, Bushra had to practice for at least three hours before taking a one-hour break. The players had to practice three times a day and felt extremely exhausted by the end of the day. Bushra explained the challenges associated with a heavy training schedule:

¹ The military officers' club is a hospitality landmark in Abu Dhabi established in 1997

That was not easy for me as I never woke up that early: not even for school. My mother once came to visit me in the camp and said that I must have forgotten her since I had not even called my family for a week. I had to explain to my mother that being part of the national team was, as she had warned me, actually hard work and that I was extremely busy. But before my mother could say: I told you so! I explained to her my love of the game and my devotion to it and that I wanted to continue playing despite all the hardship and commitment and I would have it no other way. (Bushra, INT 2)

After eight months of training with the team, they made their first international trip to participate in the first Arabian Gulf friendly games. Bushra had never left the UAE before without her mother or brothers. This was her first match representing her country and a new experience traveling alone. What was comforting to Bushra though was that her first trip was to a fellow Arab, Muslim country which was Kuwait. She recalls that trip with great delight since her team beat the Kuwaiti team and went on to beat the Qatari team as well. This was a great achievement for the newly formed UAE team as they had now become number one in the Arabian Gulf countries.

However, a few months later, they went to Jordan for the West Asian Football Federation Women Championship. Bushra's team was not expected to do well against Jordan and Iran as they were strong teams with much more experience. Initially, those defeats were not well accepted by the UAE team and it was especially hard for Bushra because in one of the games, the team was beaten by 25 goals and Bushra felt it was her fault as the goalkeeper. Bushra talked of this disappointment:

The defeats challenged my notion of being a good goalkeeper. However, our coach encouraged me and told me that this is a great learning experience for us. We won fourth place in the West Asian games and our coach considered it a great achievement as it was our very first time to play outside our country. I had to work on myself and gain my confidence again. (Bushra, INT 1)

During their trip to Jordan, the UAE women's volleyball team was staying in the same hotel as Bushra's team and some of the participants attended some of the football matches. The additional support was much appreciated and left Bushra with an impression that women's sport in the UAE was certainly experiencing an upward trajectory. In my final discussion with Bushra, I asked her if she would have any specific advice for other Emirati women keen to pursue a career in women's football. Bushra clearly stated that:

Any girl with passion for the sport should pursue that passion and work on convincing her parents to join. She should stop at nothing to make her passion her profession. Even if a girl's parents refuse to have her join the team, she should ask the coach to talk to them. The coach will clarify the role of the women and help the parents accept the reality that women are now playing football in the UAE. Sometimes parents just need more information like knowing that the club does not allow men in when the women are training. The coach can also clarify that when the women travel, the club ensures that the players are chaperoned everywhere they go and the club sends the parents regular updates of the women's schedules. I often encourage my friends' parents to come and watch our games to get a feel of it and that helps parents accept the possibility of their daughters playing. Many parents change their mind once their worries are addressed and they realize that playing this game is something to be proud of because their daughters are representing their country. (Bushra, INT 1)

4.2.5 Hala

Once my father agreed to me playing, my playing changed! I was a different person. My coach said that I started playing like a pro and that I was not hesitant and reserved like I was before. (Hala, INT 1)

Hala is a 22-year-old who joined the elite UAE women's national football team when it formed for the first time in 2014 (when all players were required to be UAE nationals). Prior to 2014, the team existed but with players from countries other than the UAE. This data is based on the interviews conducted, in Arabic, with Hala: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Hala, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Hala, INT 2).

Hala did not play football as a child and she describe her initial skill as minimal: 'I couldn't even kick a ball' (Hala, INT 1). Hala does not cover her hair (Hijab) and her parents do not force her to either. However, unlike all the other players, Hala spent her childhood outside the UAE, predominantly in the United Kingdom (UK) where her parents attended university.

Despite spending most of her childhood internationally, Hala's commitment and loyalty as a UAE citizen was evident, even as a young child. In her discussion of this, Hala explained that when she was only ten years old she wrote a letter to her 'country'. She explained:

I left the UAE at a young age and I always felt I missed my country. At the age of 10, I wrote a letter to my country which my mum kept for me. I wrote: 'I miss you very much my dear Emirates. I can't wait to have you back. I just want you to know that I love you, no matter what'. I wrote this letter while living in the UK. I

left for the UK at the age of seven because my parents decided to do their higher education abroad. I remember when we were leaving the UAE, in the airport, I made up my mind that I wanted to come back as soon as possible to my beloved country and I assumed I could only return if I was a good girl! I felt that the only loyalty I could offer my country was the promise to return by being a good girl. (Hala, INT 1)

During their time in the UK, Hala's father was the President of the 'Club of UAE students' at his university. Once a year the club organized a three-day conference where all Emirati's in the UK and Ireland met. Hala recalled that this event 'was a big deal, everybody worked relentlessly to make this event a success' (Hala, INT 1). This event was organised to include the families of UAE Higher Education students also and even Hala had a part in the program where she was asked to sing at the event. She explained:

During the conference days, I witnessed the unity of our Emirates: different Emiratis from the different Emirates coming together under one flag. It was amazing, and I loved it. No differences existed, it was enough that we were all from the UAE. (Hala, INT 1)

Hala returned to the UAE at the age of fourteen after her parents finished their studies and she explained that she still felt a very strong connection to her country – her time abroad had not caused this to dissipate. In discussing her return to the UAE, Hala did comment that she was unsettled by a sense that some Emirati's positioned themselves as 'better' (read more privileged) because they came from particular Emirates. Hala commented, 'they would boast about being from Abu Dhabi rather than Dubai, or from Sharjah rather than Ajman' (Hala, INT 2). She further explained:

Why some people think they are better than others just because they are from another Emirate, I don't understand! Our leader, His Highness Sheikh Zayed, always stressed the great importance of unity to face any challenge and unity as the only way to reach our national goals of strength and prosperity. I only hope for this vision of unity to become a reality soon just like our three-day conferences in UK where no one cared which Emirate they were from and they gathered in my dad's university to celebrate just being Emirati. (Hala, INT 2)

Upon their return to the UAE, Hala's family faced the challenge of deciding into which school they would enrol Hala. Having spent significant time abroad in the UK, Hala was familiar with, and preferred, the British schooling system, and as such her parents moved to Abu Dhabi where there were some 'good' (read reputable) British schools. Hala recalled that she had no problem fitting in with the

children in the school in Abu Dhabi. She was committed to her studies and her parents were proud of her studious approach. Hala explained that she passed high school with flying colours and was accepted into a good university in Abu Dhabi. Hala recalled that her parents were happy she was accepted into a local university and that she would not have to travel to study abroad. In describing how she came to be playing football, Hala explained that she was in her final year of studies at university when she heard from a peer that the UAE national team were trying to recruit Emirati women. Hala explained that for her, an opportunity to represent her country on a national team, would enable her to realise the dreams she had as a 10-year-old – not as a professional footballer, but as a loyal UAE subject:

When I heard about them wanting to form a UAE women's football team and that they were desperately seeking local women to play, I felt this was my opportunity to fulfil my dream of giving back to my country. I shared my thoughts with my parents because I have always respected their opinion. You know, culturally, we are taught from a young age to consult our parents. As Muslims too, we are encouraged to obey and respect our parents. My father wanted me to choose a career that I could benefit from and football was not what he had in mind. In fact, he couldn't understand why I was into football now at the age of twenty-one. He believed that at that age, it was too late to start a sport. Although hesitant, my father agreed to allow me to try it, but he requested strict supervision. My mother was more open to the idea and just wanted me to be happy. (Hala, INT 2)

Armed with her parents' varying degrees of consent, Hala explained that she then made initial contact with Al Wahda Club and enquired about the team. She was advised that she would need to contact a member of the coaching staff (Coach Hedi) and the coach would be the person responsible for deciding about her participation, 'since all the other women had strong backgrounds in football and I had never played' (Hala, INT 1). Hala described her initial conversation with the Coach as 'interesting ... I explained that I had no background in the sport, but I had a childhood dream, I think the coach kept an open mind and liked my commitment to the UAE' (Hala, INT 1). Hala explained further:

Coach Hedi told me I can start training and practice and if I manage to prove myself ... Once I prove myself, I can be selected to play on the national team. I realized that the team was committed to giving every Emirati girl a chance to play and this encouraged me to start practicing in the club. To improve my playing, not only did I practice for long hours, but I also started watching the men's football games to learn the 'tricks of the trade'. (Hala, INT 1)

Hala described her early induction experiences into the game as challenging on several levels. Firstly, Hala explained that not only did she have a relatively

marginal skill base and limited experience of the game from which to draw on in her practice sessions, but she also had little knowledge of what participating in a national women's sporting team involved. Secondly, Hala's father was resistant to her involvement in the team and through his presence at early training sessions and conversations with the coach, was active in his attempts to subvert Hala's participation:

My father accompanied me on my first practice because he was concerned as to where I went for training. He was not completely comfortable with the idea of me playing football and hence tried to convince my coach to tell me that it is too late for me to start football at 21 and that I cannot join the team. My mother, on the other hand, supported me very much and tried to convince my father that my childhood dream has always been to serve my country in any way possible. My mother told my father that it was because of his studies (as well as hers) that the family moved to the UK when I was a child. She told him that as parents, they should realize their daughter's dream- just like they pursued theirs with education- and they should try to support it even if it means enrolling in something he is not very happy about such as football. (Hala, INT 2)

Hala explained that eventually her father's resistance eased due to her mother's continual advocating, much to her relief, and she suggested that this appeared to have had a significant influence on her approach to her playing. She explained that once she had her father's endorsement to continue, she was not as emotionally conflicted, and his support was very important to her. After months of renewed vigour and commitment to her training, Hala was excited to be invited to join the Elite team and was named in the international team for games scheduled in the coming months. As Hala explained, 'this was an opportunity for me to fulfil a childhood dream and represent my country'. Following my second interview with Hala, I made the following note in my reflective journal:

My second interview was with the players on their pitch in Dubai just before their practice. After the interview, the women started playing and I noticed how confidently Hala was playing. When other players passed her the ball, she would take it on and continue towards the goal instead of panic and pass on to another player. I also heard her coach shout often 'go Hala,' 'Great job Hala' more than she would for others. This indicated to me that Hala was in more need of the words of encouragement than other players and that her coach was proud of her since her playing was improving (Reflective journal, 28 December 14)

As our discussion was ending, Hala commented that she was now in her final year at university and she felt that her academic progress had not been hampered because of her involvement in football. In fact, Hala indicated that she was particularly

committed to working hard to achieve high grades and to prove to her father that, ‘football is no barrier to education’ (Hala, INT 2).

4.2.6 Ayesha

If my father found out, both my mum and I would be in deep trouble to say the least. My dad would pull me out of school and not allow me to continue my education. (Ayesha, INT 1)

Ayesha was the eldest of the player’s interviewed (aged 24) and, as she explained in her first interview, she plays for the national team without her father’s knowledge. Ayesha wears a headscarf (or *hijab*) and graduated from university with a degree in Political Science in June 2014. At the time of the interviews, Ayesha was working at the Dubai Public Prosecution’s Office. This data is based on the interviews conducted, in Arabic, with Ayesha: first interview was on 28 December 2014 (Ayesha, INT 1) and second interview was on 27 May 2015 (Ayesha, INT 2).

Ayesha was initially identified by a talent scout who was a member of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council. The talent scout advised her that she needed to meet a member of the coaching team and Ayesha was surprised to learn that the member of the coaching team was a girl she had played football with during middle school (discussed below). It was through her connections with this coach (Coach Hedi) that Ayesha was invited to join the Al Wahda Club – a pathway for recruitment into the UAE Women’s national team. Although this was a dream come true for Ayesha, her father would not allow her to play. Hence, the past year has been particularly challenging given she attends all training sessions and games ‘in secret’. Ayesha described one such incident when, as part of her involvement in the team to participate in the eight-nation Aphrodite Cyprus Cup held on the west coast of the Republic of Cyprus, Ayesha was required not only to travel to the event, but also to attend regular training sessions at the Football Association Headquarters in Abu Dhabi. She explained that her mother was instrumental in not only ‘covering for practice sessions, but also the trip to Cyprus’ (Ayesha, INT 1). Ayesha’s mother attended the trip to Cyprus as her chaperone:

My mother told my father that she was accompanying me on a business trip. My mother and I regard my football as another job since I receive a salary for it. It

is a job of being a hero for my country and taking new steps for future generations of women in the UAE. We don't even try to tell my dad that I play because knowing his mentality, he will not only not allow me, but he will forbid me to play and if he does that, then I cannot play. So, I would rather just not tell him! (Ayesha, INT 1)

Indeed, Ayesha fondly recalled how proud she was of her team's achievements on that trip. During the Aphrodite Cyprus Cup, the team qualified for a FIFA ranking for the first time. This was significant as teams with a FIFA ranking are eligible to compete for a place in global elite competitions such as the Women's World Cup which was held in Canada during the summer of 2015.

During our conversation Ayesha described her initial pathway into the game through informal neighbourhood games of football with her brothers and other boys residing nearby. Ayesha lived in Dubai with her large family of three brothers and four sisters and, as Ayesha explained, 'having large families is considered relatively 'normal' for Arab culture and often Arab men take pride in having many children' (Ayesha, INT 1). Ayesha lives in the Deira district of Dubai and considers the area to now be more conducive for children's outdoor play in comparison to her experiences as a young girl:

If I can remember, I have been playing football. I started playing in my neighbourhood where I would gather my brothers and the neighbourhood boys, and I would teach them how to play. I was always leading them from an early age and I knew far more about the game than the boys did. Football skills came naturally to me. In elementary school, I recall playing whenever I got a chance even if it meant playing on tarmac in my school. Although Dubai is extremely green now – a new initiative was launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai to plant one million trees in 2010 – it has not always been green. My school did not even have a tree that we could play in its shade. And so, we played in the scorching heat under the desert sun. (Ayesha, INT 1)

Despite these conditions, Ayesha took every opportunity during school hours to play football. During middle school Ayesha was part of the school team and played many tournaments, yet upon her transition to high school Ayesha was confronted by cultural discourses that acted to regulate her football participation:

My high school years were frustrating because my school no longer had a league or team. I would bring my own football to school so that I could play with my friends but as soon the teachers would spot us playing, they would confiscate our football and say, 'Administration bans this; you are not allowed to play. Women should not be playing football. Go play volleyball or basketball'. I think it was because parents are more accepting of games like volleyball and basketball

because those are 'indoor' sport where spectators can be restricted while football must be played outside and has no restrictions as to who will stand by and watch. (Ayesha, INT 1)

As Ayesha explained, these changes were not isolated to her schooling experiences. Throughout the years Ayesha played football during elementary and middle school, and her father did not object to her participation. Yet, like the regulations experienced upon commencement of high school, Ayesha's participation was also restricted by her father. As Ayesha commented 'My father made it clear that the end of my middle school years was also the end of my football playing years' (Ayesha, INT 2).

When Ayesha was still at university, she joined the university's football team without her father's knowledge. During one of the games, her ankle was severely injured. Her father found out that the injury was due to her playing football and he forbid Ayesha from going back to university as a punishment. She was grounded² for ten days and during this time, Ayesha recalled promising her father that she would never play again – all to be allowed to leave the house and continue with her university studies. Ayesha's father eventually relented on the condition that she was not permitted to participate in football:

From then on, I was very careful not to get injured and if I did, I had a story for every injury to cover up such as falling down the stairs, someone stepping on me or some similar story. (Ayesha, INT 2)

In discussion about the ways in which Ayesha had been able to continue with her football despite her father's decree, Ayesha described the important role her mother had played:

The only way I could play after middle school was if I had the support of my mother. I made it clear to my mother that I wanted nothing more than to pursue my football career and that she needed to support my dream. I needed her support not just to cover up for me when I went to practices but also if I was injured and when I needed to travel. (Ayesha, INT 2)

Ayesha and her mother have decided that Ayesha's dream of being a football hero for her country is worth the risk of keeping this a secret from her father. Even her brothers do not know she plays and if they were to find out, they would inform their

² 'Grounded' refers to being restricted to one's home environment for a period of time and in this instance is employed as a consequence or disciplinary technique

father. Ayesha explains that she has tried numerous times to discuss playing football at the national level with her brothers and father but feels as soon as she brings up the subject, ‘they do not even entertain the idea and they tell me no way’ (Ayesha, INT 2).

What is perhaps most astounding in Ayesha’s narrative, is that despite her success on the field she has managed to keep her identity in the public eye from her father and brothers by using a false surname. Further, she has received support from the women’s national team administrators in protecting her anonymity. The elite UAE women’s national football team has a public relations committee (PR) that oversees the publication of every photo and news story of the team. It is mandatory (by law) for every newspaper and social media to obtain approval from this PR committee prior to publication and it through this mechanism that the PR committee can restrict public records of Ayesha’s involvement.

Ayesha described the support she received from team members as invaluable, particularly given she explained that practice (training) and games are her only outings away from the family home and she considers members of the team as her second family. Despite her on-field success Ayesha describes her greatest dream, ‘would be to get my father’s blessing before he leaves this world’ (Ayesha, INT 1). After many years of smoking, Ayesha’s father has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Ayesha explained that she hopes to be able to tell him about her football career.

I don’t want to live with the guilt of hiding this from my father. I pray every day that God will give me the strength to just tell my father what I am doing. I know I am not doing anything wrong. He should be proud that I follow principles of my religion such as covering my hair and at the same time representing my country and trying to be a hero for this nation. I just hope that when I do get to tell him, he sees the matter in the same way my mother and I see it. I want to be his hero as well as my country’s hero. (Ayesha, INT 2)

Ayesha believes that her father’s resistance to her football participation is based on his concern for the way in which she may be positioned within society given the cultural discourses that render this activity as problematic for women. Normalised and taken-for-granted attitudes about what are considered culturally acceptable activities for women to participate in are replicated in everyday dialogue. For example, Ayesha discussed a conversation she had recently had with a co-worker:

Just yesterday my friend (who does not know I play) saw the picture of the elite team in the local papers holding a trophy. My friend's mother was with him as he was looking at the picture and she said that these women should be ashamed of themselves and should not be publicizing this 'boy's game' as their own. This statement was made by a lady in her 70s and it did not surprise me, so I asked my friend what he thought. Unfortunately, what he said did surprise me! He said, 'I think women should be able to play what they like but there is no need for them to publicize it; they can do it in secret'. I was extremely disappointed to hear this view from a young man. (Ayesha, INT 2)

Ayesha believed that the UAE society still has a long way to go in terms of changing their mindset towards women playing football. She does admit that there are some who support and promote this game but do so only for someone else's daughter and not their own. The problem she believes 'is all tradition and not religion' (Ayesha, INT 2). Some people in UAE society have the traditional point of view that women should not be doing a man's work/sport and football is most certainly a man's domain:

End of the day, I am doing this for my country and anything with that intention cannot be wrong. I believe the solution is to educate the community and show them, with the help of the media, that we are not doing anything contrary to religion. The media has a vital role to play in helping women who want to play. I feel the media have been guilty up to now because they have not made much effort in promoting football for women. However, I am happy that the media is also changing its attitude and in turn society's perception of women playing football is turning around. I am grateful that the Abu Dhabi sport council supports women's football in every aspect especially when it comes to their budget. The country has money and is willing to spend it on the team. (Ayesha, INT 2)

Ayesha discussed the role of education in supporting widespread cultural change about women's sport (and football) participation. Ayesha questioned whether sanctioned involvement in football in school, especially at the elementary level, would positively impact women's confidence, leadership capabilities, empathy and decision-making capabilities – she considered these to be important attributes for 20th century women in the UAE. Ayesha described her belief that sport can be a strong vehicle for social change, as 'women are the future mothers and we have a responsibility towards the future' (Ayesha, INT 2).

After my interviews with Ayesha, I noted in my journal:

Given Ayesha's sensitive situation, I feel honoured to have her accept to be interviewed by me and I am happy I have gained her trust for my research. I assured her that her name would be changed for the purpose of my research, but she did not seem concerned. She replied with a smile on her face, 'I am not

worried. Besides, my father and brothers will never read your research!’
(Reflective journal, 28 December 2014)

4.3 Coaches

In addition to the interviews conducted with the elite players, conversations were also held with two coaches (one male, one female) involved with the elite UAE women’s national football team. Both interviews were conducted in Dubai, were semi-structured in nature and were of approximately sixty-minutes in duration. Given that the elite UAE women’s national football team was only recently formed, it is interesting to note the international expertise of key coaching personnel involved in the women’s team. The inaugural member of the coaching staff had been involved in women’s football for over three decades (as both a coach and administrator) and had formerly been the Head of Women’s Football for the Oceania Football Confederation. Her successor was another international coach who had been specifically recruited based on his success coaching another international women’s football team. Like many sporting teams, a member of the coaching staff of the UAE Women’s Football Team is supported by assistant coaches. The narratives of the two coaches involved in this research are presented below with pseudonyms.

4.3.1 Coach Sam

Just over a year ago, Coach Sam was tasked with joining the coaching team for The White Ladies (the official name of the elite UAE women’s national football team). Coach Sam is a non-Emirati citizen, is in his late forties and has a rich history in international football coaching. His resume includes serving as an assistant coach to the Tunisian men’s national football team that qualified for the 2011 African Cup of Nations in Gabon. Coach Sam also has a fine record with the Tunisian women’s team (2004 to 2010), which he took to the 2008 African Nations Cup and to third place in the Arab women’s championship in 2006 after just a few years of training. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with the coach on 27 May 2015:

I am here now coaching the elite women's football team because a Tunisian I knew well was the administrative director for the UAE team last year when the previous coach resigned. My colleague knew about my success with the women's team back in our home-country. So, when it was time to select a qualified coach for the UAE's women team worthy of replacing the Coach my colleague nominated me for the position because he knew I was more than qualified. I accepted the offer and started training the Emirati women's team in August 2014. Since then, I have implemented a stringent training regime for the elite team. I train the team, which has 25 players aged 14-35, regularly three times a week. I also lead the Al Jazira's U-17 male team in the UAE. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam described the process of introducing a women's football team in the UAE as relatively challenging. His experience with the previous UAE women's team was largely as a coach of one of their competitors – the Tunisian women's football team. Coach Sam explained that on his first coaching tour in the UAE for the Ramadan Tournaments in 2010, two of his players were poached by UAE scouts – 'I left with two less players on that visit, soon after they joined the UAE women's team' (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015). Although the UAE had an elite women football team in 2009 (prior to the emergence of the all-Emirati women's team), the players were an amalgam of various (predominantly Arab) nationalities such as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan. The UAE government gave these players UAE citizenship so that they could call them a UAE national team:

I have no ill feelings or regret about my two players being scouted and taken by the UAE team back in 2010. In fact, it was a good thing because the Emirati women saw that other Arab women, many wearing a headscarf, play football on a professional level without offending culture or religion. As more women from the UAE started joining their team to represent their country, in 2014, the UAE women's team cancelled contracts of all their non-Emirati players, and today we see for the first time the elite team comprised of all Emirate players. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam explains that the key driver for the establishment of an official national women's football team was the work of the UAE Women's Football Committee, (which formed in 2009), backed by the UAE Football Association and the Abu Dhabi Sports Council. The committee was formed as part of a UAE FA initiative to increase the presence of women's football in the country. The vision of the UAE Women's Football Committee was 'to become the leading ladies football team in the region' (*Al Khaleej Times*, 22 June 2015) and this vision was reiterated by Coach Sam:

We try to work closely with the families and our main challenge is assuring these families that we have the proper facilities and both indoor and outdoor women-

only facilities. We also know that to change people's mindsets takes time; it cannot be overnight, and it will not be easy. We believed that football builds great team spirit and increases discipline and the fitness level of the players. We know that although challenges will always be there, I believe in my players and know that they can face and overcome any challenge. That is what makes this game so exciting! Challenges will always be there. I am not surprised that the UAE women have challenges with their parents, families and communities. In Tunisia, we had challenges when we started too. Ironically, they were the same challenges women are facing in the UAE. Although Tunisia had their official volleyball and basketball team before they had their football team, parents were hesitant to send their women to football. This was due to the unanimous belief in the Arab world that football is a boy's game. They worry about a girl's injuries believing that a woman's body was not made for this kind of game. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam considers these normative perspectives about women's sport participation to be common among much of the Arab world, yet he appears optimistic about the changing nature of attitudes to women's sport participation – 'it can change and has already started to change ... Parents realize that with proper training, injuries can be avoided, and women can stay feminine and be professional football players' (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015). Coach Sam explains that the introduction of an Emirati women's team for the U-14 is evident of this change, particularly as they 'are the future of football in this country'. He sees Emirati parents bringing their daughters to the game, staying and watching the entire game, and then taking them home:

This is a sight for sore eyes because this was not possible just over a year ago. Hence, so much has changed and it is delightful to see these changes and gives us so much hope. I consider this change in attitude more important than the victory in the game: the fact is that we cannot have good players without parental support. The player's psychological well-being and inner peace affect the game. I consider it to everyone's benefit to bring parents on board. When parents say that they did not imagine women's football to be this way and that they are delighted by what they see, I consider that as my victory. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

The greatest change, however, Coach Sam believes comes from the grass-roots level as opposed to the elite level, because many of these attitudes manifest within, and should be challenged, through everyday practices such as neighbourhood games of football, or through school football and sport programs:

This is the main reason I try to work with schools because that is where you educate the teachers ... they should encourage the women and you get to work on the parents, removing any misconceptions they have about the game. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam considers the attitudes of parents to be key barriers that impede women's sport participation in the UAE. Specifically, he explains 'that parents in this part of the world need to know their daughters are safe and taken care of. For instance, there is a bus to take and bring their daughters to games and that the staff are all women – the administrator, the doctors, and the chaperones when they travel outside the country' (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015). This is the kind of information Coach Sam feels is important to convey to the parents and teachers:

It is vital we recruit the women at a young age! Once they are sixteen, eighteen and twenty, it is very hard to convince parents to allow their women to play. If parents get used to their women playing from a young age, then they will have less of a problem accepting them playing at eighteen and twenty. We need to create a large pool of young women football players so that if half of them pull out due to family restrictions, we can still form our teams. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam is a strong advocate of introducing women to the game at a young age, he comments, 'it is easier for communities to accept women playing football at a young age rather than older' (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015). Another important factor the coach stresses in starting early is that the physique of the women at a younger age are easier to train. Physiological attributes such as flexibility, coordination, and speed are easier to develop when women start playing younger.

Despite his optimism about the future of women's football in the UAE, Coach Sam believes there are still some significant challenges to confront:

The start for the UAE is great and on the right track. For example, there are now six local women's teams in the seven Emiratīs of the UAE. They did not manage to form a team in Ajman this year but intend to do so next year. These teams consist of women under fourteen with a coach and 25 players on each team. All the players are Emirati women although they are allowed two non-Emirati players if they cannot fill all the spots. Although school coaches, also school physical education (PE) teachers, are all non-Emirati, they are trained with me – to the best standards of FIFA. But the fact that these teams do not have Emirati coaches, that is a challenge. I am hopeful though that within the next four to five years, from this pool of teams around the country, local talent for coaching will rise and develop. It must be said that it is vital to encourage local talent (from UAE) to become PE teachers and coaches as they understand the needs and culture of their own country more than anyone else; they understand the mindset and perception of their own people. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

Coach Sam discussed the WFC's plans to expand the grass-root levels of competition in the coming year. He explained that, 'Next year, the plan is to form a second team in all the seven Emirates for the U-12' (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015).

Coach Sam is strongly committed to growing the pathway programs for women's football participation in the UAE as it is from these growing pools (currently 120 Emirati players) that future national team players will be recruited:

By next year we will have at least 240 players once we form the U-12, and each year if we add a team in all the seven Emirates, you can do the math. You can imagine where the UAE can go with these numbers. I see one major challenge for the UAE and that is that there is no physical education (PE) curriculum at the high school level. I think it is vital to continue physical education after middle school and hence the women, as well as parents, become accustomed to playing and don't feel that playing is only for the younger age. I hope that the Ministry of Education makes it mandatory for high school to have a formal PE curriculum. I am hopeful that this will change soon. This country is doing so much to promote sport in general and women's sport. When I was asked to be the coach for the elite women's football team, I went on the websites to see what the UAE was offering. There was a lot on the net, and I was wondering how much of it is true. When I came here, I realized that the country is doing more than it even promotes on the net. With the leadership's determination, promotion and encouragement for sport, especially women's sport, this country is going places! (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

What this country provides women in terms of camps, training, and travel far supersedes opportunities in other places such as the European countries. Coach Sam believes that sport is the best vehicle for social change:

Before being good physically or even professionally, sport is good morally. It trains and teaches us ways of behaving with others. It teaches us competition and at the same time cooperation; we fight for the ball, but we are still friends. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)

4.3.2 Coach Hedi

Coach Hedi is an Emirati female in her late twenties who joined the coaching panel at the beginning of 2015. Coach Hedi's initial induction to the game came through school pathway options where she joined the school team at sixteen. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with the coach on 27 May 2015.

With limited experience but an abundance of raw talent, Coach Hedi was identified by an Egyptian coach from Abu Dhabi Country Club in 2004 who was touring schools in the UAE as a scout. The targeted recruitment of young women into the Abu Dhabi team formed the basis of the national team in 2009. Despite her limited exposure to the game, Coach Hedi recalls being 'started off as the goalkeeper'. At the teams' first appearance in the international women's football sphere (albeit in

an ‘Arab nations’ tournament), Coach Hedi was the recipient of the ‘best goalkeeper in the Arab world’ award. This award was the first of many that she would attract during her time as a player in the elite UAE women’s national football team.

Coach Hedi’s coaching experience started when her club participated in a series of school coaching clinics within the Abu Dhabi schooling district. These clinics involved introductory football sessions being conducted in schools under the supervision of an accredited coach:

I was blessed to have a FIFA instructor, Connie Selby, train me. She was the coach of the UAE National Team at that time, and although Connie left the UAE last year, she leaves her mark on me and the team. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi described Coach Selby’s vision to increase the capacity of Emirati women to be coaches, referees and administrators. As Coach Hedi described, Coach Selby ‘believed that Emirati women should be empowered to be the future coaches of their own country’ (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). A key legacy of Coach Selby was, according to Coach Hedi, the formation of the first FIFA women’s coaching course in the UAE. Coach Hedi was one of the first Emirati women to complete this course and she explains that it provided key skills in learning ‘how to deal with players and what to teach the players’ (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). Coach Hedi recalled that some of these coaching students accompanied Coach Selby on international visits to ‘watch and learn from the more experienced teams playing in those countries’ (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015) and considered herself a beneficiary of this approach as a game analyst during the 2014 Asian U-17 tournament. It was after this trip that Coach Hedi seriously thought about making coaching her profession.

After making the decision to become one of the first female Emirati coaches, Coach Hedi embarked on a series of accreditation courses that ultimately provided her with firstly her ‘C’ license (license to coach U-14) from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Two years after that, she obtained her ‘B’ license with the AFC (license to coach U-17) and at the age of 24, Coach Hedi left Abu Dhabi Country Club and formed her own team with Al Reem Investment Company:

I wanted to leave the club to create my own future of becoming a coach. I believed that if I stayed at Abu Dhabi Country Club, they could not make me a better player and a coach. I needed to make history; I wanted to be a champion and then come

back and make the club a champion. In June 2014 I went for my 'A' license [license to coach an elite team of any age], which is the highest coaching license. I am the only woman in the Middle East to have achieved this license with the AFC. I was the only woman in my group who went for the license. That trip was not easy: I was up against men who had much more experience than I did, and hard work and experience is mandatory for this level of license. One of the men in my group of 'A' license told me that he has been doing coaching since 1986, and I thought to myself, 'Well I was born in 1986!' But that was not a problem for me. I believe in improvement and hard work. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi describes herself as ambitious and she indicated that she did not want to stop at the 'A' license but aspired to complete the highest coaching accreditation available, a 'pro' license which members of the coaching staff of the UAE Men's national football team only obtained in the previous year.

Coach Hedi's vision has always been to improve women's football in her country and through coaching, she was able to establish a women's football team at the Al Wahda club – a pathway program to the women's elite team. In that role, Coach Hedi described all the people she worked with as Emirati – 'all the players, the assistant coach and all the members of the team administration'. Coach Hedi explains she feels a sense of responsibility towards her country and enjoys developing local talent – as she commented, 'it is not about being the best I can be; it is about my country being the best' (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). She feels her country supports her with opportunities to pursue her talent in football, and so it is now her turn to give back to her country by empowering other Emirati women. Coach Hedi recalls her initial reactions to her current appointment with the national women's team:

I didn't even ask about my salary because I felt it was my duty to serve my country by accepting this job. Growing up, I was slightly overweight and so was also happy that playing will help me become healthy. I am lucky to have not faced any challenges from my family. In fact, my parents were the first to push me to take up this career. So, I am lucky because generally in the UAE, families have resisted [women's participation] because of tradition and culture. Although religion allows women to play sport, many make religion an excuse to not allow women to play especially when it comes to Hijab [the head cover]. As you can see, our team has no problem with covering up, and we have many women who wear not only the head scarf, but the long stretch shirts and pants under their uniform. It is not a problem at all. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi considers the UAE players as quite fortunate with the provision of club venues that allow women to participate in ways that are deemed 'culturally appropriate'. She compares her situation with their neighbouring countries: 'Saudi

Arabia, where they are not allowed to have clubs, nor do they have trainers. Women in Saudi Arabia cannot go and play publicly as they do in UAE' (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). Coach Hedi explained that in Saudi Arabia, women cannot play in public and this restricts their participation in games and practice. Further Coach Hedi explained that in addition to the barriers such as a lack of, and access to, appropriate facilities, women in Saudi Arabia cannot even find women's football shoes (cleats). Coach Hedi explained that they must wear a small size men's cleats, even though part of being a professional athlete is having the right gear:

We are spoiled in the UAE with all the sport shops displaying all sorts of women's football gear. Although Saudi has two women representing them at the last Olympics, women in Saudi do not have any opportunity to practice and play sport. Even their school curriculum is absent of any sport, something the UAE started to change years ago. To this day, we are working on improving. That's why Saudi population has the fourth highest diabetes rate in the world. So, promoting a culture of sport in the UAE is our national duty. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi believes the UAE has witnessed significant growth in terms of women's football over the time she has been involved with the game, and, as she comments, 'there are now 2000 Emirati women playing football in leagues all over the UAE'. Coach Hedi considered the U-16 women recent tour to Bangladesh for an international tournament as evidence of this change:

This only means one thing – that the mindset of society is changing. The players have proven that the way they dress and behave, the way they respect themselves and each other, is not contrary to any religious belief; some are covered and wear the hijab. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

When I asked Coach Hedi about the various support schemes available to support her team, and women's football participation more broadly, she commented:

We are still not where the men's team is, and we are not given as much responsibility. The men's team has reached far more international levels. Nevertheless, we are lucky to get the support we need now from the Women's Football Committee (WFC). To have the support of the head of UAE Federation as well as, head of WFC's support. This support is vital to our success. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

In fact, Coach Hedi identifies the specific contributions of a senior Board Member for the UAE Football Association (FA) and attributes her support as integral to the success she has had as a player and coach:

She believed in me and in all Emirati women. The Abu Dhabi Sport Council has always been our main support, and they have been trying to increase the number

of games so that they can get the practice and exposure they need and deserve. The reason they even placed me as the assistant coach of the elite team, is to promote the council's policy of supporting women's football and attracting more local women to upgrade their capabilities and gain the required experience. Financially, there is tremendous support from the leaders in the government, as every player gets a monthly salary, and yes, it is not as much as the men get paid, but we are not at their level anyway, so we don't have to get equal salary. On the other hand, we do get better salaries than all the other women's games in the UAE such as volleyball and basketball, although they have been around longer. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi believes that to promote women's football in UAE, there is a need to increase access to pathway programs. Coach Hedi suggests 'that we need every Emirate in the UAE to have an Academy for Women's Football, this does not exist presently, but it does for the men' (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). Coach Hedi considers that 'ideally, the academy would go into schools in each Emirate' and this would provide increased access to quality coaching opportunities and would also help in the recruitment of more young females to local teams. Coach Hedi considers improved partnerships between local academies and schools as vital as this would provide young women with the skills to participate at an earlier age:

I believe this needs to be mandatory, but it can only happen if the Ministry of Education in UAE signs an MOU with the academies. This can also be implemented at university level. I believe that this will also address the problem of parental consent, as it will be easier for parents to accept their women playing football if they start at an early age and they get used to the idea of their women playing this game. These women will become mothers of future generations, and they will have a completely different perspective on women playing such sports. What better vehicle for social change can there be? (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi considers that it is important for women to be open to opportunities like playing football, particularly as she considers it as a sport with an upward trajectory. However, in discussions about the current barriers that exist for UAE women in terms of sports participation, Coach Hedi offers the advice:

Any girl wanting to join the team should get their parent's approval and have them come to terms with the fact that they can be a professional football player proudly representing their country and bringing home the trophy one day on a national level. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

She further comments:

This is not an easy game and only enthusiasm and passion will get the women through the long hours of practice and hard work. Football makes a girl a better person and a stronger individual. It helps players in decision making and that is vital in all aspects of life. Meeting other players from other parts of the Arab

world and Western world opens minds and exposes them to different perspectives that they get the opportunity to learn to respect and celebrate. I, myself, am a different person as result of playing football. Football has changed me; it has made me think differently, plan ahead and have confidence in improving myself. Winning is not about numbers to me anymore. Winning is about experience and getting to develop ourselves; to accept defeat and when we do win, we know not to put others down. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

Despite her busy coaching and administration schedule, including a job as the technical manager of the Abu Dhabi Sport Council, Coach Hedi supports the provision of sporting programs for children with special needs. She involves her elite team with the children in the Special Needs Centre and comments, it is important ‘so that they can develop the attribute of service and giving back to the community’ (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015). She believes that these special needs children differ only in their abilities, and comments, ‘we can teach them to play football according to the best of their ability’ (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015).

Coach Hedi ended her interview recalling the words of Mohammed Khalfan Al Rumaithi, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Abu Dhabi Police Headquarters and former president of the UAE Football Association when he told her that they always feel proud of their national talents and she says she is proud that their leaders are so supportive.

4.4 Administrators and Support Staff

In addition to the players and coaches, four key administrators in Women’s football in the UAE were recruited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Each participant held a position that required them to contribute to the administration and governance of women’s football in the UAE. Specifically, there were three female and one male administrator recruited and these administrators are involved with either the Dubai Sports Council or the Abu Dhabi Sports Council. Each has played a key role in enhancing the profile of women’s football in the UAE and their narratives are included below. The data below is based on the interviews conducted in May 2015.

4.4.1 Administrator 1: Abeer

Abeer is an Emirati in her mid-thirties and is the first UAE woman to be appointed as a Board Member for the UAE Football Association (FA) and the secretary general of the Women's Football Committee (WFC) (operating under the umbrella of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council). She was a former board member of the judo and jiu-jitsu association and is still the treasurer for the Asian Association for judo and Vice president of the Asian Football Association. She is also a Director of Project Management at the Manazel Properties company which is a private company owned by the office of the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mansoor Bin Zayed. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with Abeer on 30 May 2015.

In addition to the many roles described above, Abeer is also a single mother of three young children since her husband passed away three years ago. She lives with her mother (who is also a widow) who assists her with her home duties.

Abeer graduated from Emirate University with a Bachelor of Arts in Education nearly 17 years ago. She describes herself as someone who has always had driven and ambition to be successful, a strong advocate of women's equality and her initial role was with the Activities Department in the Abu Dhabi Education Council. In this role, she promoted women's participation in sport through the education sector and was one of the first Emirate women to work in Model Schools³ in the UAE. Currently Abeer is the only Arab women involved on the Board of the Judo and Jiu-Jitsu Association with most of other board members hailing from Asian countries.

Abeer described her role in the establishment of women's football within the UAE. She explained that introducing this sport to this part of the world required balancing the culture of football with the culture of this community characterised by the 'Bedouin' way of life prevalent in the Middle East. Abeer's own origins are Bedouins and she explains the significance of family, cultural practices and the role of women within this culture – particularly in terms of 'taking a woman's honour seriously'. She explains:

³ Model Schools, a government education system much for the UAE nationals which started as a pilot programme in 1994-1995 academic year.

The Bedouins believe a woman should be protected by staying at home (not working and not playing sport) until they get married. So, introducing football for women in this culture was extremely challenging. I know football is a popular phenomenon all around the world, but it was not easy to bring it for women into our part of the world. It required an understanding of what one is capable of. The process of introducing this game in to the UAE began with guidance and instructions from His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan. It started with only six UAE girls playing football and we were faced with many challenges by the community. I conducted a study to find out what were the hesitations and concerns parents had when coming to accept football for women. The main factor I found was that parents resisted this idea because of culture, customs and tradition. They felt their women would be exposed: seen by men that is! (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Arab and Islamic customs dictate that women are not seen by other men without a cover and cannot play sport in front of men. Therefore, the issue of the dress code for female sporting participants has always been a concern, Abeer explains, ‘it was unacceptable for the women to wear the shorts and T-shirt and not cover their heads’ (Abeer, 30 May 2015). Abeer considers the fact that head scarves were not permitted to be worn during games by the International Football Association (FIFA) and the Asian Football Association (AFA) prior to 2014, as a key barrier to women’s football participation in the region. As Abeer comments, ‘this was the main reason Iran did not participate in the football Olympics: because they were not allowed to wear a head scarf’ (Abeer, 30 May 2015).

Following her role with the Abu Dhabi Education Council, Abeer moved into the private sector. Missing her connection with young people and sport, Abeer volunteered to take on the role of Head of the Activities Department at the Armed Forces.

After the first tournament, we received wide resistance from the community and via social media. Our close-minded community was worried that this phenomenon (women’s football) will negatively impact the culture and the women in the UAE. My team and I planned to face this resistance by organizing a ceremony where we would honour best women football players. We had the head of the Armed Forces invite many women’s football teams from various countries such as Brazil, USA, China and Japan including many Arab countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq just to name a few (women are involved in the Armed forces in the UAE). The head of the Armed Forces asked the Minister of Justice, one of the highest positions in the UAE, to honour the players at this ceremony. Since this ceremony was covered by the media, it proved to the UAE community that women’s sport in general and women’s football was acknowledged by leaders and accepted by them. Although the close-minded community still resisted women’s football, the negative publicity became slightly less as the public realized that women’s football was in alignment with certain country policies such as giving women opportunities. High position people of the

*country are backing these policies and therefore the resistance was minimized.
(Abeer, 30 May 2015)*

Soon after this event, Abeer explained that to make the sport more inclusive, FIFA ruled that all the countries should have a women's football team if they wanted to remain eligible for a FIFA ranking. One of the biggest challenges for the UAE was that FIFA's requirements around the establishment of a woman's team mirrored those for the men's competition. The most significant of these regulations was that members of the women's team had to be originally from the country they represented. As Abeer explained, 'this was a huge challenge for us because the UAE did not have enough Emirati women playing football and we had already faced community resistance with the Ramadan tournaments' (Abeer, 30 May 2015). To comply with FIFA regulations, in 2009 the UAE Football Association established the Women's Football Committee and Abeer was appointed by the Ministry of Presidential Affairs to be part of the board of directors.

In reflecting on the factors that contributed to this shift in policy by FIFA, Abeer explained that the then Vice-Chairman of FIFA was from Jordan and Abeer considers that he would have been 'fully aware of the challenges for women in this part of the world' (Abeer, 30 May 2015). Abeer recalled that the UAE (and many other Middle Eastern countries) did not participate in the first game of the West-Asia Women's Tournament that was hosted by Jordan. Yet in the following year, 2010 (and again in 2011) the UAE not only participated but hosted (and won) this tournament. Abeer explained that to enable the UAE to participate in this tournament:

*We needed some leniency from Prince Ali Bin Al Hussain [Vice Chairman of FIFA] to have a team that comprised a few original Emirati women and others from neighbouring Arab countries that were granted temporary UAE passports.
(Abeer, 30 May 2015)*

Abeer considered the 2011 final to be particularly powerful in promoting the women's game in the UAE for three key reasons. Firstly, not only were the 'White Ladies' attempting to secure their second successive 'Golden Cup' trophy but their opponents in the 2011 final were Iran, widely regarded as one of the strongest teams in the region. Secondly, Abeer explained, the event was attended by some high-ranking public officials:

Prince Ali Ibn Al Hussain of Jordan attended and extended his support as well as His Highness Sheikh Hazza as well as other Sheikhs. The Ambassador of Iran and his wife and whole family also attended. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Finally, Abeer described the media coverage of this event as ‘historical’. As she explained, all tournament games were broadcasted live on UAE Television and through social media channels which had not occurred at any time previously:

Our greatest achievement was not our win but the fact that we had achieved what the men’s team was not able to achieve to that date: win over Iran. Because the event was broadcasted live in the UAE and the community saw all the leaders supporting the women and the UAE winning, resistance from the community was never public again and to this day, they have never had further negative publicity. In fact, the media has turned around 180 degrees and started supporting the women’s football. As a result, the general view towards woman playing sport in general and football has changed within society overcoming the obstacles of culture and tradition. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Following this historic period, Abeer was appointed as the Deputy Chairman [sic] of the West Asian Football Federation, a position that was second in command to Prince Ali Ibn Al Hussain. Abeer recalled that in one of her first ‘three-day round table discussions with FIFA representatives from places like Iran, Bahrain and Jordan’ (Abeer, 30 May 2015) a key topic of discussion centred around whether the wearing of the Hijab (or headscarf) should be permitted for women in football:

As a representative of the UAE, FIFA saw that I wear the Hijab as a woman, an athlete and UAE national. I talked and laughed with them, so they know that women with Hijab can talk to men and we discussed the role of sport in the community and how sport is separate from politics. I discussed that sport does not interfere in politics. In fact, while politics separates and segregates people, sport unites people and brings them together under one flag. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

According to Abeer, the result of this FIFA sanctioned conference was instrumental to women’s sport participation in the UAE. As Abeer comments:

FIFA’s decision to lift the ban on the hijab was an important policy change ... being able to play official games wearing the hijab has been a vital decision that has allowed more Emirati women to take up the sport, we now have over 2000 local players in the UAE alone. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Abeer considers the growth in women and young women’s participation also reflects a change in parental attitudes. She says that the transition for parents ‘from resisting the idea of women playing to seeing parents themselves bringing their daughters to join the football practice is delightful to see’ (Abeer, 30 May 2015). She further comments:

This shift in mindset shows that the sporting culture is changing in the Emirati household, family by family, and this is something we didn't expect and never saw in the past. We now value sport as a tool for bettering one's life. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Abeer commented that she was extremely proud of the rankings the 'UAE Whites Ladies' (name of the UAE elite team) achieved at the Aphrodite Cyprus Cup where they were granted a FIFA ranking for the first time. In that tournament, the UAE team finished ahead of Bahrain and Lebanon and is now ranked No. 73 at the international level, second only to 54th-placed Jordan in the Middle East and 14th in Asia. Abeer continued to describe the various support structures that had contributed to the growth of women's football in the UAE; she highlighted that recently the UAE Football Association had received an official letter from FIFA confirming their commitment to provide financial, technical and logistic support to develop women's football for the period of 2015 through 2018 under the program 'Live Your Goals'. As Abeer explained:

This is really exciting; this campaign was first launched at the FIFA Women's World Cup Germany 2011 and has evolved into one of FIFA's most recognised initiatives in women's football. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Abeer explained that the 'Live your goals' project was announced early 2015 'amidst a lively atmosphere as eighty women from a range of private schools across UAE took part in the opening festival' (Abeer, 30 May 2015). Abeer commented that, 'FIFA is hopeful that this project will help the UAE promote the women's game and allow more women to step in and take part' (Abeer, 30 May 2015). Abeer sees the continued growth of the women's game as a progressive step towards gender equality in the UAE and, as she comments, 'the project's goal of increasing the numbers of women who are practicing football will also encourage them to establish a positive relationship with the beautiful game' (Abeer, 30 May 2015). The implementation of this project also seeks to highlight the various benefits of sports participation for young women, and through its increased profile, Abeer hopes there will continue to be progress towards addressing the barriers that impede Arab women and women's sport participation. She comments:

You see, we have come a long way and we can still go further. My ambition for my country is to host one of the upcoming FIFA Women Football World Cup finals by bringing in more UAE lady coaches, referees and administrators. It's a long process and there's a lot of work to be done. Personally, my dream is to join

the FIFA and the International Olympic Committee to make my mark as an Emirati and as an Arab woman. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

Abeer stresses that the Emirates has witnessed great progress in the past six years with the women's cause in general, and women's sport and women's football in particular. Yet, she does add a cautionary note that whilst this progress is certainly positive, a vision of a more equitable UAE for women was promoted nearly fifty years ago by the founding leader of the UAE, the late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

4.4.2 Administrator 2: Ary

Ary described his role as the General Coordinator of the Women's Football Committee, a position that requires him to work closely with the Secretary General (currently held by Abeer as discussed above). Ary's role involves coordination of all events and meetings as well as taking care of affairs of the national women's team. In addition, he is also the General Team Manager for all national pathway teams which include the under-14 and under-16 women's teams. Ary is an Emirati based in Abu Dhabi and his work intersects with both the Abu Dhabi Sports Council and the UAE Football Association. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with the Ary on 30 May 2015.

After a brief discussion about the purpose of the research, Ary commenced his interview by praising the role of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF) and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, for her continuous support of the role of women in UAE society. He also emphasized the support of H.H. Sheikh Hazza, Head of State for National Security Advisor, Vice President of the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi Emirate and chairman of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council who was a strong advocate for the establishment of the Women's Football Committee. Ary explains the changes in UAE society:

We, in the UAE, need time when it comes to changing the mind-set of our society. We have only had a short period of time. Despite the patriarchal divide in our society, men have started to advocate for this change. In the past six years, many factors have contributed to this change in our society's mindset. Factors such as

the support mentioned above from rules, relentless support from leadership and their aspiration to make this country 'number one' in every aspect including women's football. Another factor has been the modernization of UAE which has played a major role in this change. Thirty years ago, the UAE was one of the least developed countries of the world and see where we are today! (Ary, 30 May 2015)

The Abu Dhabi Sport Council formed the first elite team back in 2009 using Abu Dhabi Sport Club premises and later the Women's Football Committee was formed and Mrs. Hafsa Al-Ulama was appointed as chairman of the Committee and Talal Al-Hashimi as deputy chairman (both are not holding those positions any longer). There was an agreement in 2009 between Abu Dhabi Sports Council and the UAE Football Association to foster women's contribution to sport and Ary explains that this started initially through the 'setting up of women teams to engage in local and international competitions' (Ary, 30 May 2015). Ary explained that the work of the Women's Football Committee was primarily to promote the game of football for women in UAE. He said:

It was really quite amazing, they began by establishing training centres, sixteen in total all over the UAE for U-14 and U-16s, and some women interested in the game were key people in spreading the message. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Ary reflected on the early challenges involved in supporting the development of the women's game and in promoting women's participation. He explained that the U-14 elite team was established in 2011 and they participated in the Asian Regional Tournament for three consecutive years (2011-2014) and they have recently taken second place in the West-Asian Tournaments (Jordan came first). Ary explains that the changes to the composition of the women's national team in 2014 required some 'significant awareness raising':

My role and my team's role are mainly to increase awareness in the community promoting and marketing the game of football for women while emphasizing that it does not violate the culture and tradition of UAE. I recognize that there are cultural and religious barriers and limitations to women's participation and I accept it. We need to raise awareness so that this can happen. Emirati men and women must bring to light and promote sport and help develop policy that accommodates this. However, our culture is still within the bounds of what is considered culturally acceptable in terms of tradition, religion, and family support. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Ary explained that his role was made somewhat easier with key policy changes that governed what women could wear during games. He commented that changes to

FIFA regulations and The Asian Football Confederation rules to lift the ban on the hijab were important policy decisions because until then:

They had impeded the development of women's sport across the Middle East. Allowing Hijab for players was an example of the acknowledgement of this culture. This policy change helped parents overcome their fears of their daughters playing football evidence being that parents started to allow their daughters to join the game. So, from twenty professional women football players in 2004, we now have 2000 women playing football in UAE. This increase in number is the biggest proof that we have managed to change the mindset of parents and create tolerance, acceptance and even celebration for women's football in our country. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Ary explained that a significant aspect of his team's promotional work was conducted through schools in the UAE. Specifically, Ary commented that the Women's Football Association had signed agreements with the Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Education Council to bring the students and the physical education teachers to the federation's training premises to train them and give them courses on football:

I am grateful for the decree issued by the UAE General Authority of Youth and Sport Welfare making the presence of women in all sport clubs mandatory. This decision was one of the main issues that helped and supported the promotion of women's role in sport in the UAE. As a result, the Women's Football Association appointed ABS, whom I work with, as the first woman Board Member. We no longer have the challenge of women joining the team. Our challenge now is winning international tournaments. The era of participation is over, and the era of harvest and achievements has begun. The need to achieve success and to be number one is required by the Rulers and Sheikhs in the UAE. The formative period for women's football is over as it has already been seven years since the formation of the Women's Football Committee and that is why our rulers need to now see the fruits of the formative period and the fruit is our achievements. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Ary was a strong advocate of the role sport can play as a vehicle for social change.

He stated that:

Sport can be a source of change in every aspect of society. It is sport that creates positive attitudes and gets the employee away from his work routine releasing negative energy ... sport changes a person let alone a community. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Ary's final words were advice for any girl who has a love for the game, desire and talent to play to contact the committee because all the help and support is there:

They just need to approach us the committee will make home visits to the parents and regular meetings with them offering them all sorts of support and assistance if they need it such as financial assistance. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

4.4.3 Administrator 3: Khan

Khan is a 22-year-old support staff member of the national women's team and the under-14 team. She is relatively new to this position having commenced only six months ago. Khan is an Emirati also based in Abu Dhabi and like Ary, her work also intersects with both the Abu Dhabi Sports Council and the UAE Football Association. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with the Khan on 19 May 2015.

Khan describes her role as largely administrative, in that her key responsibilities orient around enrolling, registering and supervising players. Khan considers a key aspect of her job is parental liaison:

The most important part of my job though is meeting the parents and keeping in touch with them to ensure that they are happy with their daughter's situation and they do not pull them out of the team. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

The need for family liaison and support is an important aspect of the UAE culture. Although Khan has no experience herself playing football, she is learning a lot about the game in her current position. She is a young Emirati, and this is her first job after she graduated eight months ago from college. Khan explains:

In my last meeting with the administration, they pointed out that they are confident I will learn as I move forward. They stressed the fact that there is nothing they want more than having successful Emirati women on their staff and they will do everything they can to support us. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan's decision to apply for this job was strongly influenced by her relationship with Coach Hedi, who she considers to be a close friend. Khan recalled that a key message from her conversation with Coach Hedi was that the WFA were keen to ensure that key staff and players were recruited from the Emirati population. She recalled that Coach Hedi encouraged her to watch the games and practice sessions to 'get to know' the players. Khan comments she, 'soon fell in love with the idea that women in her country will be taking on this new path towards promoting themselves in fields they had not entered before' (Khan, 19 May 2015). Since she

took up this role, Khan has sat in every one of Coach Hedi's games and practices and her observation of these sessions has helped her tremendously in her job.

In my reflective journal, I noted the following:

It is interesting to note what Khan has learnt from her observations of the game: besides just learning about the game of football, she unproblematically accepts what she sees occurring as normalized. For example, the women explaining why they were late to the game because they had to sneak off without their father knowing where they were or being chaperoned by a brother because unless a man comes with the women, they will not be allowed to play! These taken for granted assumptions Khan appears to grapple and not question at all as she is also part of that same culture and fabric of society. (Reflective Journal, 19 May 2015)

Khan discussed the positive climate and supportive work culture she experienced in her role. She commented that there 'were many opportunities for self-development in this job, which is great, and I am thankful that the administration is taking such care to develop their staff' (Khan, 19 May 2015). As an example, Khan explained that only three weeks ago she was asked to attend a training session entitled, 'Successful Administration' and on completion she received a certificate of attendance. She commented, 'I was excited about this course and really look forward to being sent to more training courses, so I can continue to develop my work skills' (Khan, 19 May 2015).

Khan explains that she enjoys watching football now particularly given she has learnt a lot about the game. She feels with improved knowledge of the game she can better guide and support the players and liaise with their families. She particularly enjoys supervising the U-14s because she says that 'they are the future of the elite national team and it is vital that we start them up at an early age because parents accept the situation easier' (Khan, 19 May 2015). Khan compares dealing with parents of older participants (e.g., in the Under-20 team) compared with the parents of players in her under-14 team. She explained, 'when it comes to convincing parents and having them sign consent forms, it is much easier to do so with the parents of the younger age group' (Khan, 19 May 2015). She further elaborated that this challenge is culturally and religiously based:

In the Arab World, parental consent is important because women need to obey their parents according to Islamic law. It is not like the West where after eighteen years of age, you can make your own decision. You know, our prophet said something that we are brought up to abide by: 'Beware! Abstain from angering

the parents. The fragrance of Paradise is perceived even at a distance of a thousand years, but those who are disobedient to parents and those who cut off ties with relatives will not be able to smell it' (Prophet Mohammad, Wasa'il ul-Shia). (Khan, 19 May 2015)

In terms of learning skills of the game, Khan also stressed that it is much easier to learn at a younger age. Specifically, Khan commented:

Manoeuvring, speed, tactics are all easier to pick up when women are younger and most important, their study load is less at an early age and they have more free time which presumably will enable them to give their best to the game. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan explains that the Community Affairs Committee of the UAE Football Association has decided to visit one of the schools in Abu Dhabi next week as part of the committee's plan to encourage children to attend the football matches of the national team:

The committee will give away gifts to the students as well ... These are the kind of programs they work on to encourage women and their families to take an interest in the game. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan's considers her main challenge in her role is her ability to communicate with the parents. Khan comments that she is continually confronted with the rhetoric that football is a boys' game and therefore not something that they wish for their daughters:

Culture and tradition is engrained deeply in our country and although I am proud of our traditions, I must work hard to convince the parents that their paradigm about 'football being against our tradition' is false and has no basis of truth. Many parents, even when convinced about the game, are not convinced that football can be a profession and a future for their daughters. I try to explain to the parents I meet that the opportunities are vast in this game: although the women can start off as players, they can later go into coaching if they like or even administration, lecturing and judging. Their daughter can play while wearing the Hijab and their role is very important in representing their country. They are the future mothers who are making a difference and who will be role models for their children and other women in their country. Communicating with parents is hard work which is made easier when parents and siblings have a background in sport. When one of the parents has knowledge about football or any other sport, my job becomes much easier as they know and appreciate the game. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan finds that a particularly challenging aspect of her role are the conversations she needs to have with the fathers of her players. She comments, 'convincing fathers is much harder than convincing mothers. Mothers are more open-minded and more understanding of their daughter's wishes and dreams' (Khan, 19 May 2015).

Considering this, Khan comments that she ‘often starts with the mothers because once they are convinced, they know how to convince the fathers’ (Khan, 19 May 2015). Another key strategy that Khan employs is to encourage parents to attend practice/training sessions so ‘that they can see with their own eyes that nothing outside the religious boundaries is going on’ (Khan, 19 May 2015). Khan describes that she often sits with the parents when they attend a practice session and she addresses their questions and concerns. She also makes home visits when required and she finds that, ‘a personal touch with a visit to the homes of the women makes all the difference with the parents’ (Khan, 19 May 2015). In describing this further, Khan comments:

Once parents are convinced and happy sending their daughters to us, the girl’s commitment to the game changes and she starts practicing harder and hard work becomes easier. It is vital for the women to know they have the backup at home. This affects their psyche and wellbeing and of course the way they play the game. In fact, we do not encourage women to play if their parents are not convinced. We tell them to wait until we get a chance to work on the parents and convince them. We do encourage them to talk and communicate openly with their parents; to tell them about the positive aspects of the sport and we tell them we can help them with that communication. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan comments that she thinks the ‘UAE has come a long way’. In her discussion of the factors that have shaped a more progressive and open attitude to women’s sport participation, Khan comments that the:

Emirati community mind-set has changed and what has helped this change is international TV, news and social media. Previously, parents knew about the game through what they heard; they did not see things with their own eyes but through the eyes of the other. Today, parents see videos of women from other parts of the Arab world playing, covered and proudly representing their country. As Emiratis, we love being first in everything and love being leaders in many things. I feel our community doesn’t want to fall behind when they saw women in the Arab world play football. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan considers that women’s participation in sport in general, as well as football in the UAE, are ‘absolutely’ markers of the role sport can play as a vehicle of social change. She further commented that:

When women start playing, their mindset changes, they become educated in the lessons of life such as decision making and accepting different skills and capabilities ... They start to see things differently, they understand their culture and tradition differently and start seeing opportunities for women in their society they could never imagine before. (Khan, 19 May 2015)

Khan commented that she would like to see change to the media coverage of women's football and an increased profile of the Women's football committee in the current affairs reports in her country. As she commented:

Many do not know the committee exists and that there is tremendous support for the game in this country. Many women are playing in their neighbourhoods with their friends unaware that there is a committee representing them. The committee's aim is to develop programs, working in partnership with schools and sports clubs to promote the game ... The media can help us too with this awareness and they have started to do so. Parents and women need to see what is available for the game. The media has a big role in removing misconceptions about the game. We provide great support and the community needs to know this. We have a player on the national team who is married and comes with her husband and children to practice. Her husband is her biggest supporter! If the media were to portray and talk about this case, it will encourage others to accept this new phenomenon. The ultimate goal is to produce and promote a steady stream of Emirati talent that can progress through the ranks of international football. (Khan, 19 May 2015).

4.4.4 Administrator 4: Dr. Asia

Unlike the other administrators interviewed, Dr. Asia lives in Dubai and her role is the 'Deputy Head of the Organizing Committee and Conference Director' at the Dubai Sport Council. A key imperative of this role, explains Dr. Asia, is to advocate and publicise the opportunities that exist for women's sport participation in Dubai. This data is based on the interview conducted, in Arabic, with Dr. Asia on 19 May 2015.

Dr. Asia is quite critical in her assessment that currently there is a lack of facilities available to support women's sport participation on a regular basis. She comments:

There is only one women-only club in Dubai that has a gym, but it does not have a woman's football team or any woman's team for that matter. Other clubs are private clubs and are very expensive to join and besides, the local women do not want to join these private clubs because they are not sex-segregated spaces. Men on the other hand, have many options of clubs where they can join teams and leagues and have regular tournaments. (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015)

Dr. Asia suggests that there is a need for improvement in the provision of women-only clubs in the UAE if women's rates of participation in sport and exercise is to improve. She further comments that there need to be pathway programs in school settings to allow women to participate in the game from an early age. Dr. Asia commented that government schools in Dubai do not have sport education for

women whereas many private schools do offer this, particularly through physical education curriculum and extracurricular sporting programs. Dr. Asia states that she is concerned that ‘the local talent (which is usually from the government schools) does not get noticed because there is no platform for them to showcase their sport talent’ (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015). She further comments:

The main problem we have here in Dubai is execution: Goals and plans have been set but when it comes to executing those plans, Dubai lacks motivation and funding. Short-term plans such as one-off events are executed well but it is the long-term plans for women, such as creating women’s football teams, that are not put into action. We are given some seasonal plans such as Dubai Walks Campaign which is an initiative for the whole community. The problem with these seasonal campaigns are that they are only once a year and not specifically for women: they are open to all. Therefore, our local women have a problem with that: many of them don’t want to be mixed with men. They would need their own initiative in a private setting where women only attend. This perpetuates inequality as women are not allowed, culturally and religiously, to mix with men while exercising although there are many private clubs where expat community men and women do mix. (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015)

Dr. Asia explains that she is regularly approached by members of the Dubai community, and on occasions even through colleagues on the Dubai Sports Council who call for the introduction of women-only sporting opportunities in Dubai. Specifically, she comments that these need to be ‘in segregated venues for women’. Dr. Asia appears frustrated that, despite attempts to encourage sporting clubs in Dubai to offer such options, these attempts have been largely ignored. Dr. Asia comments:

These private clubs have refused to provide the spaces and even refused organizing programs and games for women. The clubs state that this is not feasible for them as the women’s programs and teams do not make them much money while the men’s teams do. (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015)

Reflecting upon the increased growth in women’s football in the UAE, Dr. Asia explains:

The main reason our national team is successful and has support is because Abu Dhabi is backing them up. As the capital city, Abu Dhabi has the money, the resources and the leadership to support the elite team. This kind of support does not exist in Dubai as funding is not allocated for women’s sport in general and specifically women’s football. Football in Abu Dhabi has recently seen this major support. I feel society still feels some reservations towards these women playing football. I also feel that society has still not fully embraced the idea of women being involved in this man’s game. The solution, I believe, is in raising more awareness about the game. Since my role at the Dubai Sport Council is the public relations department, I feel that the restrictions players have about their pictures

being taken by the media does not help raise awareness. The national women's football team even has a committee to approve the pictures and news before anything is published. How can we get the word out and create awareness about the team if taking pictures of them is restricted and must go through many layers of approval? We want the media to help create awareness and yet we don't give them the freedom to come to the games and take pictures! I understand that some of the players are not allowed to play by their parents and hence the restriction on photographing them, but we need to see if keeping such players is worth it for the team. If we were to replace the one or two players who are not allowed to be photographed, would we be able to seek the media's help and create more awareness easily and freely without restrictions? (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015)

Dr. Asia commented on a specific strategy she had introduced recently to support the publicity of women's participation in football – she explained that through her role on the Dubai Sport Council she initiated a social media competition that encouraged local female athletes to photograph themselves playing sport and send their pictures to the Dubai Sports Council. She explained, ‘the best picture was to win the competition and the initiative was a great success – we were really thrilled by the number of photos we received!’ (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015). She further comments:

I do what I can in my role but there is so much more that can be done if only we had the budgets and opportunities that men do. My concern is only for Dubai of course as that is my territory of responsibility. (Dr. Asia, 19 May 2015)

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the narratives of the six players, two coaches and four administrators involved in this research. These narratives have sought to present nuanced accounts of the various challenges, opportunities and experiences of those involved with the UAE national female women's football team. These narratives have been constructed with a view to making visible the sociocultural discourses that shape what is thinkable, knowable and do-able as a female athlete, coach or administrator in the context of women's football in the UAE. It specifically sought to present readers with an insight into the various discourses and power relations that shape the experiences of those involved with women's football in the UAE from various perspectives.

This chapter presented the data that will be the foundation for analyses, discussion, and interpretation in the coming chapters. From the stories presented here, common

themes and patterns will be distilled in Chapter Five and discussed in relation to relevant literature to help inform interpretations of the data. From a Foucauldian perspective these accounts have not been presented as absolute 'truths' but rather as contingent and contextual. As such it will be the work of the coming chapters to distil meaning from the various themes presented within this chapter and to consider the ways in which this research contributes significant new knowledge about women's elite sports participation in the UAE.

Chapter 5: Analyses and interpretation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will analyse and discuss the key themes that have emerged from the narrative presentation of data. As Clandinin (2007) explains, narrative analysis can be approached in multiple ways, including a common approach wherein, ‘the narrative data is analysed for common themes, metaphors, plotlines and so on to identify general themes or concepts’ (Clandinin 2007, p. xv). It is this approach that best describes the narrative analyses undertaken in this research. Within this framework, the aim of the analysis was to try to bring to light some of the shared or common perceptions and experiences of the women who participated in this study, while being true to their unique personal experiences. In overlaying this analysis with a poststructuralist lens, I was particularly attuned to experiences that helped to bring into question some of the taken-for-granted ‘truths’ about female footballers in the UAE. Drawing on the work of Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980, 1983), the analysis sought to explore how various ‘truths’ and ways of being (subjectivities) are constructed, negotiated and resisted through the experiences of the participants and considerations of how discourse and power shape what is knowable and thinkable.

To do this, I adopt an approach that seeks to ‘illuminate the general by looking at the particular’ (Denscombe 2007, p. 36). Starting with the participant narratives as my primary point of analysis, I look to build context around the emerging themes. In practical terms, my analysis endeavours to contextualise the experiences of the participants within the forces that shape their commitments, opportunities and actions. This discussion is organised around key themes that elucidate both the enablers and barriers that the women encountered in their journey to being elite footballers in the UAE. The understandings generated are considered as part of the wider socio-cultural barriers that women in the UAE encounter. This data, therefore, has the potential to contribute to wider issues of gender inequality, aligned to what Weedon (1997) refers to as ‘the fight for change’ (p. 6). In keeping with poststructural principles, I acknowledge the unstable and ubiquitous nature of lived experiences and the uncertainty that is involved in naming and framing them.

An important aspect of this research is to give ‘voice’ to participants who have not previously been the object of social enquiry. Prior to this study none of them had participated in research *per se*, let alone research that seeks to privilege their voices – the experiences, struggles, delights and passions that underscore their participation in elite level women’s football. Being a relative ‘insider’, as a citizen of the UAE (albeit with different cultural proclivities than that of participants in this study), provided me with a unique opportunity to undertake such a study, and capture data of this kind. As Denscombe (2007) points out:

Research on interviewing has demonstrated fairly conclusively that sex, the age and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal. (p. 184)

Though I was embedded in the context, I tried to look beyond my everyday assumptions about the experiences of women in the UAE to explore the meanings behind their individual experiences, and the meanings they attributed to these. Here, attention is also given to the cultural context, including information about the experiences of the participants.

Carefully proofing and coding the data while conducting the analysis was a fruitful process. Manual coding and highlighting methods gave me a good sense of common themes. During this process I teased out common issues and themes and corroborated these with the media analysis I had undertaken while implementing my research. The strength of the case study approach is that I was able to corroborate the interview data with a variety of other data sources, such as observations of events and documents from local regional media sources (between 2013 & 2016). I draw on local media accounts to make connections with cultural discourses that were shaping the experiences of women athletes in the UAE. As Goodwin (2003) points out:

Society’s perception of women gives us a good insight into the understanding of the Islamic world. To understand how society is structured, one can look at the way the Islamic culture positions women and the spaces that it opens for them to access power and assert agency. (p. 27)

Following Goodwin, the testimonies of the participants need to be analysed within the cultural narratives of the UAE, for, as others such as St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) argue, words create meaning in a cultural narrative. Language and culture are

discursively constructed – they can be influenced by institutional discourses operating through religion, the media and even sport itself. Close attention to the language used is important in narrative-based research given it is language that will ‘define and legitimize what is true or false, normal or abnormal and good or bad’ (Riordan & Kruger 1999, p. 143). Hence, the language in the local media, before, during, and after the formation of the elite UAE women’s football team, plays a central role in framing the ways the participants were positioned within socio-political and cultural norms. Key themes from the data are identified, analysed and interpreted below.

5.2 Induction into the game and early experiences

The discussion below presents analyses of the various reflections the participants had about their early experiences of becoming an Emirati female footballer in the UAE. Specifically, the discussions seek to make visible the gender ‘rules’ the participants have had to negotiate, as well as the ‘truths’ circulating around childhood that shaped their experiences of physical activity in the outdoors in the UAE. For many of the participants, their stories were accounts of the ‘manoeuvring’ that they had to do to negotiate approval from family members (most often their fathers) to participate in physical activity and specifically football. Through their narratives it is apparent that the level of parental support was different for each participant, and that their childhoods were largely influenced by intersectional cultural discourses of gender.



Khaled 2015, ‘Women’s football game making great strides in the UAE on senior and youth levels’, *The National*.

5.2.1 Childhood ‘games of truth’ about football participation

As Peters (2004) explains, Foucault’s ‘games of truth’ refer to ‘sets of procedures that lead to certain results’ (p. 50). Building on this framework, this section explores the various factors that appeared to shape the participant’s early football experiences. Specifically, Peters (2004) points out:

Foucault’s innovation was to historicise ‘truth’: first materially, in discourse as ‘regimes of truth’; and second, in practices as ‘games of truth’... [where] the emphasis falls on how the human subject constitutes itself by strategically entering into such games and playing them to best advantage. (pp. 56-57)

Considering Foucault’s interest in giving a history to formation and validation of certain ‘truths’, I analyse the early experiences of participants in this study as having occurred in the mid to late 1990s in the UAE. It was common at that time for children to play in the neighbourhood, in the streets or on vacant land near their homes. However, it was more commonplace for boys to frequent these spaces, than it was for young women. The streets or outdoors were considered public spaces where boys were free to roam, but young women were not. Naomie explained, ‘fathers in our culture are not typically happy with their daughters playing a ‘boys game’ in the outdoors where they can be ‘seen’. Whilst the regulative role that fathers play in the physical pursuits of participants will be taken up in subsequent discussions, Naomie’s comment captures the ways that prevailing cultural gendered discourses produced certain ‘truths’ about who could participate in physical activity in the public sphere, and who cannot.

Despite this, through the participant narratives it was evident that many of their early experiences with football occurred through informal neighbourhood activity with their brothers, cousins or neighbouring boys. Of course, some had better experiences than others. For example, Gigi explained that many of the neighbourhood boys made fun of her with comments such as, ‘why do you bother playing? You know you don’t have a future in this game ... we can only play for our country. You can’t!’ Others like Shireen, who started playing at the age of five, had her brothers to play with and not only did they allow her to play, they also coached her and had their (male) friends accept their sister as a player. Shireen

recalls, 'I am grateful to them because they (my brothers) never saw me and my capabilities as any different'. Others like Ayesha not only played with the neighbourhood boys at an early age, but she even taught the boys – a practice accepted by her peers given her high degree of skill for the game.

Inherent in the differential experiences recounted above is a form of 'truth' that appears to legitimate boys' sporting participation whilst at the same time limiting the young women. Analysed through the lens of a 'game of truth', we can begin to identify particular 'rules' that the young women needed to negotiate or 'manoeuvre' at the time. Whilst on the surface it appears that it was generally acceptable for young women to participate in physical activity in the neighbourhood, this required the sanctioning of their parents especially their fathers. Shireen, Gigi and Naomie revealed that during their childhood years they felt they had this support. For example, Naomie explained that every time she returned from playing football in the neighbourhood her father would ask, 'Did you have fun? Did you learn to play better?' For participants such as Ayesha, (whose father is not aware of her current involvement as a professional player), it was interesting to note that her father did permit her to play football as a child with her brothers and the neighbourhood boys.

It is also interesting to note that in addition to negotiating gender 'rules' that operated within the family that regulated their participation, the young women's experiences also suggest that once involved in the neighbourhood game there were other 'rules' that they had to strategically negotiate. Having the support of brothers and being physically skilled appeared to be important in helping, for example, Shireen and Ayesha navigate their roles as participants in the neighbourhood games.

5.2.2 Games of truth' about sporting adolescents

About 'truths' associated with social pressure, Foucault claims that fitness movements have created social norms around self-discipline and self-denial that serve the capitalist state by governing bodies. These truths create normality around the privileging of bodies wherein all bodies become sites of production and regulation. The 'truths' that Foucault talks about are socially produced forms of

power (each society having its own unique ones) that are not neutral but have a regulating effect across populations. In fact, these 'reigns of truth' and 'general politics of truth' become rules that control what is thinkable and knowable. For many of the participants, what was thinkable and doable changed as they grew older. Whereas they could play in their neighbourhood as children, they faced considerably more resistance as they grew up and became adolescents. Growing up as females was accompanied by changing cultured gender expectations.

When the participants reached adolescence, many had to hide the fact that they continued to enjoy playing football and actively sought opportunities to practice. For many of them, training opportunities orientated around their capacity to sneak away from the family. Several of the participants had to negotiate and convince their fathers to win the right to play (such as Hala); another (Ayesha) was forced to quit her university team for a month after her father saw her sprained ankle. Ayesha's situation was grave because if her father found out, 'both my mum and I would be in deep trouble to say the least. My dad would pull me out of school and not allow me to continue my education'. Naomie on the other hand was quite unique as both her parents supported her participation. Even where parents did consent to their daughter's participation, they would not attend games for 'fear they would be seen by society as overly supporting' (Dorsey 2011).

Parental approval in the UAE culture is an important aspect of social life and it is considered disrespectful to act against their wishes. This cultural expectation weighed quite heavily on participants whose involvement was not supported by either one or both parents. The data unequivocally reveals that all the participants gave considerable weight to having, or not, their parents' support to play soccer. Indeed, participants whose parents supported their involvement in the game were much more at ease and tended to be more focused on theirs and the team's performance. Those who did not have the support of their parents tended to be conflicted about their participation. Bushra, for example, outwardly acknowledged that her performance improved quite dramatically after her father approved of her playing on the national team.

Generally, the data gathered from this group of participants reflects a willingness to deal with the consequences of rejecting traditional values. The data sheds light

on some of the social and cultural conditions that enabled this group of young women to ‘bend the rules’ and challenge the patriarchal order. With greater and lesser degrees of support they found a way to negotiate dominant socio-cultural gendered impositions to do something that was previously not available to them. After all, as Naomie explained, her father continues to be conflicted by his daughter’s participation in ‘a boy’s game’. Of significance in the analysis of the data is a view expressed well by Ayesha, that the differing expectations for boys and young women in the UAE have little to do with religion. These distinctions, she argues ‘are all about tradition and not religion’. This view is supported in the literature by commentators such as Jawad, Al-Sinani and Benn (2011) who also argue that ‘religious principles became confused and intertwined with cultural overlays’ (p. 29).

5.2.3 Institutional discourse: Families, schools and sporting clubs

Sport, as a social and cultural institution, ‘is believed to mirror rituals and mainstream values of the societies in which they are developed’ (Wickman 2008, p. 39). One set of values that have been in place in the UAE is the concept of patriarchal family and traditional kinship which is ‘one important dimension of social change in the region that has been weakening’ (Moghadam 2003, p. 24). With modernization in the UAE beginning in the 60s, there have emerged newfound opportunities for women in politics, education and other social spaces. Although very gradual at first, emerging social change over the past two decades has had ‘profound implications on the status of women within the family and in society’ (Moghadam 2003, p. 24).

In 1971 the new federal state established an education system that was for all Emirati children in the country that ‘entitled boys and girls to free public education at all levels’ (Gaad 2011, p. 215). The Ministry of Education and Youth in the UAE was, and still is to this day, responsible for education in the public sector and for ensuring that equitable educational opportunities are available to all Emirati children. While the ‘education for all’ policy has been a significant one for gender equity, the participants indicated that few public schools provide for young women

participation in sport, let alone young women's football teams. Gigi was one of the few lucky ones whose school in the city of Al Ain had a young women's football team in high school. Shireen also had a football team in high school but did not have one in elementary school. For most, however, like Ayesha, there was no provision to play football at school and they were actively discouraged from doing so during the breaks. The data also highlights that, at times, challenges to teachers and school administration decrees that 'banned young women from playing football in the yard' could nearly always result in young women being severely reproached.

A shortage of women's football clubs in the UAE was expressed as an area of concern for many of the participants. Shireen, for example, spent two years in university playing volleyball because she could not find a woman's football club in her city of Al Ain. Like Gigi, Shireen was not allowed to commute to the capital city of Abu Dhabi to join the Al Wahda club (one of the two clubs offering women's football in the UAE), on her father's orders. This situation is vastly different for boys, who have many opportunities to play football from a young age and to enter any of the myriad of football clubs all over the UAE.

The coaches, players and administrators I interviewed agreed that sport for young women should start early in schools in UAE. Coach Sam believes that the greatest change in social attitudes needs to come from the grass-roots level:

This is the main reason I try to work with schools because that is where you educate the teachers who should encourage the girls and you get to work on the parents, removing any misconceptions they have about the game. (May 27, 2015)

Ayesha concurred with the view that encouraging young women to play sport at an early age in school will help to 'open and broaden the perception of society towards women playing football at an older age'. She believes that sport can be a strong vehicle for social change as these skills and attributes will not only help the girl's participation in sport but with their life in general. Ayesha believes that the development they achieve through sport will help them in many aspects of their lives – 'these young women are the future mothers and we have a responsibility towards their future'.

Coach Hedi believes that when young women start sport at an early age in school, it becomes easier to change parental attitudes towards their participation. Hedi

believes that the players ‘will become mothers of future generations and they will have a completely different perspective on young women playing sport. What better vehicle for social change can there be?’ This point was also corroborated by Khan in her parental liaison role. Previously, researchers acknowledged that school’s contribution to the low participation in physical activity by adolescent young women could be the result of the environment they create. This problem is exacerbated in the UAE schooling system because of low levels of local teacher expertise in this field. Although the number of Emirati students involved in various sports is on the rise, it appears Emirati teachers are not interested in teaching physical education in schools as Gaad (2011) has also reported.

Theoretically, physical education is an entitlement for all children in schools but in boys as well as in girl’s schools, the subject is currently taught by expatriate teachers because there have never been opportunities for Emirati women to train to teach physical education in their own country. (Gaad 2011, p. 216)

One reason for this low number of Emirati coaches could be the low pay as well as the religious tolerance to liberal clothes and what is traditionally acceptable. Physical education is a low-status subject in schools and universities, and there are various cultural and traditional reasons for this. Whereas the issue of low pay is likely to be relevant to men, the impost of liberal clothing demands relates mostly to women in this part of the world. ‘The stigma and sensitive nature of the suitability of ‘Western’ and ‘liberal’ dress, association with sport, could be the prime reason’ (Gaad 2011, p. 216).

Coach Sam is also concerned about the low number of Emirati coaches in elementary, middle and high schools in the UAE. He states, ‘The fact that these teams do not have Emirati coaches is a challenge’. Sam hopes that within the next four to five years, from the pool of Emirati teams around the country, local talent for coaching will rise and develop. He states:

It must be said that it is vital to encourage local talent (from UAE) to become PE teachers and coaches as they understand the needs and culture of their own country more than anyone else; they understand the mindset and perception of their own people. (27 May 2015)

Coach Hedi is proud that everyone she works with at the Al Wahda club are Emirati including all the players, her assistant coach (a lady with a ‘C’ license) and all the administration. She reveals a sense of responsibility she feels towards her country

and hence enjoys developing local talent which she believes is much needed. Hedi reflects on the team's previous coach, who had a vision to train Emirati women to become coaches, referees and administrators. Following the previous coaches lead, Hedi believes that Emirati women should be empowered to be the future coaches of their own country.

Coach Sam hopes that the Ministry of Education makes it mandatory for high schools to have a formal Physical Education (PE) curriculum. He is hopeful that this will happen soon. Coach Hedi believes that change should start with women in football academies who can sign a memorandum of understanding with schools and train young players on a regular basis. She believes that, 'The Ministry of Education in the UAE must make this mandatory. This can also be implemented at university level'. Hedi is confident that this will also solve the problem of parental consent as it will be easier for parents to accept their young women playing football if they start at an early age and they get used to the idea of their young women playing this game.

Coach Hedi thinks that parents need to 'get used to their young women playing from a young age, then they will have less problems accepting them playing at eighteen and twenty ... The community will also accept easier'. What will also help is the relationship the schools build with parents. 'The close relationships strengthen parental views on the importance of physical education and sport in the lives of young women' (Dagkas, Jahromi & Talbot 2011, p. 20). Research supports the link between young women taking part in sport at school and their subsequent level of interest as an adult. According to Repucom (2015), across these diverse markets, a high level of sports participation at school translates to a 76 per cent chance of an enduring interest in sport compared to a less than a 50 per cent chance for those that did not play sports at school, (p. 9).

The administrators shared a view that by including physical education (PE) in UAE schools at an early age, young women could gain the necessary skills, understanding and appreciation of a wide range of sports. This early induction would help to directly challenge gender stereotypes of non-participation and be especially helpful for the development of women's football. According to one administrator the lack of female sporting role models 'has become a structural barrier' that needs to be

solved. She is optimistic that a new wave of women coaches and PE teachers might emerge from the current pool of female participants (Khan). Administrator Khan revealed that there is now support for women who might want to explore such opportunities, stating that, ‘many young women are unaware that there is a committee that will support their game and will represent them’. While Administrator Asia agreed that this level of support is important there needs to be broader social education to remove existing barriers. ‘I feel society still feels some reservations towards these women playing football’ (Dr Asia). The solution, she believes, involves raising more awareness of the benefits of women’s participation in sport.

Administrator Ary revealed that he is already working on spreading the awareness of the women’s game and that his department had already approached schools. Under the Women’s Football Association, he has signed agreements with the Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Education Council to bring students and PE teachers to the federation’s training premises to train them and give them courses on playing and coaching football. Ary is aware that for the above agreements to work, follow up by the committee needs to happen with ‘home visits to the parent’s home and holding regular meetings with them offering them all sorts of support and assistance if they need it, such as financial assistance’.

All the participants agreed that starting sport for young women at the elementary school level is crucial to building traits such as skill level, game awareness, confidence, leadership and decision making. One of the barriers to this happening is around balancing their participation in sport with the educational expectations that are placed on them. Balancing practices, games and study demands was a recurring theme among the elite women’s players. For example, Naomie, at grade five, was part of the school football team and played tournaments. While her parents were generally supportive of her participation their biggest concern was that her studies would be sacrificed. Similarly, Bushra’s mother, although also supportive, was consistently reminding her that she would be removed from football, ‘if her studies were to suffer’.

5.3 Experiences of being an Emirati elite female footballer in the UAE

The data revealed that the participants saw their roles as active change agents who were not willing to sit back and accept the social norms about women and sport. Instead, as members of the Emirati elite women's national football team they felt a responsibility to be active in resisting and changing social norms that had previously deemed it unacceptable for Emirati women to play football. Because of their biographies, they were positioned as front-line resisters of the prevailing social gender order. 'Resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance' (Reitan 2013, p. 106).

Although recent improvements in the UAE are seeing women play a greater role in the public sphere, their participation in elite level sport continues to be stifled by family and community expectations. Here, there are long standing hierarchies that continue to exert power over many aspects of women's lives that women feel compelled to obey. In their quest to respect and preserve dominant social and cultural values, women's desire to participate in certain sports, such as football, often runs counter to family expectations, especially that of fathers. Overcoming these barriers was a vital part of each player's journey to becoming who they are today and changing history by participating in the first ever all-Emirati elite women's national football team.

Coach Hedi, for example, says she was lucky in terms of parents agreeing for her to play:

I'm lucky in that I have not faced any challenges with my family. In fact, my parents pushed me to take up a career in football. They believed it would help the weight issue I had. (27 May 2015)

Hala's game changed after her father agreed to her playing, 'my coach said that my playing changed, that I was a different person. I started playing like a pro with no hesitation like before'. There is no doubt that parental consent for the players is a vital factor in helping them play their game. According to Coach Sam, 'we cannot have good players without parental consent. The player's psychological well-being

and inner peace affects the game. Hence, it is to everyone's benefit to bring parents on board'.

The subject of scrutiny by society is a reality and a challenge that all participants faced. For example, although Shireen's father was supportive of her playing during school days, he became worried that she would 'be seen' in public once she started playing tournaments. Shireen reflected that during the first year, 'my father only allowed me to play games that were in my home town of Al Ain'. Her father felt that the further she went from home, the more 'exposed' she would be. Shireen's father's concern is one of the reasons sport participation among Muslim women is rare. Benn, Pfister and Jawad (2011) capture this tension, in stating:

The relatively rare participation of Muslim women in sporting activities mean they are often labelled as marginalized and they become the subjects of struggle for feminists with common aims and different worldviews, such as Western and Islamic feminists. (p. 3)

Perhaps attitudes will change as it becomes clearer that there are career opportunities in sport beyond just playing, such as being a coach, trainer, referee or administrator. This was recently pointed out by a prominent social commentator: 'there are opportunities for women to play as well as work in the game of football. It is definitely a career for them' (Hammond 2015).

Another concern parents have about their daughters being involved in game like football is their perceived vulnerability to injury. Football is physical game and, as such, it is widely understood in the UAE as a man's game. Of course, there are contradictions to this perception, such as the rise of female participation in the sport of jiu-jitsu following Princess Maitha's interest in the sport:

The increase in the number of jiu-jitsu training programs and events in schools have led to the rise in the number of female students enrolling in the School Jiu-Jitsu Program. (Pennington 2014)

It is widely felt that with proper training and conditioning the risk of injury can be greatly diluted. To this end, coach Sam believes that women's football in the UAE is far ahead of other countries in the region and beyond, 'What this country provides women in terms of camps, training and travels far supersedes opportunities in other places such as the European countries'.

5.3.1 A woman in a man's game

A common theme emerging from the perceptions of participants was their father's belief that football is a 'man's game', and one that young Emirati women should not be playing. Fathers, it appears, are worried about community perception of their family, as though having a daughter publicly playing a man's game will damage their family honour. Ayesha explained that her father did not allow her to play after middle school because he was worried about 'what society would say'. Gigi's father took this even further, telling her that, 'everyone knows me, and you will embarrass me by playing this boy's game'.

It is important to note that the view of football as a man's game is not only held by men but is a 'common-sense' view shared by many Emirati women in the UAE. This perception expressed in the popular media through the eyes of a twenty-two-year-old student at Zayed University. Recounting her testimony, the report revealed that although her family did not mind her watching football on TV her friends would regularly tease her – 'they tell me that as a girl, I'm not supposed to like football' (Al Amri 2013). In his interview, coach Sam acknowledged that there was a widespread view across the Arab community that football is a 'man's game':

This was due to the unanimous belief in the Arab world that football is a man's game. They worry about a girl's injuries believing that a woman's body was not made for this kind of game. (27 May 2015)

Across the dataset the dominant mindset towards women not playing football was understood on cultural grounds, not religious grounds. According to Ayesha, 'people in UAE society have the traditional point of view that women should not be doing a man's work/sport and football is most certainly a man's domain'. Gaad (2011) states:

There is also a tacit rule regarding traditional disapproval of what might be deemed 'inappropriate' activities for women, for example those involving the display of their bodies in public spaces and in the presence of men. (p. 216)

5.3.2 Cultural considerations

A cultural consideration prevalent in the UAE which all participants had to navigate through was the strong level of patriarchy that exists within the family structure.

The term 'patriarchal' (as explained in earlier chapters) 'refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interest of men ... patriarchal power rests on the social meaning given to biological sexual differences' (Weedon 1997, p. 2). The Muslim family, as Moghadam (2003) explains, is a 'patriarchal unit' and describe the contradiction and challenges it brings about. Media in the UAE explains the authorities at work in the family:

There are two crucial authorities that work towards the preservation of Emirati culture and society: Firstly, the government plays a huge role ... and secondly, the nuclear family itself plays a big role in preservation of its values. (Gokulan 2014)

Of course, in some way or another, the participants in this study had been successful in reconciling the patriarchal order to pursue their passion for football. The participants shared a view that their playing football does not go against their religion or culture, but rather is simply a social construct about what is culturally acceptable. For example, culture demands that women are chaperoned if they go to places where they have not been before or are traveling outside the country. Ayesha, whose father did not know she played was chaperoned by her mother to Cyprus where the team played their first international game.

Part of this culture is the disparity between the privileges young women are offered against those of their young male counterparts. For example, parents do not generally have an issue with their sons playing any sport, anywhere and are overwhelmingly supportive of their choices. In fact, most parents actively encourage their sons to be members of clubs and to play sport, including football, from an early age. This, it is viewed, helps them to socialise and helps keep them away from idleness and sloth. Young women are not seen to have the same issues because if they do have the same access to 'spare time'. As part of their cultural upbringing, they are expected to stay home learning to cook and clean and to be a good housewife for their future husbands.

There was a recurring call by the administrators I interviewed, for the need to create more women-only clubs and/or teams so women can come together in supportive and safe environments. This provision is likely to be a significant factor in growing women's participation in sport, as evidenced in the experience of Shireen. For Shireen, having a separate space for women to practice at the Al Wahda club was a

‘game changer’. The club provides free bus rides to and from Abu Dhabi, where Al Wahda club is, so that the players can attend daily trainings. Initially, Shireen’s father did not allow her to go to Abu Dhabi for the practices. However, after the Al Wahda club offered the women-only bus rides which were chaperoned by employees of the club, Shireen’s father was happy for her to attend her practices.

Coach Hedi emphasizes that, ‘we are lucky because the UAE offers us spaces and hence opportunities to play such as the clubs they have provided for us’. She compares her situation with neighbouring countries where they get very little support, such as in Saudi Arabia. Bushra agrees with her coach and says that women-only spaces help parents agree to their daughter’s training in such spaces. Awareness needs to be raised about such clubs where parents receive regular updates about their daughter’s schedules and the ways players are chaperoned wherever they go.

Abeer, one of the administrators, was proactive in that she conducted a study to find out what were the hesitations and concerns parents had when coming to accept their daughters’ participation in football. The main factor she found out was that parents resisted this idea because of culture, customs and tradition. They felt their young women would be exposed (seen by men). Customs demand that a woman is not seen by other men without a cover and cannot play sport in front of him. The issue of the dress code was a recurring concern – as it was unacceptable for the young women to wear the shorts and T-shirt and not cover their heads. The fact that head scarfs were not allowed by the international FA (FIFA), or the Asian FA, prior to 2014 was a major barrier. The removal of this restriction was significant in opening new opportunities for Muslim women to participate in football.

5.3.3 Navigating the shifting landscape – The emergence of an all-Emirati women’s elite football team

Administrator Abeer is grateful for the decree issued by the UAE General Authority of Youth and Sport Welfare making the inclusion of women in all sport clubs mandatory. This decree was influential in supporting the promotion of women’s participation in sport in the UAE. As a direct result, the Women’s Football

Association appointed administrator Abeer as the first woman Board Member. Abeer mentioned in her interview:

One of the biggest challenges for us in the UAE was the laws and regulations for forming a women's football team which FIFA had announced and was identical to the men's regulations. (30 May 2015)

A theme that came up repeatedly with all participants in this study was the expectations their families and society had of them as women, which for some were facilitators and for others were barriers, as we will see below. It is important to look at where the UAE sits with the gender gap globally so that we can see what circumstances the participants were forced to 'manoeuvre' around. I use the term 'manoeuvre' to capture the spirit of negotiation and compromise that the Emirati women had to engage in to work around dominant socio-cultural values, attitudes and customs.

Shireen believes that, 'society's mindset has shifted in recent years about young women playing sport in general and football in particular'. She believes that as members of the first women's elite team, they contributed to this shift. By simply having a national team it has helped to challenge the dominant mindset and prove that it can be done. While players such as Shireen recognise that they have been shaped by society they realise they have a unique opportunity to help to shape society. Wickman (2008) recognises the potential for sport to shape society and the privileged position that elite athletes hold in this process. 'To be a successful athlete is comparable to be a good society member. In that manner, society shapes sport and reciprocally, sport shapes society' (2008, p. 39).

Gigi was another to point out how rapidly the landscape was changing around female sports participation. She recounted that four years ago the UAE did not have a national women's elite team, nor did they have a U-14 or U-16 team. Central to her reflections was acknowledgement of the speed at which society was changing. 'Back then, society was not receptive to the idea of Emirati young women playing football which is a male dominated sport'. Administrator Abeer also expressed the sense that they were part of a period of rapid social change:

This shift in mindset shows that the sporting culture is changing in the Emirati household, family by family, and this is something we didn't expect and never

saw in the past. We now value sport as a tool for bettering one's life. (Abeer, 30 May 2015)

5.4 The impact of discourse on Emirati women footballers in the UAE

Though there is evidence that it is changing, the dominant discourse around sport in the UAE continues to privilege male participation. Coupled to the masculine discourse are attributes associated with domination, physicality, camaraderie, resilience, aggression, hardness and stoicism. The challenge that confronts the participants is to position themselves within this framework so that they can assume a measure of legitimacy or begin to broaden the sporting discourse to accommodate attributes such as participation, enjoyment and inclusivity.

Of course, the sporting discourses that determine what is thinkable and knowable in the UAE are interconnected with wider social cultural knowledges and sensibilities. These are discussed in the following section.

5.4.1 Male authority in the public sphere

In traditional Arab families the role of males is that of the breadwinner or provider (Pfister, 2011). This leaves the Emirati women's role to the domestic activities associated with the home and largely, 'restricted to housework and looking after the children' (Pfister 2011, p. 59). It is in the sphere of the home where the traditional role of mother and wife is understood and practiced as supporting males so that they can be productive providers and represent the family in the public sphere.

As with most social norms and assumptions, the cultural restraints put around cultured gender forms of participation are so normalized that most women do not question inherent power imbalances that are transported in them. For example, Gigi considers herself lucky to be allowed to drive two hours to Abu Dhabi to attend practice sessions, as she knows other young Emirati women are not permitted to do the same. In other cases, it was not so much about travelling to Abu Dhabi but the fact that the young women might play on open pitches where spectators cannot be controlled. Shireen's father for example had no issues when she played football on

her girls-only school team and on her school premises. However, when the school started playing outside of their premises, her father was worried she would be 'seen'. This he believed would cause him embarrassment. Many other gender assumptions are clear in the sporting arena, where sports such as volleyball are female inclusive whereas others, such as football, are not. When Ayesha would take her ball to school to play football in the yard, she was told that she should quit wanting to play football and should try playing basketball or volleyball which is for young women, primarily as they are conducted 'indoors' away from the male gaze. By taking up ju-jitsu role models such as Princess Shaikha Maitha can play in influential role in challenging sporting gender stereotypes for all Emirati women:

Who live in a culture where women's participation in public exercise and sporting activity is a relatively new phenomenon, and one which can challenge traditional notions of appropriateness for women and their bodies. (Gaad 2011, p. 217)

5.4.2 Nationalism and identity

A recurring theme across the interviews was the shared sense of pride and loyalty the participants felt as Emirati citizens. For example, Naomie saying that 'my pride is in representing my country'. According to Hala, the nationalist discourse that exists in the UAE is comparable to that of the UK. When Hala lived in the UK as a child she realised, through her father's work with other Emirati citizens, that the national goal of strength and prosperity is in unity and pride of its citizens. Hence, upon her return to the UAE and when she heard from a colleague about the women's football team, she felt that this was the opportunity for her to realize her dream and represent her country on a national level. She wanted to 'celebrate being an Emirati' through her membership with the elite team.

Other players displayed their national loyalty in other ways. Gigi, for example, received offers from the US, Spain and France to play for their countries but refused although the salary would have been more. She felt her duty was to represent her country and no one else's. She played other games very well and was even approached by the women's UAE skydiving team in the UAE but her commitment to football superseded all other games.

Although Ayesha's father does not know she is a professional footballer, Ayesha is determined to continue playing as it fulfils her dream of 'wanting to be a hero for my country'. Although she feels guilty about not telling her father that she plays, she is able to rationalise this to herself claiming she is making an important contribution to the UAE. She explained, 'at the end of the day, I am doing this for my country'.

5.4.3 Islam and Islamic law

Most Muslim societies, including the UAE, are undergoing a form of 'spiritual awakening and revival' and women are particularly active agents in that. This period of awakening is ushering in new discourses about the meaning of faith, worship, freedom and social commitment. Of course, there is never one definitive discourse at play, but rather there are often different and sometimes conflicting discourses colliding together to create new realities. Ultimately the most powerful discourses come to surface and present as a form of truth or reality (Wright 2004). Recognizing that discourses are not 'closed systems', women in the UAE have become active participants in the processes associated with the spiritual awakening and the discourses that are emerging from it (Ramadan 2013). Through an increased sense of power and agency women in the UAE are helping to create new 'truths' about gender and Islam.

Through the participants' voices we develop a deeper understanding of how women in an Islamic culture manage their religious values yet are still able to reach the elite level participation in football. One way of expressing their religious commitments in this context is by choosing to wear or not to wear a hijab. In Islam, and especially Bedouin culture (desert dweller's culture), it is not acceptable for males, other than fathers, brothers or husbands, to see a woman playing with her head uncovered. As discussed in the earlier parts of this thesis, in the Arab world and in most Islamic countries, gender differences are emphasized by clothing, especially the hijab (head scarf). The commitment of the participants to cover their heads while playing football was a recurring theme in the interview data.

As well as honouring their own commitment to their faith, pressure is also asserted by their fathers, for whom, 'the hijab is a symbol of honour connected to faith and

respect for the Islamic requirement to cover the hair' (Dagkas, Jahromi & Talbot 2011, p. 17). Of course, this issue is not particular to the participants as, 'to veil or not to veil is a recurring issue in the Muslim countries' (Moghadam 2003, p. 25). To veil is not mandated under Islamic Law, but it is not always a matter of choice as social pressure plays a big role in it in this part of the world. 'The Sharia (Islamic law) does not enjoin women to veil, but certain hadith, or sayings of the prophet, do' (Moghadam 2003, p. 108).

Gigi, Naomie, Bushra and Hala choose not to wear the hijab while Ayesha and Shireen choose to wear it. Administrator Ary explained:

Allowing Hijab for players was an example of the acknowledgement of this culture. This policy change helped parents overcome their fears of their daughters playing football – the evidence being that more parents are starting to allow their daughters to join the game. (Ary, 30 May 2015)

Coach Hedi believes that 'generally, families in UAE have issues with tradition and culture' although she believes that families use culture and religion to not allow their young women to play despite the team allowing the head scarf hijab:

Players have proven that the way they dress and behave, the way they respect themselves and each other is not contrary to any religious belief; some are covered and wear the hijab. (Coach Hedi, 27 May 2015)

One thing to be wary of is that religion (the primary text) is not available to be changed or questioned for these women. Their challenge has been to look for hidden/ multiple meanings (Foucault 1981) the discourses (secondary cultural text) keeping them within their religious and cultural framework. They need to stay faithful to the Message without being seen to disturb social frameworks or power relationships. When it comes to religion:

It may well be over the women's issue that tensions, contradictions, and concerns are most frequent and complex. This involves human relationships, deep-seated representation, and relationship logic that, beyond scriptural sources themselves, have to do with age-old cultural and social heritages that remain deeply ingrained and highly sensitive. Speaking about women in any human group means interfering with the groundwork of social structures, of cultural symbolisms, of gender roles, of the position of the family unit, and of authority and power relationships. (Ramadan 2013)

There are many in the UAE who support a view that Emirati women should have more say in the ways their religious identities are played out on a day to day basis.

‘It is women who must, from within, refuse to accept that religious discourse about them ... since it deals with interpersonal relations without elaborating anything about womanhood’ (Ramadan 2013). Supporters of this view believe that Emirati women themselves must help in producing a discourse on womanhood; a discourse ‘that restores the link with meaning rather than single-mindedly focusing on norms’ (Ramadan 2013).

Although religion is distinguished from culture, women athletes face ongoing pressure from their families who place great importance on the observation of faith-based rules such as the hijab. Now in the UAE, ‘during matches, young women wear a hijab and a body suit beneath their kimonos, which they say helps to prevent scratches or hair pulling on the mat’ (Pennington 2014). Administrator Abeer believes that because of the lift of the ban, the transition for parents from resisting the idea of young women playing to seeing parents themselves bringing their daughters to join the football practice is ‘delightful to see’. Extolling the virtues of the removal of the ban on wearing the Hijab in football, Shireen revealed, ‘we are proof that we do not have to give up our Hijab for any game’. When FIFA decided to lift the ban on the Hijab in 2014 it:

Allowed the women to re-enter a more public life, pursuing equality within an Islamic framework. Such interrogation has also helped Muslim women in sport to distinguish religious from cultural barriers through understanding that nothing in Islam precludes participation in physical activity. (Doll-Tepper, Koenen & Bailey 2017, p. 23)

5.5 Media constructions of gender equality

A common theme among Arab countries is that women who reach the upper levels of their chosen field typically have support from their respective institutions and from the media. For example, the successful Palestinian elite women’s football team was given the unconditional support of the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) before the media became strong advocates of the team as it ‘made its mark in Palestine and abroad’ (Gief-Stuber et.al 2011, p. 171). A very similar trend can be mapped against the UAE elite women’s football team.

The UAE houses major media organizations such as CNN and Reuters and has several state-owned newspapers. ‘The UAE is a regional and international centre

for TV and media, alongside Egypt and Lebanon', (*BBC News*, 23 May 2016). It is important to note that the domestic media in the UAE is run by state-owned bodies such as Abu Dhabi Media and Dubai Media Incorporated. In the UAE, media organisations:

The constitution provides for freedom of speech, there is strong regulatory and political control of media content. Publications must be licensed and follow official guidelines on reporting. Foreign publications are censored before distribution. Journalists tend to practice self-censorship. (*BBC News* 2016, para. 5-6)

Legislation bans the dissemination of online material that can threaten 'public order' and enforces prison terms for those who 'deride or damage' the reputation of the state or 'display contempt' for religion (*BBC News* 2016).

Globally it is noted that the gap between men's and women's interest in sport has narrowed substantially in the last fifty years. On average, across twenty-four major countries representing the Americas, Europe and Asia, 'nearly half of all women declared themselves either interested or very interested in sport, compared to sixty-nine per cent of men' (Repucom 2015, p. 5). This trend can be mapped into Asia (UAE, India and Indonesia) where, in some markets 'more than half of all women switched on to sport, particularly sport on TV' (Repucom 2015, p. 5). Although in recent years local media in the UAE have drawn attention to women and, to the rising success of women in sport, the proportion of this attention in comparison to the attention given to men's sport participation remains relatively small.

The UAE media took steps to break cultural perceptions of women in sport when it covered a three quarters of a page report on the first and only Emirati woman (who wears a headscarf) on the UAE skydiving team stating 'Breaking through not just cultural barriers but also personal ones, this courageous Emirati woman has made around 1200 jumps' (Swan 2013). This newspaper explained that her journey was not easy as she had to 'battle for twelve months for the right to represent her country as a formation skydiver' (Swan 2013). A Dubai based sport writer announced:

Shamma Al Muhairi was the first woman to represent the UAE in a formal capacity at a major international meet when she competed in the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok in the air pistol shooting event ... Four years later Shaikha Maitha made waves by competing in karate. (Abulleil 2015)

As for the elite women's football team, they have a committee that filters all pictures and news of the team before it can be published. This level of management is necessary because there is a team member of the team who is participating without her parent's approval. To further camouflage her identity, she participates under a false name to minimise her chances of being recognised. In 2015 the Dubai Women's Sport Council launched a 'photo award' for the best photo of women in sport to 'empower women to create awareness of their sport and encourage Emirati women to play sport' (*Al Bayan* 26 April 2015, p. 14). The Sport Council received tremendous response from Emirati women receiving pictures of them playing a wide range of sports. Competitions like this are helping to raise the profile of women in sport and are 'creating awareness about the important role sport plays in health and happiness of women in the UAE' (*Al Bayan* 26 April 2015, p. 14).

UAE media now actively covers international female football games and its players. This exposure is helping the UAE society see football as a female game, as well as a male's game. For example, UAE media dedicated a half page to local athlete Lauren Silberman when she tried out for the National Football League in the USA. In the feature article she is quoted as saying, 'I might be the first woman trying out for the NFL, but I certainly hope I'm not the last' (*The National* 5 March 2013, p. 03). Alongside the football players, the media is also keen to cover female participation in other male dominated sport, such as the popular US Nascar circuit. Danica Patrick was reported in UAE papers as becoming the 'fastest driver, not fastest girl', beating men and making history after the previous highest female qualifiers in a Nascar race in 1977 (*The National* 19 February 2013, p. 03). However, despite the importance of the growing focus on female sports performances, there continues to be 'a lack of female role models in this arena. Until this changes it likely to be 'a problem for the growing number of young girl footballers in the UAE' (Cameron 2011).

There is much more the media can do using sport to challenge cultural attitudes towards women. As all participants in this study suggest, the media can promote sport for Emirati women in the UAE by emphasizing that important aspects of religious observances can be maintained while playing sport, especially football. The participants in this research aired mixed views on the role of the media. Ayesha,

for example, claimed that the media was ‘guilty’ of not doing enough in the past to promote women’s football and that it has, ‘a vital role to play in helping women who want to play’. Building on this she acknowledged that the media ‘is now changing its attitude which has helped society’s perception of young women playing football’.

5.6 Power relations: A multidirectional analysis

When analysing the place of women in any society consideration must be given to its social structures, key cultural determinants and the power relations within that society. Within the context of the UAE such a consideration would need to acknowledge ‘deep-seated representation, and relationship logic that, beyond scriptural sources themselves, have to do with age-old cultural and social heritages that remain deeply ingrained and highly sensitive’ (Ramadan 2013). As such, dominant power relations within the UAE continue to confine women to their own spaces when it comes to sport. However, rather than view these relationships as subservient, these women-only spaces can be seen as key social spaces within which it is possible for them to participate freely and excel. These women-only spaces remove cultural concerns related to exposure and enable women to participate in activities, such as football, that have hitherto been outside of their reach.

Power, viewed through a Foucauldian lens, can be used by people or institutions to dominate or oppress others, while recognising it as a two-way process wherein there exist resistances to such power. Discursively, social power means that those who are marginalised in society stay marginalized and this creates relation of domination. However, forms of resistance do exist. St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) remind us that while cultured gender power relations still exist in powerful ways, feminism as a western social movement, ‘has had a profound influence on the daily lives of women and men by challenging patriarchy at every turn’ (p. 2). They argue that some forms of power are harder to negate, such as where patriarchal relations are ‘structural’ they are often normalised in institutions and social practices of society.

Patriarchy is most evident in the Bedouin family structure. The Bedouin civilization in the Middle East is based on close-knit family ties and takes a woman's honour seriously. The Bedouins believe that a woman should be protected by staying at home (not working and not playing sport) until she gets married. Administrator Abeer, whose origins are Bedouin explains, 'Hence, introducing football for women in such a culture was extremely challenging'. It was challenging because often patriarchy gets mixed up with religion. However, Moghadam (2003) argues that 'Patriarchy should not be interwoven with Islam as it needs to be understood in social-structural and developmental terms' (p. 109).



The National 28 January 2013, 'Wives and daughters in the UAE are showing that they understand and appreciate the nuances of the game as well as their fathers and brothers'.

5.6.1 Hierarchical power relations

When Connie Selby, former Head of Women's Football for the Oceania Football Confederation, resigned in 2016, a male coach was appointed. Coach Sam had over thirty years of coaching and administrator experience and has Coach Hedi (a female Emirati national) working closely with him as part of a succession plan. The move of appointing a male coach to nurture and develop a female Emirati coach to succeed him signals a commitment to strengthening women's carriage of the International team.

Within the family, on the other hand, fathers are the head of the family and have the duty to protect their family's honour through the control over the female members.

In contemporary Muslim patriarchal societies, such control over women is considered necessary in part because women are regarded as the potential source of 'fitna' - that is, moral or social disorder. (Ramadan 2013)

Gigi's father, for example, told her not to play football because 'you will embarrass me'. Moghadam (2003) explains that 'the Muslim family is a patriarchal unit ... and the institution of marriage is a significant aspect of society' (pp. 99-102) and so it is important to note that women in UAE have not always had the liberal status and opportunity as women in more liberal socio-cultural contexts. In the context of the Emirati Women's football team, there is a different power-relation than that within the family unit.

While the family unit is patriarchal, mothers do assert a degree of power and influence in the home. This was visible as a reoccurring theme within the data collected from the participants. When Gigi's father would not support her game, her mother for example would tell Gigi 'leave your father up to me' and indeed her mother would talk to her father and convince him. Shireen's father was worried about Shireen being a professional football player whereas her mother was a strong advocate of her involvement in the team. Hala's father resisted her participation on the team but her mother eased that resistance and continually supported her. Ayesha stated, 'the only way I could play after middle school was with the support of my mother'. Across the data it was clear that mothers did assert power and control behind closed doors in terms of talking to the young women's fathers and convincing them that their participation in football was safe and proper.

However, it is important to mention that not all women are supportive of the push for women to be involved in football. Indeed, even some women who are fans of the game, continue to believe that it is a 'boys game'. The views of three such women were recently captured in the local media. Each of the women stated that they quite liked the game of football. However, they believed that as women, it was their duty to stay at home and not attend games and cheer next to men. One of those interviewed was twenty-one-year-old Emirati student, Al Kaabi, who explained that not only does her family disapprove of her enthusiasm for the game, but her friends view it as 'unnatural'. 'I am sometimes questioned whether I think it is 'normal' for a girl to watch football' (Al Amri 2013). She cheers at home but does not attend games because she believes 'it is not acceptable in here in our society to do so' (Al

Amri 2013). Another twenty-two-year-old Emirati student at Zayed University explained that a sports stadium is not the right place for a woman: 'It doesn't feel right although it would be fun and exciting' (Al Amri 2013). Following this, a seventeen-year-old female high school student from Dubai is quoted as saying that although her family does not mind her watching football on TV, they insist that watching it must not cause her to neglect her duties, studies or prayers. Outside of her family she is also concerned with what society will think of her if she was to attend local games of soccer. 'Society will be critical of a woman attending a stadium full of men. They will talk about me in a negative way' (Al Amri 2013). She expects that after marriage, she will continue to watch 'as long as I do what is expected of me as a wife' (Al Amri 2013).

5.6.2 Power 'for' participation

Lack of a father's support for a female athlete is not strange to UAE culture. Calls for change, as Gigi stated, have come from top leadership in the UAE, where there is overt support for women's participation in society, including in the field of sport. Gigi's father initially did not allow her to play because 'everyone knows me' he said. However, when the Sheikhs (rulers) found out that Gigi can play, they asked her father to allow her to play: 'Once I got the leadership's support, my dad had no choice but to obey them and accept my situation. They were his leaders and he looked up to them'. Gigi claims she is happy she was able to overcome her greatest obstacle, her father. 'Everyone is going in the same direction' Gigi claims in her last interview, 'and has the same vision creating laser-focus and execution allowing us (as women) to overcome every obstacle'. Leadership of the country has taken a proactive stance towards supporting Emirati women and facilitating their ascent into high social positions. Importantly, they have been active in ensuring support within the women's families and at work, which enables women to give their best and participate in the march of development in their country.

This theme of rulers of the UAE (the ruling family and Sheikh rulers), supporting women was prevalent among the participants of this study. Many of the players interviewed said that they could have never achieved what they have if it were not for the vision and support of the country's leaders. Shireen, for example, agrees

with Gigi that leaders are supportive and states, ‘the constant encouragement and support we get from all the Sheikhs and princesses in the UAE’ is encouraging and ‘their support is constant and unfailing’. Administrator Abeer explains that the initiatives to promote Emirati women in society started from the beginning of the creation of the UAE with the initiative of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, former ruler of UAE. She payed homage to Sheikha Fatma Bint Mubarak, head of women’s Football Federation and Sheikh Hazza Bin Zayed Al Nahyan for their support and guidance and to Sheikh Mansoor Bin Zayed Al Nahyan ‘whom without their support, women’s football would not get to where it is today’.

Coach Hedi also attributes the success of the Emirati Women’s football team to the Football Association (FA) which has been equally supportive of women in sport as is evident in their support for the Abu Dhabi Sport Council. Coach Hedi acknowledges that ‘the Council has always been there for us ... they continuously support women’s football’. Coach Hedi explains that the Abu Dhabi Sport Council also financially supports every player. ‘We all get a monthly salary and yes, it is not as much as the boys, but we are not at their level to get equal salary’. Coach Sam is positive that with the ruler’s determination and support, promotion and encouragement for sport, women’s sport will see it advance and become more popular. Coach Sam explains that one of the main drivers behind the formation of the official national women’s football committee (in June 2009) was the backup of the Abu Dhabi Sport Council under the umbrella of the Abu Dhabi government. ‘The Football Association and the Sport Council have worked for many years to encourage Emirati women to defy tradition and put on a pair of boots’.

The Emirati leadership regularly express their support for women in many speeches and public contexts. For example, Al Qubaisi who was elected as the first woman to take the chair as Speaker of the Federal National Council of the UAE government recently stated:

With the support that the leadership gave, an Emirati woman is now able to reach and prove herself in any field ... I feel proud and grateful that I am an Emirati woman in a country where a woman is shown respect and is trusted. (Al Khoori 2013, p. 02)

Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah, and Chairperson of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs also said at a recent conference:

The UAE leadership has worked devotedly, since the early years of the creation of the Union, on women's education and abilities to help them enter the job market, as well as to provide a supportive and appropriate environment for them. This was an important issue for the late Sheikh Zayed and continued by the UAE leaders of today. (*UAE Interact*, 09 July 2015)

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was the nation's founder who initiated this support for women giving them the opportunity for leadership and sharing the stage with their male counterparts. The ruler of Sharjah, His Royal Highness, Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member, has brought about laws that have improved the role of working women, particularly those who are married:

Some of those laws include maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks and the provision of nurseries within workplaces, which all work towards removing barriers and obstacles facing women and enabling them to achieve and excel. (*UAE Interact*, 09 July 2015)

Another leader who is referred to often and thanked by the people is H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF) and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood:

For her outstanding effort and significant role in supporting UAE women, as well as for her contribution to upgrading women's position locally and globally. Sheikha Fatima's guidance and leadership had a significant impact on the status of Emirati women in our country today. (*UAE Interact*, 09 July 2015)

Rulers and leaders in the UAE have gone as far as creating legislation, policies and programs that help to achieve gender balance in the workplace and other areas to make the UAE one of the top-ranking nations in the gender balance category. Another kind of support the leaders (Sheikh's) are exerting is through actively involving their own daughters in activities that exemplify the opportunities that exist for women. For example, the involvement of Princess Sheikha Maitha bint Mohammed Al Maktoum and Sheikha Latifa bint Ahmed Al Maktoum (daughter of Dubai's ruler, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE) when 'The UAE had taken that step four years earlier when they became the first Gulf women to take

part in an Olympic Games' at the 2008 Beijing Games (Abulleil 2015). Due to the Princesses' involvement in all sorts of martial arts such as Jiu-Jitsu and Taekwondo, the capital city of Abu Dhabi has sought to become the spiritual home of the martial arts. The UAE acknowledges that currently it is Brazil that is the spiritual home (*The National* 13 April 2013, p. 02) and declares that 'UAE Jiu-Jitsu could be as big as Brazil and maybe eventually even bigger'. This indicates the UAE's desire to 'reaffirm the capital's position as the premier destination in the sport' (*The National*, 11 April 2013, p. 09). The media has covered Jiu-Jitsu for women more than any other sport in the UAE.

To become this sport destination, Abu Dhabi started to host world championships such as the World Jiu-Jitsu Children's Cup and the World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship. Shiekha Maitha got involved with Jiu-Jitsu in late 2014 and won a silver medal in 2015. Before that, she made waves by competing in karate in the 2002 Asian Games in Busan. The Arabic *Al Bayan* paper dedicated its first sport page (25 April 2015) to Sheikha Maitha's silver medal win with a blown-up colour picture of her covering the entire first page of the Arabic newspaper. When the media mentions the sport, it always mentions the benefits such as discipline, self-control, patience and determination (*Al Bayan* 25 April 2015, p. 02).

Having Sheikh Hamdan, Crown Prince of Dubai, being an active sportsman and champion of many sports helps to push sport forward in this country. He created the Faza'a International Athletic Championship in 2009 hosting annual sport competitions including the International Paralympics Games, which included women and a Grand Prix event. He is committed to seeing Dubai 'remain one of the grand prix cities forever' (*The National* 24 March 2013, p. 12). Sheikh Hamdan has ensured that as many championships as possible are held in the UAE so the country can position itself as the leader in sport. Another Abu Dhabi princess, Sheikha Latifa bint Ahmed Al Maktoum, became the first Emirati woman to compete at an Olympic Games, lining up for the taekwondo and show jumping competitions respectively in Beijing 2008 – a full 28 years after the International Olympic Committee had first recognized the UAE National Olympic Committee.

On 28 October 2015 two major Arabic papers *Al Khaleej* and *Al Itihad* took half a page of their sport section dedicating it to the U14s young women's football team

silver medal win in the West Asia football cup. The newspaper spread included interviews with some members of the Women's Football Committee. This attention to women's football was unprecedented in Arabic papers and was given clearly on the back of the formation of the all Emirati women's elite team in May 2014. Some would argue that the high level of media attention was enforced on them because the Sheikhs daughters started getting involved with the sport.

Some members of the international media have been critical of the attention the UAE has given to sport and its recent achievements, claiming that it is an attempt to distract attention from important human rights issues. The UAE media has wasted no time in defending itself. In October 2012 the European Parliament accused the UAE of human rights breaches especially around its labour rights and the status of women. The UAE immediately sent Emirati women representatives to the parliament defending its legislations and clarifying the misconceptions saying the parliament was 'misinformed' (Gargash 2012). Less than a year later, the UAE revealed itself as 'the leading country in the Middle East when it comes to human rights' according to a global index: 'the International Human Rights Rank Indicator based in Norway' (*The National* 19 October 2013, p. 03). Two years after the initial accusation, the UAE asked its permanent representative in the UN, to speak about steps the UAE 'is taking for domestic violence and promoting women in society' (*Al Emarat* 29 October 2014, p. 04). A year after this, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid, vice-president of UAE and ruler of Dubai, announced a gender equality committee was to be formed 'with the aim of ensuring absolute equity in UAE society in all aspect of life especially work and ensuring women are an integral part of UAE's future' (Al Shahed 2015, p. 60-62).

Over the past few years the media has repeatedly reinforced the fact that the country's leadership and Football Association (FA) spare little expense to back women's football and to ensure the right preparation is provided to reach all its targets. It also plays a crucial role in promoting a social discourse of gender inclusivity. 'In mid-2009, the UAE Football Association formed a Women's Football Committee dedicated to creating a national team that could officially represent the country internationally' (Abulleil 2015). Both Arabic and English papers are sure to point out that women's achievements are due to the support they

receive, 'The UAE women have achieved considerable advancements in various fields and this is a sure proof of the support leadership (ruling family of Sheikh Nahyan) have given to women' (Ahmad 2015, p. 07).

Following the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games the General Secretary of the National Olympic Committee, Ebrahim Abdul Malek was quoted as stating that:

We are making history here ... We are sending a clear and powerful message to all women in the UAE that now the government strongly supports sport across all sectors of society and that there is no difference between male and female. (Ferris-Lay 2008)

5.7 Agency, resistance and social change

In analysing the data, it is evident that the participants share a view that UAE society's mindset has changed and that it has begun to actively reject some long held cultural norms. The participants clearly believe that they have the potential to play an active role in helping to challenge some of the dominant gender beliefs and practices within society, through their own participation in sport. In saying that, there is a clear recognition among the group that social change is complex and difficult, and therefore slow. As Claros and Zahidi (2005) point out, 'it takes far more than changes in law or stated policy to change practices in the home, community and in the decision-making environment' (p. 2). Leading by example the participants are front-line workers in challenging social attitudes towards women playing football in the UAE. This process has certainly not been easy for the women. In the words of Sheikha Ahmed, a formation skydiver on the UAE team:

As an Arab girl, everything is always hard but being the first is even harder. It is hard to convince everyone to support you but when they see the passion and how good you're becoming, they change. (Swan 2013)

5.7.1 Practices of freedom (agency)

Ramadan (2013) explains two colliding discourses of 'freedom for women' versus a 'universe of submission':

The issue of 'Muslim women' is being bandied about today as if it characterized the irreconcilable relationship between Islam and the West, the opposition between a universe of submission and another holding the promise of freedom, with, of course, the leitmotiv of the contrast between patriarchal traditions and western modernity said to be an increasingly feminine viewpoint. (Ramadan 2013)

This practice of freedom was not easy for the players who took part in this study. Gigi recalls that 'it took us one year of awareness campaigns and hard work to recruit UAE women for our football team'. She recalls going to malls and placing posters up and talking to everyone who walked by their stand. They especially talked to parents since Gigi knew that parental consent is important for women to be involved in sport.

There are many ways the players exerted their freedom, such as choosing to wear or not to wear hijab - although not all feel that they are free to make that choice. Some, like Shireen, say that her parents prefer her to wear it. Others, like Naomie, reveal that, 'not wearing hijab is absolutely my choice'. Another example of the players asserting their freedom to make decisions can be seen in their choices about where they go and where they stay. For example, Gigi chooses to drive to Abu Dhabi by herself although there is a free shuttle to take her on this long two-hour drive. She states that the two hours (each way) allows her time to think and reflect on her life and gives her some 'me time'.

Others like Shireen do not have freedom to do what they like. For example, Shireen does not stay at the free hotel accommodation that the club offers the players in Abu Dhabi during the practices. Her parents prefer she stays with family in the capital city rather than stay at a public space. Her father was constantly worried about the places Shireen went to around football, such as her playing with other schools or traveling to Abu Dhabi. However, through the Al Wahda club this issue was mitigated for Shireen's father in knowing that they offered women-only spaces to play and women-only transportation.

5.7.2 Facilitating acts of resistance

A recurring theme in the player data related to the support of their respective mothers. The theme that repeats in many of my stories is the fact that fathers often

resisted their daughter's involvement in sport while mothers were more receptive and supportive. In Shireen's case, it was her mother who brokered her football career and found out about Al Wahda club for her. It was her mother who initially took her there and who she credits for making her 'dreams come true'. Bushra's mother did not hide the fact that her deceased father was a football coach – an important factor in Bushra's love for the game. Gigi's father, unlike her mother, 'was totally against her playing football. He was a Bedouin (desert dweller) and a leader of his tribe'. Her mother, however, was able to convince him to give Gigi permission to play football. Gigi's mother not only mediated her participation but empowered her by telling her to 'fight for your dreams and you can achieve the impossible'.

Administrator Khan revealed that convincing fathers to support their daughter's participation in sports is much harder than convincing mothers. She explained, 'communication with parents is hard work and convincing fathers is always harder than mothers'. She believes that mothers are more open-minded and more understanding of their daughter's aspirations and dreams. In the recruitment process, Khan often starts with a player's mothers believing that once they are on board, they are the best placed to convince their fathers.

Not only have many of the participant's mothers been supportive but several them have played an active role in covering for their daughter's participation so that their fathers, who have not agreed to them playing, did not find out. For example, although Hala's father resisted her playing football, it was her mother's continuous advocacy and support that got her father to eventually agree. That said, Ayesha's father rescinded his approval for her to play after she completed middle school and her continued participation is solely to do with her mother's support. Her mother continues to cover up for Ayesha playing as a professional football player although she knows 'she is taking a big risk' because her father has not and will not agree to her playing. Although at the time of the interviews Ayesha's father was very ill, she contends that in the event of his passing, her brothers were also unlikely to grant their support for her to play football.

It is not only mothers that are covering for their daughters, but it is also players covering up for other players. Every member of the team (administrators and

coaches included) knows that Ayesha is not supposed to be playing and that her father ‘forbids her’. Recognising the risks, they work together to ensure that her identity is not revealed, so that she can continue. I noted in my reflective journal:

I was struck by the close friendship among the women. Therefore, the closeness of a sisterly-bond I observed here tonight brought to reality what the women had told me before that ‘we feel we have gained a family’. (28 December 2014)

5.7.3 Practices of freedom and social change

The activities of the participants as the ‘pioneers’ of the first ever Emirati women’s football team in the UAE have led, and are leading to, forms of social change. This has been a trend since ‘in recent years, sport has also served as a catalyst to social change’ (Appleby & Foster 2013, p. 12). In the Middle Eastern countries, women are playing a big part in bringing about change. ‘Women are also drivers for social change, especially in the new millennium, instead of being mere victims’ (Seikaly, Roodsaz & Van Egten 2014, p. 19).

Besides women being drivers of social change, other multiple sources, as Moghadam (2013) explains, are also at play. ‘The major source of social change in the Middle East in the post–World War II period has been the dual process of economic development and state expansion’ (p. 22). Thus, it is reasonable to recognise that social change is the result of multiple forces and a variety of occurrences. Both the advancement of the economy and the expansion of the state have changed the social perspectives of people and allowed for an increased awareness of gender issues. The inflow of foreign influence has been another factor that has impacted and broadened social attitudes and perceptions of cultured gender subjectivities.

When focusing on the UAE it is important to recognise difference and multiplicity across its female populace. The general perception in the Middle East is that women are part of one classification and share a gender uniformity. Whereas in the practices of their day to day lives this is far from the reality (Moghadam 2013, p. 10). ‘Women are themselves stratified by class, ethnicity, education, and age. There is no archetypal Middle Eastern Woman, but rather women are inserted in quite

diverse socioeconomic and cultural arrangements’ (Moghadam 2013, p. 10). The varied cultures (both enduring and reinvented) that are present in the UAE presently exemplify varied manners of understanding and communicating with the world. ‘The rapid social change in the Persian Gulf is simultaneously accompanied by reinventions of traditional culture to address contemporary issues’ (Seikaly, Roodsaz & Van Egten 2014, p. 20). As Moghadam (2013) argues:

Women are not only the passive targets of policies or the victims of distorted development; they are also shapers and makers of social change—especially Middle Eastern women in the new millennium’. (p. 9)

While it is still in process, the participants had to some extent succeeded in ushering in a change in substantial public perception about the possibility of women playing football. The ongoing dilemma for UAE women relates to whether women’s participation in football is at odds with core religious and cultural values. Nehwal Abdul Aziz, Whites Ladies’ right back says:

Women’s football could be deemed as at odds with local culture, but society was fast coming around to the idea. Culturally and physically some people are still not convinced in women playing football, but opinions are starting to change ... The sport is still not out there, and people are not aware that there are some very talented women’s players in the UAE and Arab world. They maybe haven’t seen where we play or don’t know about our competitions. But as we increase our playing pool and our level improves women’s football will gather attention and more people will start to follow us. (Hammond 2015)

In analysing the interview data, it is clear that the participants believe that UAE society’s attitude toward women’s participation in sport has changed. Shireen believes that as the first elite team, they made a difference and impacted the shift in mindset because we proved it can be done. Hence, sportswomen such as Shireen shape society just as society shapes them, ‘to be a successful athlete is comparable to be a good society member. In that manner, society shapes sport and reciprocally, sport shapes society’ (Wickman 2008, p. 39). It is important to remember that there is a lot that goes into facilitating social change. As Claros and Zahidi (2005) point out, ‘it takes far more than changes in law or stated policy to change practices in the home, community and in the decision-making environment’ (p. 2). Administrator Abeer describes this process:

This shift in mindset shows that the sporting culture is changing in the Emirati household, family by family, and this is something we didn’t expect and never

saw in the past. We now value sport as a tool for bettering one's life. (30 May 2015)

Coach Sam believes that more exposure of women's sport can help change society's perception about the vulnerability of female athletes and the ever-present threat of injury. This is a common perception in the Arab world as indicated by Gieb-Stuber et.al (2011) where they reveal one Palestinian mother's concerns 'about her daughter's health, since football brings with it the risk of severe injuries, a risk that is increased when playing on hard or uneven pitches' (p. 177). Coach Sam, however, believes that there is active risk mitigation already going on. 'With proper training, injuries can be avoided, and women can stay feminine and be professional football players.' Further to this, Coach Sam explains, is that 'today we have a complete Emirati U/14 young women's team who are the future of football in this country.' It is commonplace now to see Emirati parents bring their daughters to these games, staying and watching the entire game and then taking them home.

It is a sight for sore eyes because this was not possible just over a year ago. Hence, so much has changed and it is delightful to see these changes and gives us so much hope. (Coach Sam, 27 May 2015)



Al Amri 2013, 'UAE's female fans get onsite for following football', *The National*.

5.8 Summary

In this chapter, key themes emerging from the narrative representation of my data were analysed. Themes such as parental support, early experiences, negotiating gender rules, cultural impact on the women's lives and society's perception of this

‘men’s game’, just to name a few. My end in mind with this analysis was to bring forth the common experiences and truths of the women I interviewed and giving them a ‘voice’ as they became agents of change.

In the upcoming chapter, I revisit the three research questions and recap on the purpose and findings of my study. Facilitators and barriers are looked at which allowed the women to reach elite level football. Relating my research to previous research is also covered as well as looking at limitations of my research, implications of the findings and further recommendations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, implications and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In the opening chapter of my thesis, I referred to Penney's (2002) claim that much of the critical and feminist research that has examined the experiences of Emirati women in sport and physical education has tended to take a 'single issue' focus. In acknowledgement of this critique, and following other researchers concerned with women sport participation in the Arab World (e.g., Al-Ansari 2011; Dagkas & Benn 2006; Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011; Jawad, Al-Sinani & Benn 2011; Gaad 2011; Gieb-Stuber, Kremers, Luft & Schaller 2011; Knez, Benn), this research, informed by approaches to intersectionality, has sought to examine the identities and experiences of elite Emirati women football players in the UAE.

This has not been a straightforward journey. In previous sections of this thesis, I have acknowledged my own positionality and marginality as an Omani-born, non-Muslim, woman currently living in the UAE, and rendered problematic the taken-for-granted assumptions about gender that I brought to this research. The categorical tag of 'woman', like many other universalistic terms relevant to this research, such as Muslim, Emirati and Football player are now, even at this late stage of the research journey, more problematic for me than they were when I started. Through an examination of the narratives of the participants in this study, like Flintoff and colleagues (2008), I have come to recognise both the 'multiple and fluid nature of individuals' identities and the complex ways in which enduring inequalities are produced through social relations of difference' (p. 74, original emphasis).

Bodies, and in this case UAE Emirati women footballer's bodies, are not only gendered bodies – they are also racialized and abled bodies that are shaped, regulated and resisted within specific cultural and religious discourses and power relations.

What I have attempted to present in this work is research that moves beyond the 'single issue' focus. Yet, as is often necessary in any poststructuralist work in

practice-based settings (e.g. sports clubs, schools), I have drawn boundaries around identity positions. This is evident in language that characterises participants as Emirati or non-Emirati, Muslim or non-Muslim, players who wear a hijab (or not) and those positioned as woman/man, mother/father and player/coach. I acknowledge that when theorising identities and subjectivation processes from an intersectional perspective to explore the relationships between different axes of oppression, not all categories are equally important always (Flintoff, Fitzgerald & Scraton, 2008). Rather, as Brah (1994) points out, ‘analysis of women’s narratives must be framed against wider economic, political and cultural processes in non-reductive ways’ (p. 152). This has certainly been an intent of this research.

As detailed in earlier sections of the thesis, I set out to examine what impeded and assisted the participation of young Emirati elite women football players in the UAE. It is my hope that my representation of the lived experiences of the participants in this study offer rich descriptions of the contextual factors that shape their experiences in football, sport and society. These are Emirati women football players whose lives, up till now, have not been explored in any research capacity, and their histories, achievements and representations not yet captured or written. To this end, my research provides a unique opportunity for readers to learn from these experiences and, with the insights gained about the sociocultural, historic, economic and political factors that have influenced the emergence of elite sporting pathways for Emirati women in the UAE, and to appreciate the hurdles they have had to metaphorically jump to get to this point. My study has emphasised the relevance of traditions, culture and politics in the UAE and has sought to demonstrate how this interconnect with the rise of Emirati women’s participation in sport.

Literature on this subject and specifically in the context of women’s football in the UAE is inconclusive on several vital questions. Most studies for which the UAE has been a focus have concentrated on the change that happened for Emirati women in politics, education and business/work, but in-depth studies into the domain of sport and women’s football have until now been largely underexplored. This contribution has sought to make visible the possibilities for transgressing traditional values and the opportunities that have led to some women to create new futures. As such, this study contributes new knowledge about the ways that elite women

footballers in the UAE are creating new subject positions for females, as guided by the three research questions that orientated my study.

Specifically, the first research question focussed on the experiences of Emirati women in the UAE through their elite sport participation in football, and to consider how these experiences inform their cultured gender subjectivities. The findings associated with my research question were broadly in line with the Iranian researcher, Moghadam (2003), indicating that an important dimension of social change in the region has occurred in the context of the patriarchal family and traditional kinship systems. However, there were several areas in which the UAE is unique and its circumstances different from that of other countries in the region. A central point of this uniqueness is due to the cultural diversity among the female population in the UAE. Unlike surrounding Arab countries, wherein the dominant culture is strongly homogenous, the diversity of cultures that exist in the UAE today offer different ways of understanding female subjectivities. Within this context there is increased scope for challenging cultural constructions of gender to offer alternative subject positions in education, employment, and sport.

Acknowledging the intersectionality associated with the process of identity construction (what poststructuralists refer to as subjectivation), the second question was concerned with examining the enablers and barriers to becoming an elite Emirati female footballer in the UAE. The findings around this build on some of the works of Iranian and Arab researchers reviewed in Chapter three. Many of these studies indicate that traditional Islamic practices act as barriers to women's entry to the athletic sphere. Sehlkoglou (2010) indicated that such barriers included the lack of women-only spaces, the issue of hijab, and familial role expectations and duties. All these barriers were recognisable across the lived experiences of the participants in my study. Offsetting these barriers was the increasing modernization of UAE society and economy. Consistent with the insights of Benn, Pfister and Jawad (2011) the results of this study depict a realm of new opportunities for women amid a time of rapid social change. Following the discovery of crude oil in the 1970s the UAE has witnessed a shift from a predominantly tribal Bedouin way of life to more interconnected and modernized ways of living.

This modernization has impacted aspects of UAE society differentially and has had a different impact on each of the Emirates. My empirical results indicate that for the more traditional parents it was harder to accept their daughters' entering the world of football. This observation is consistent with Gaad's (2011) assertion that:

Some parts of the UAE are much more conservative than others. The rate of change in the modernization process is uneven across the individual states, and this is reflected in the progress on inclusion for people, particularly women and those in education, sport and beyond. (217)

My final research question was concerned with what Flintoff and colleagues (2008) refer to as the 'political project' (p. 80) of intersectionality – related to the ways sport participation by Emirati women in the UAE at the elite level might intersect with wider issues of gender in/equality? The analysis of the data in relation to this third research question seems to resonate with Moghadam's (2003) belief that giving Emirati women the right to participate in sport is suggestive of an increased focus on gender equality in the UAE. My findings indicated that the participants unanimously believe that their involvement in sport reflects a heightening social consciousness of the status of women. For their part, the athletes in this study see themselves as role models as to what is possible for women in the UAE for the next generation.

Currently, very little work has examined how discourses and power relations permeate different aspects of society in the UAE, particularly in relation to the ways gender is thought about and enacted in elite level sporting contexts. However, this research indicates that the key to greater understandings of what is possible lies in understanding the context in which they are shaped. Importantly, in addition to greater understandings of the wider societal contexts, what is also needed are more nuanced accounts of the ways in which discourse and power relations play out in the lives of Emirati women in the UAE.

The following sections of this chapter will recap my study's purpose, summarise the emergent findings of this research and consider them in relation to the findings of previous research, and then in the later stages discuss the limitations, implications and recommendations arising from this work. Finally, and in keeping with the feminist poststructuralist intentions of my research, I consider my own reflexivity through some final autobiographical reflections.

6.2 Recapitulation of purpose and findings

The purpose of my study was to explore the lived experiences of women athletes involved in the first ever all-Emirati elite football team in the UAE. A feminist poststructuralist framework was employed to examine discourse-power relations that appeared to shape the experiences of these Emirati women. My objective was to identify how the lived experiences of elite Emirati women football players connected with wider issues of gender the inequality experienced in UAE society. Through their undistorted voices I sought to capture their triumphs and struggles in becoming members of the first ever all Emirati women's elite national football team. Complimenting the interview data was an analyse the ways their participation was captured and represented in the local media. The research questions sought to identify the facilitators and barriers (e.g., family, sport, schooling), these Emirati women faced as they negotiated the pathway to becoming elite football players.

Mobilised as a qualitative case study, my research explored and analysed factors, such as contemporary social (religion, class & culture) conditions, that permitted Emirati women to participate in sport particularly football. My study also aimed to make visible some sort of 'history of the present' (using a Foucauldian construct) and added some empirical dimensions by interviewing current policy makers and champions who have helped pave the way for this 'social turn'. Foucault's concepts of 'discourse' and 'power' provided a useful set of analytic lenses to talk about the evolving engagement of Muslim women in sport and their intersectional identities.

In capturing this hitherto elusive dataset the narratives of these Emirati women needed to be translated from Arabic to English. Lyle (2010) explains that, 'if we assume that narrative production is influenced by language and culture, then translation involves not only theoretical and methodological issues but personal and cultural ones as well' (p. 6). The advantage of me personally translating all the raw (interview) data was that it gave me deep insights into the original script and its meanings which helped me with the analysis and interpretation. Underpinning this process was a recognition that 'transcription is an interpretive process that is influenced by theoretical beliefs and practical considerations' (Lyle 2010, p. 7).

The following section will synthesise the key empirical findings in relation to my study's three research questions and contemplate what has been learned about Emirati women's sport participation in the UAE through this inquiry.

6.2.1 Intersectional identities – The emergence of all-Emirati, Muslim, women football players in the UAE

In response to my first research question, I drew on the concept of intersectionality to make sense of the participants' experiences of elite Emirati female football participation in the UAE, and to then consider the implications this might have for their subjectivities. Flintoff and colleagues (2008) draw on the work of Phoenix (2006) to explain that the term intersectionality can be employed as 'a useful shorthand to describe the complex political struggles and arguments that seek to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it' (Phoenix 2006, p. 187 cited in Flintoff, Fitzgerald & Scraton 2008, p. 74).

Given my study's focus on Emirati female athletes in a context where distinctive patterns of patriarchy appear normalised, it is not surprising that when read one way, many of the participants' experiences and subjectivation processes can be described as inherently gendered. Collectively, the narratives of each participant made visible the sociocultural discourses evident in the UAE that, like much of the globe, manifest in 'games of truth' that position football as a game for men and boys (and not for women and girls). Specifically, patriarchal discourses that position men as 'powerful' in hierarchical gender relations become evident in participant's recollections of the role their fathers and brothers played in allowing them (or not) to participate in football.

For example, many participants in my study described their father's initial reluctance to granting them permission to play football, and in circumstances where they did, they were active in their surveillance of the practices associated with their football participation. For example, Hala's father was present during her initial practice sessions and early induction to the game. Hala described the ways in which her father paid particular attention to the 'place' and 'space' where practices would

occur to ensure that this was away from the male gaze or surveillance of others. Despite appearing to acquiesce in his decision to allow Hala to participate, her father's resistance was inherent in his subversive attempts to influence the coach to advise Hala that she may be too old to take up football. Viewed through an intersectional lens, what becomes evident are the ways in which cultural discourses about gender, age and ethnicity intersect through subjectivation so that Hala's identity as a football player tends to manifest as a less confident player. This is highlighted by the immense positive change in her performance following her father's approval. This is about more than just gender and is also about what it means to be a father, which involves gender.

Another example that highlights the inherently cultured gender experiences for these Emirati women football (which is inherently gendered) players is highlighted by Hala's reliance on 'the men's game' to inform her game sense and skill development. She explained that in the absence of female role models in the UAE, Hala had to watch the men's game on TV to learn the 'tricks of the trade', as she put it. On the other hand, Ayesha and Shireen had hands-on experience as young children both in the neighbourhood with their male siblings, cousins and neighbours, and later through the provision of opportunities at school (although these were always in single cultured gender contexts). However, such opportunities were not available to them as adolescents, largely because of sociocultural discourses that normalised football participation for males, but actively scorned female sporting participation in activities such as football. Viewed through an intersectional lens, discourses about gender, age and culture produced identity positions that create tensions for both Ayesha and Shireen where their options become either to garner the support of their mother to assist in influencing their fathers to allow them to play or draw on their mother's support to actively hide their involvement.

Another inherently culturally gender experience is seen in Ayesha's reflections about the ways in which her school teachers actively reproached her for bringing her football to school to play during school breaks. As she commented, teachers would say that the 'administration does not allow it for young women- although

this was not an issue for the boys who could bring their footballs to play during school break.

In considering the cultured gender subjectivity of the participants, it is interesting to note that there are some social spaces where young women are expected to participate fully and robustly. For example, nearly all participants discussed their commitment to their education and academic pursuits. Academic achievement had become normalised for Emirati young women and was often given high priority in families. Mandatory education for both boys and young women's in the UAE was only introduced in 1971. Hence, in a relatively short time (just over 45 years) education has become a normalised practice for young Emirati women in the UAE – but something that is still positioned by some men and fathers as a privilege for women in this context. Ayesha, for example, revealed that her father would deny her attendance to university if he found out she was playing football.

Islam and gender are the 'triple oppression' (Flintoff, et, al, 2008) and intersecting each category, 'is constituted by and is constitutive of each other' (p.75) to shape identities as an Emirati woman football player. It is not that sport participation is not permitted or culturally discouraged per se; rather that the type of sport, and where it occurs (e.g. outdoor or indoor), are key considerations here. For example, Coach Sam identified the need to educate teachers as they are powerful sources through which gendered and cultural discourses that confine young women sporting participation to indoors are perpetuated. This is underpinned by cultural and religious discourses that stress the need for females to actively avoid the male gaze that might occur in outdoor sporting pursuits like football. The Bedouin way of life emphasises the vulnerability of females within the significance of family and demands that they be protected by staying inside the home and away from the gaze of men.

Further to this, an intersectional analysis of women, ethnicity and religion also reveals the influence of subjectivities and the seemingly limited identity positions available to the participants. 'Theorizing such multiplicity has resulted in the use of terms such as 'cross-cutting' or 'intersectionality' (Flintoff, Fitzgerald, & Scraton, 2008, p, 75). Administrator Khan points out that under Islam 'parental consent is important in the Arab world because women need to obey their parents according

to Islamic law'. In her interview, Khan recites from memory the Prophet's words, 'Beware of angering the parents'. This is something so ingrained in her identity that she does not even have to refer to the text to quote these words.

Despite the challenges that confront the women athletes and the discourse-power relations that circulate around gender and race and ethnicity that render the women participants as marginalised, there are also practices of resistance and freedom. It is not that Islam does not allow women to play football but rather challenges Emirati women to ensure that participating in sport is done so in a way that is respectful of their Islamic principles.

Subjective processes inherently apply that subjects are aware of or participate in these practices. Ayesha provides an example of her agency in this space and the way it worked for her as a practice of freedom. She was aware of her father's decree that she was not permitted to play football, so, as she states, 'if he forbids me I can't play, so we just don't tell him'. In his ignorance, her father is unable to preclude her from playing and Ayesha 'plays this card' quite literally. When I discussed how privileged I felt to be able to tell her story through this research I was initially concerned about any potential implications it might have for her, but in another practice of freedom, Ayesha comments, 'Don't worry, besides, my father and brothers will never read your research'!

6.2.2 'The road less travelled' – Facilitators and barriers to becoming an Emirati elite women football player in the UAE

In response to my second research question, I draw on the metaphor of 'the road less travelled', to describe both the optimism that surrounds those involved with the first all-Emirati UAE elite women's football team, but also as a cautionary tale. What becomes evident in the analyses of the players, coaches and administrator's experiences is the way in which the emergence of an elite women's football team in the UAE has presented both opportunities and challenges for Emirati women. As is often the case when a new social phenomenon emerges, the cultural barriers that confront the 'trailblazers' generally meet resistance based on the challenge they present to traditional practices, customs and ways of being. While there are always some elements of society that willingly embrace social change, there are many

others committed to maintaining the status quo and upholding traditional values, customs and practices. For the latter, there is much comfort in the known and familiar.

While the forces of resistance actively manifest in discourses and power relations that circulate in social institutions (such as the family, school, sports clubs, media and politics), Foucault (1980) points out that such power can also be productive. Foucault (2000) asserts that we enter 'games of truth' not by 'playing a game that was totally different...but by playing the same game differently' (p. 295). Evident in chapter five were numerous examples where participants identified the 'rules of the game' but manoeuvred them to play the game differently, or from another angle. As Foucault (2000) comments, by entering this game of truth, participants engage the productive influence of power, 'by showing its consequences, by pointing out that there are other reasonable options, by teaching people what they don't know about their own situation' (p. 295).

Some of the key barriers to the Emirati women's participation in football could be mapped on to family, culture and environment. Families, particularly fathers, were the strong gatekeepers and often central to creating barriers for participants to pursuing football as a profession. Their motivation for doing so was largely based on cultural and religious sensitivities and mores.

Another significant barrier to Emirati women's participation in football originated in the policy environment. Foremost here, up to 2014 women were not able to play professional or national football if they covered their hair. This almost totally precluded women who identified as Muslim. That changed in 2014 when FIFA passed a rule allowing professional footballers to play with a head scarf (hijab). Lifting the ban on hijab was instrumental in opening parent's minds to the idea of allowing their daughters to play football. It was this policy change that gave rise to the formation of the first Emirati women's football team. Further propelling this was FIFA's decree that all countries need to have a women's team (comprised of players from the country they represent) if they want to remain eligible for FIFA ranking. It was this policy environment that gave rise to the UAE looking to start their own national women's football team.

Whilst it is not possible to recount all the specific factors that appear to facilitate Emirati women's participation in football in the UAE, there are a few key points that can be reiterated here. The role of mothers as facilitators presented as a significant facilitator. Many of the participants acknowledged that although their fathers acted as the head of the household, it was their mothers who had the greatest influence in allowing them to play football at an elite level. Having their mothers support was crucial to gaining wider family acceptance and approval. While the opportunity for Emirati females to participate in football clearly varied according to the familial situation gaining a mother was often the starting point.

The Media has also emerged as a facilitator of increased female sports participation. The marked increase in media coverage of international women's games particularly from Arab world, has had a significant influence in breaking down enduring cultural gendered stereotypes. In seeking to advance its standing in the world UAE government has actively endorsed, and resourced, increased exposure of women's sport. Importantly, as part of their endorsement of the women's game the media have played an active role in keeping some of the player's identities out of the public sphere. Early in 2017 the Arabic newspaper, Al Bayan, started a revolutionary piece in their 'sport' section focussing on 'women in sport'. This weekly column covers all kinds of conferences, events, sports and meetings that are related to women in sport in the UAE. This will be a sure facilitator for promoting women's sport.

6.2.3 Sport as a vehicle for social change in the UAE: Examining gender in/equality

As the subtitle for this section conveys, the notion of sport as a vehicle for social change is a commonly reported rhetoric in the literature. Ingham and Donnelly's argument (as stated in Field, 2015) that 'all sociological knowledge is practical knowledge; despite their evident effects on social change, many of the examples of research that follow were carried out without any intent to engage in public debates or provoke social change' (p. 371). In response to my third research question, it became evident through many of the participants' comments, that there was invariably a similar rhetoric operating within the UAE about the powerful way that sport could be garnered for advocating social change in terms of cultured gender

relations. Many participants were ready to support this adage, in fact on occasion, it appears that many of them accepted this rhetoric as an unproblematic 'truth'. What I found was that sport in the Emirati culture has contributed to changed perceptions in society regarding women, their roles and capabilities. Although this change is in its infancy, people involved in sport are doing their part in shifting paradigms and creating discourses about women and their social participation.

It is apparent that substantial internal policy change at government level in the UAE has been instrumental to legitimating Emirati women's sport participation. Accompanying this has been a considerable increase in the allocation of resources to support women's football. While this provision of resources is far inferior to what is available to support the men's team there is a no apparent resentment among the female players who share an overall sense of gratitude that things are substantially better than they were in the past. Coach Hedi points out that when she was offered a monthly salary, she didn't even ask what it was as she was happy to just be offered payment to play. She is acutely aware that her pay is not where the men's pay for the game is. She believes that elite Emirati female footballers do not deserve as much as their male counterparts because they haven't been playing as long as the men have.

Of course, resourcing at the elite level is only part of what is needed to grow the Emirati women's game. Dr. Asia points out that the facilities available for women is highly located, and whereas Abu Dhabi has benefited from the increase in resources and facilities, Dubai has experienced very little growth. Despite all the optimism, Dr. Asia argues that resourcing is slow to follow the rhetoric and that much more needs to be done if we are to progress faster and better. She points to schools as sites that would benefit from substantial resource and reform. In an effort to make schools more progressive she argues that sport education should be mandatory for young women at all levels.

Further to this Dr. Asia believes that the current media practices around the women's game are inadequate. She argues that the UAE media are not able to cover any news of women's games any time they like but have the approval of a national sports committee prior to coverage. Dr. Asia believes that this hampers media coverage of the women's game and ultimately stifles its progress. Dr. Asia

questions the value of having players in the team who are not allowed to be seen in the media helps or hinders the game. The limiting of publicity opportunities is likely to constrain the promotion of the women's game.

The advocacy of the Emirati women's game by public officials and social leaders will continue to be important in the wider socialisation of female participation. Without this, advocates of the game are likely to be continually confronted with the rhetoric that football is a man's game. In her efforts to recruit players Khan conceded that the most difficult aspect of her work was to convince parents that female participation in football is not against cultural and religious traditions. She revealed that recruitment is decidedly easier when families have already been socialised into women's sport and have begun to accept that it is part of a new social order.

Importantly, as Dr. Asia asserts, it is important for men to be actively involved in supporting and promoting women's football. She argued that to truly confront the patriarchal divide it is imperative that men are also seen to be advocating for change. This is an important ingredient if the profile of women's football is to be more widely accepted and promoted in context of UAE.

6.2.4 Implications of the Findings

My research contributes to new knowledge in the field of gender in/equality in the UAE by exploring the ways in which women in the country are positioned and position themselves the context of elite sports participation. This is particularly important since research around this topic in this part of the world is relatively new and my research was the first of its kind around the newly formed UAE's elite Emirati women football team. As such, my study mapped key socio-historical events and conditions from the past two decades that appear to have contributed to changes in gender subjectivities in the UAE. Through a focus on elite Emirati women's sport, I sought to build knowledge around Emirati women's experiences of gender in/equality within what is considered as an historically masculine domain, namely football. The further research that this thesis leads to, will help to broaden

the perspectives accessed and interpreted here, especially in connection to cultured gender relations, as these exist within families and communities.

Among the challenges facing Emirati women in the UAE who want to actively participate in football involves the need to increase awareness of the burgeoning resources and opportunities that currently exist to support them. At a more social and cultural level, more needs to be done to expound the health and emotional benefits associated with women being part of a sporting team. When the interviews were being conducted with the Dubai and Abu Dhabi Sport Councils, there was great interest in the research agenda and request to be briefed on the findings. Foremost for them is an interest in creating awareness about the team and spreading the word that being a member of the UAE's elite women's football team is 'good for the girls'.

Besides the health and emotional benefits, the Councils were eager for any evidence that women's participation in football is in alignment with the UAE culture and not contrary to it. This, they realise, is crucial if more parents are to accept the fact that their daughters can join a football team, and potentially one day be a professional player. The support and advocacy of social leaders, policy makers, players and leading educators is vital if awareness of women's football is to grow in the UAE, and the all-Emirati women's elite football team is to flourish. Importantly, advancing this awareness requires a shift in the traditional gender values and practices of families. As was evidenced in my study, gaining (or not) the support of parents is instrumental to the participation of female players. Significant cultural shift has already taken place in the UAE but, as this study reveals, there is a great deal of work still to be done.

6.3 Recommendations

Despite the intense efforts the Abu Dhabi Sport Council has made and successes they have achieved in a relatively short period of time it needs to garner more support around its goal to advance women's football in the UAE. One of the recommendations emerging from the findings of this study involves the need for schools to play a more active role in this mission. Ideally, the UAE Ministry of Education should mandate physical education for young women across all schools.

This intervention could be supported by joint efforts and activities between the schools and the Sport Council (as presented in section 5.3.4). This recommendation is supported by research that suggests the ‘entitlement to a physical education as part of a holistic education is also supported through religious texts and examples’ (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 32).

Adding sport to girl’s schools and making it a mandatory part of their curriculum will help to create a cultural shift and challenge the traditional perceptions of parents around the cultured gender subjectivities of their children. Through this intervention then would learn to accept that their daughters play sport – even football – and that young women too can have meaningful sporting careers. Parental support continues to be one of the greatest barriers to women’s participation in sport in the UAE. Without a shift in dominant parental attitudes women’s football is likely to continue to operate on the margins of society and some players will only participate by deceiving their parents. In developing policies that mandate sport for young women, long-held cultural views may begin to be challenged and overwritten.

A further recommendation of my study involves modifications to existing policy and regulations around media coverage of Emirati women’s football. Embedded in this is the need for more exposure of women’s football in the media and less restriction by this public relations committee around the promotion of the elite women’s team. Under current restrictions very few pictures of women’s football can be published in the papers, meaning that the exposure of the women’s football team is extremely limited. Consistent with the results of studies in other countries, ‘women athletes are markedly under-represented in newspapers and television coverage’ in the Arab world (Benn, Pfister & Jawad 2011, p. 162).

I also recommend that further research is conducted with the first Emirati women’s football team and their parents to map their participation as their life circumstances change and they confront issues such as relationships, marriage, careers and parenthood. The potential for these players to become role models for other young Emirati women to look up to and aspire to needs to be harnessed. Continuing to document the experiences of women who make it to the elite level of football will be important to growing and supporting women’s transitions in and out of the game.

Further research, which my thesis has promoted, will help to broaden the perspectives accessed and interpreted here, especially in connection with cultured gender relations, as these exist within the family, especially.

6.4 Conclusion

It is my aspiration in this research that the UAE might use the experiences of the first Emirati women's football team to influence wider social values and attitudes towards women athletes. Through this increased understanding, it is my hope that there could be an opening up of new spaces and opportunities through which more equitable gender relations could begin to be realized. However, in carrying out my study, I became increasingly aware that the UAE has already made some substantial steps towards closing the gender gap in terms of education, work and politics in a relatively short period of time. As clearly evidenced in this research, the scale of this agenda has been felt in the most male dominated aspects of society, such as football. The UAE has embraced a commitment to gender equity that has impacted many aspects of society and helped to dispel many misconceptions about what it means to be an Emirati Muslim woman. Knowing that Emirati women can now enter traditionally masculine domains, despite civil laws that subordinate them, is refreshing and encouraging.

The recommendations and implications of this study will help further raise the consciousness of the people of the UAE about the rights of Emirati women to experience a fuller participation in society. Giving Emirati women the right to participate in sport is an indicator of greater equity in society and heightens consciousness of the community towards the participation of women. The new knowledge that my research has presented regarding gender equity in UAE society provides further impetus for 'laws and institutions (to) change through the encouragement of new standards of behaviour' (Schweitz, 1995). The implications of such change are for an improved society in the UAE, where men and women share in healthier and more equitable forms of social engagement. This, I hope, will help to better the lives of Emirati women in general and Emirati women athletes in particular.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval

Human Research Ethics



Deakin Research Integrity
Level 7, BC Building, Bunwood Highway
Postal: 221 Bunwood Highway
Bunwood Victoria 3125 Australia
Telephone 03 9251 7123
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Memorandum

To: Prof Chris Hickey
School of Education

G
cc: Mrs Niloofar Margarite Rouhani

From: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC)

Date: 04 November, 2014

Subject: 2014-196
Women's elite sports participation in the United Arab Emirates

Please quote this project number in all future communications

The application for this project was considered at the DU-HREC meeting held on 22/09/2014.

Approval has been given for Prof Chris Hickey, School of Education, to undertake this project from 4/11/2014 to 4/11/2018.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Human Research Ethics Unit immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HRECs.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Human Research Ethics Unit
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Telephone: 03 9251 7123

Appendix B: Consent forms and plain language statements



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Athletes

Plain Language Statement

Date: _____

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

Principal Researchers: Professor Christopher Hickey.

Associate Researcher: Dr. Amanda Mooney, Dr. Perri Campbell, Mrs. Niloofar Rouhani

Your Consent

This research seeks to explore the experiences of successful women athletes. You are invited to take part in this research project that explores the experiences of Emirati women involved in the UAE's elite national football team. You have been identified, on the basis that you are included on the Abu Dhabi Sports Council list of United Arab Emirates UAE women footballers.

About the Research

We are particularly interested in how you came to be playing football at an elite level. We are also interested in your reflections about being an elite Emirati female athlete in the UAE and in exploring your thoughts about factors that might limit other women's involvement in football, sport and/or physical activity more generally.

In recent years, opportunities for women's sport participation in the UAE has greatly increased yet little is known about the factors that facilitate increased sports participation and its access, or some of the challenges faced by women athletes in the UAE. There are many benefits of regular physical

activity and sporting participation for women, but we are aware that there are also social and cultural factors that influence which opportunities become available, and to whom. This research acknowledges that sport is often considered a relatively masculine domain in many parts of the world, and as such is interested in how women athletes from the UAE negotiate this context. Drawing on your own experiences we are interested in understanding what current elite level players consider to be key attributes required to be successful in this context.

Six players will be invited to participate (upon their consent) in two one-on-one semi-structured interviews (no longer than 60 min). All interviews will be digitally recorded. The interviews will focus on:

- an initial interview that explores biographical detail relating to how you came to be playing football at the elite level.
- what you consider to be factors that facilitated your sporting participation and to identify potential barriers for other women.
- What are the kinds of experiences that motivate you to continue in your sport.
- What has been your playing successes, and what have been your greatest challenges as a female footballer in the UAE.

We are also seeking to interview participants who are coaches of elite female football teams, as well as support staff and members of the Dubai Sports Council and Women's Sports Committee. The research will be monitored in accordance with the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee guidelines.

Results of Project and Expected Benefits

The literature review presented highlights several limitations to the research around women and sports participation in the UAE to date. This research will address a gap in literature by systematically examining various factors that may impact issues of access and participation in relation to woman's sport in the UAE. This data may inform future policies supporting woman's full participation in elite sport, by understanding the impact upon women's lives, and their differential access to resources and opportunities in sporting fields at the end of this project you can request to be sent a copy of the final report.

The expected benefits of this project are informing future research, educational and policy interventions relating to women's sport participation in UAE. This understanding could have a direct impact on the targeting of support offered to teams at different stages of their games, and to help identify expectations of team members. More broadly, this research will contribute to a growing research base aimed at understanding more about the policies that make women athlete's lives easier and gives them more opportunities in sport.

Confidentiality

Data collected over the course of this research will be stored in a non-identifiable form – we will assign you a false name (pseudonym) in all reported data so that we can protect your anonymity.

You will be able to review the transcripts of the interviews, if you specifically request so, which forms part of the monitoring processes adopted in this research design. Further, it provides you with an opportunity to confirm that the transcripts are a true and accurate representation of the views that you wish to convey in the project. It also provides you an opportunity to clarify or correct details if required.

Information collected for, used in, or generated through, this project will not be used for any other purpose. Information will be stored as paper files and computer files (with password protection). Personal identifiers will be replaced with a code. Access to digital files will require a password login. Access to hardcopy files will require a key to the filing cabinets (which will be in Dubai) and a key to the offices in which the filing cabinets are kept. Only members of the research team will have access to the passwords and key protection data.

In line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Deakin University's recommendation for data storage and management, this data will be stored for five years after the data of the thesis publication. After five years, soft copies will be permanently deleted, and hard copies will be shredded.

In agreeing to give your consent to participate in this research however, we would like to point out the limits of our ability to ensure we totally protect your anonymity. Because there are a limited number of elite women footballers in the UAE some of the comments and descriptions you give may be recognised by others who know you well. Outside of this immediate sphere we are extremely confident that your voice will be an anonymous one.

Potential Risk

One foreseeable risk associated with this project lies in the potential discomfort that may be associated with recounting experiences that have occurred during childhood or adolescence. While the results from the interviews will be anonymous, you do retain the right to withdraw consent to be part of the research at any stage in the completion of the interview by filling out the Withdrawal of Consent Form. If you experience discomfort during or after completing the interview, Dr. Nadia Buhannad from Sikologia Consultancy (www.sikologia.com) is offering her services to you. You can also refer to Deakin University offers counseling services by phone or in person at each campus.

Details about these services can be accessed online at <http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>. You may want to discuss aspects of the interview results following completion of the interview. Referral to support service will also be made available at the local level through the Dubai Sports Council. If you have any further queries about the research design or schedule, please contact:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
Phone 61-3-52272666
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au

Your Involvement and Participation

Participation in this research will be dependent upon free and voluntary consent being provided by you. **If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until the data is processed or your identifying details are removed. There are no consequences if you choose to withdraw from this research. **Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed.** If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached.

To reiterate what will be required of you if you choose to consent to participate in this research, your involvement will be limited to the two sets of interviews explained above on page 1-2 under 'about the research'. The interviews should not take more than 60minutes each in duration.

Your decision to be involved in this research or not to take part is independent of your relationship with your team, your organization or Deakin University, Australia. There will be no reimbursement of expenses offered to participants.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

Ethical Guidelines

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University has approved the ethics aspects of this research project.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Further Information, Queries or Any Problems

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact the principal researcher:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Athletes

Consent Form

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women’s Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurn Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Athletes

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardize my relationship with Deakin University or the Sports Council.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

ملحق "ب"

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج الموافقة

الى: لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة

بيان اللغة الواضحة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع :

"مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة"

196-2014

الباحث الرئيسي: بروفيسور كريستوفر هيكي

الباحثون المشاركون: دكتورة أماندا موني , دكتورة بيبي كامبل و السيدة نيلوفر روحاني

موافقتك

يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف خبرات لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة. أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا الدراسة الذي يستكشف تجارب النساء الإماراتيات المشاركات في رياضة كرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. لقد تم تحديد هويتك ، على أساس أنك مشمول في موقع مجلس أبوظبي الرياضي.

عن الدراسة

نحن مهتمون بشكل خاص بكيفية انضمامك لفريق كرة القدم النخبة. نحن مهتمون أيضًا بتأملاتك حول كونك لاعبة اماراتية لكرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة وفي استكشاف أفكارك حول العوامل التي قد تساعد/ تسهل أم لا تساعد في مشاركة المرأة الإماراتية في رياضة كرة القدم / أو النشاط البدني بشكل عام.

في السنوات الأخيرة ازدادت، بشكل كبير، فرص المشاركة للمرأة الإماراتية في الرياضة في الإمارات ، ومع ذلك لم يُعرف الكثير عن العوامل التي تسهل زيادة المشاركة الرياضية والوصول إليها ، أو بعض التحديات التي يواجهها لاعبات الإماراتيات لكرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات. هناك العديد من الفوائد للنشاط البدني المنتظم والمشاركة الرياضية ، لكننا ندرك أن هناك أيضًا عوامل اجتماعية وثقافية تؤثر على الفرص المتاحة للمشاركة في الرياضة.

يعترف هذا البحث بأن الرياضة تعتبر في كثير من الأحيان مجالًا ذكوريًا نسبيًا في أجزاء كثيرة من العالم، ولذلك فهذا البحث مهتم بكيفية تفاوض النساء في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. بالاعتماد على تجاربك الخاصة فنحن مهتمون حقًا بفهم ما يعتبره اللاعبون الحاليون من مستوى النخبة من السمات الأساسية المطلوبة للنجاح في هذا السياق.

سيدعى ستة من لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة للمشاركة (بناءً على موافقتهم) في مقابلتين فرديتين (لا يتجاوز 60 دقيقة). سيتم تسجيل جميع المقابلات رقمياً. سوف تركز المقابلات على المواضيع التالية:

- مقابلة أولية تستكشف تفاصيل السيرة الذاتية المتعلقة بكيفية انضمامك لفريق كرة القدم النسائية على مستوى النخبة.

- ما هي العوامل التي ساعدت في مشاركتك في الرياضة و ما هي العوائق المحتملة أمام النساء التي تودن المشاركة في الرياضة في الإمارات.

- ما هي التجارب التي حفزتك على الاستمرار في رياضتك.

- ما الذي ساهمت في نجاحك في الرياضة ، وما هي أعظم التحديات التي واجهتك بصفتك لاعبة كرة قدم في الإمارات.

كما نسعى أيضًا لإجراء مقابلات مع مدربين لفريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة ، بالإضافة إلى أربع موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي. سيتم مراقبة البحث وفقاً لمبادئ لجنة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي التابعة لجامعة ديكن.

نتائج البحث و الفوائد المتوقعة

استعراض الأدبيات في هذا البحث يلقي الضوء على عدد من الموانع لمشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. سيعالج هذا البحث فجوة لهذا الموضوع في الأدبيات من خلال فحص منهجي

للعديد من العوامل التي قد تؤثر على قضايا الوصول والمشاركة في رياضة المرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. قد تسهم هذه الدراسة البيانات السياسات المستقبلية التي تدعم المشاركة الكاملة للمرأة في رياضة النخبة ، من خلال فهم تأثير حياة المرأة ، وفرصها التفاضلي في الوصول إلى الموارد والفرص في المجالات الرياضية . يمكنك طلب نسخة نهائية للدراسة.

تتمثل الفوائد المتوقعة لهذه الدراسة في توعية الأبحاث المستقبلية والتدخلات التعليمية والسياسية المتعلقة بالمشاركة الرياضية للمرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. يمكن أن يكون لهذا الفهم تأثير مباشر على الدعم في المستقبل للفرق في مراحل مختلفة من الألعاب ، وتهدف هذه الدراسة في المساعدة في تحديد توقعات أعضاء الفريق. على نطاق أوسع ، سيساهم هذا البحث في قاعدة بحثية متزايدة تهدف إلى فهم المزيد حول السياسات التي تدعم النساء ويمنحهم المزيد من الفرص في الرياضة. هذا الفهم يمكن أن يكون له تأثير مباشر في دعم النساء في كل مراحل الرياضة و موازنة توقعات أعضاء الفريق.

السرية

سيتم تخزين البيانات التي يتم جمعها على مدار هذا البحث في نموذج غير قابل للتعريف - سنقوم بتعيين اسم مستعار لك في جميع البيانات المبلغ عنها حتى نتتمكن من حماية هويتك.

ستتمكن من مراجعة نصوص المقابلات ، إذا طلبت ذلك تحديداً ، والتي تشكل جزءاً من عمليات المراقبة المعتمدة في هذا التصميم البحثي. وعلاوة على ذلك ، فإنه يوفر لك فرصة للتأكد من أن النصوص هي تمثيل حقيقي ودقيق للآراء التي ترغب في نقلها في هذه الدراسة. كما يوفر لك فرصة لتوضيح أو تصحيح التفاصيل إذا لزم الأمر.

لن يتم استخدام المعلومات التي تم جمعها لهذه الدراسة لأي غرض آخر. سيتم تخزين المعلومات كملفات ورقية وملفات كمبيوتر (مع الحماية بكلمة مرور). سيتم استبدال المعرفات الشخصية برمز. يتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الرقمية كلمة مرور لتسجيل الدخول. سيتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الورقية مفتاحاً لخزائن حفظ الملفات (التي ستكون في دبي) ومفتاحاً للمكاتب التي يتم الاحتفاظ بها في خزائن التعبئة. لن يتمكن لأي شخص سوى أعضاء فريق البحث من الوصول إلى كلمات المرور وبيانات الحماية الرئيسية.

ومع منح موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، نود أن نشير إلى حدود قدرتنا على ضمان حمايتنا تماماً من إخفاء هويتك. نظرًا لوجود عدد محدود من لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة،

فإن بعض التعليقات والأوصاف التي تعطيها قد يتعرف بها الآخرون الذين يعرفونك جيدًا. خارج هذا المجال المباشر نحن واثقون للغاية من أن صوتك سيكون مجهولاً.

المخاطر المحتملة

تكمّن إحدى المخاطر المتوقعة المرتبطة بهذه الدراسة في الانزعاج المحتمل الذي قد يترافق مع إعادة سرد التجارب التي حدثت أثناء مرحلة الطفولة أو المراهقة. في حين ستكون نتائج المقابلات مجهول الهوية ، فإنك تحتفظ بالحق في سحب الموافقة على أن تكون جزءاً من البحث في أي مرحلة من مراحل إكمال المقابلة عن طريق ملء نموذج الغاء الموافقة. إذا شعرت بعدم الراحة أثناء أو بعد انتهاء المقابلة يمكنك التواصل مع الدكتورة ناديا بوهناد في سيكولوجيا للاستشارات:

(www.sikologia.com)

قد ترغب في مناقشة جوانب نتائج المقابلة بعد الانتهاء منها. كما سيتم توفير الإحالة إلى خدمة الدعم على المستوى المحلي من خلال مجلس دبي الرياضي.

إذا كانت لديك أية استفسارات أخرى حول تصميم البحث أو الجدول الزمني ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ:

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
Phone 61-3-52272666
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au

تعتمد المشاركة في هذا البحث على الموافقة الكاملة والتطوعية من قبلك. إذا كنت لا ترغب في المشاركة فأنت غير ملزم بذلك. إذا قررت المشاركة وغيّرت رأيك في وقت لاحق ، فأنت حر في الانسحاب من المشروع في أي مرحلة حتى تتم معالجة البيانات أو إزالة التفاصيل التعريفية الخاصة بك. لا توجد عواقب إذا اخترت الانسحاب من هذا البحث. إذا اخترت الانسحاب فلن يتم استخدام أي معلومات تم الحصول

عليها منك حتى الآن وسيتم تدميرها. إذا قررت الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة ، فيرجى إبلاغ أحد أعضاء فريق البحث أو استكمال وإرجاع نموذج "إلغاء الموافقة" المرفق هنا.

لإعادة التأكيد على ما هو مطلوب منك:

إذا اخترت الموافقة على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، سنتقصر مشاركتك على مجموعتين من المقابلات المشروحة أعلاه في الصفحة 1-2 ضمن "عن الدراسة". لن تستغرق المقابلات أكثر من 60 دقيقة في كل مرة

قرارك للمشاركة في هذا البحث أو عدم المشاركة مستقل عن علاقتك بفريقك أو منطمتك أو جامعة ديكن بأستراليا. لن يكون هناك سداد للنفقات المقدمة للمشاركين قبل اتخاذ قرارك ، سيكون أحد أعضاء فريق البحث متاحًا لك للإجابة عن أي أسئلة لديك حول المشروع البحثي (هذه الدراسة). يمكنك أن تطلب أي معلومات تريدها. قم بتوقيع نموذج الموافقة فقط بعد أن تتاح لك الفرصة لطرح أسئلتك والحصول على إجابات مرضية.

المبادئ التوجيهية الأخلاقية

وسيتم تنفيذ هذا المشروع وفقا للبيان الوطني بشأن السلوك الأخلاقي في البحوث البشرية (2007) التي تنتجها . لقد تم تطوير هذا البيان لحماية مصالح الأشخاص الذين يوافقون على المشاركة في الدراسات البحثية البشرية.

وافقت لجنة أخلاقيات البحث الإنساني بجامعة ديكن على الجوانب الأخلاقية لهذا المشروع البحثي.

الشكاوى

إذا كان لديك أي شكاوى حول أي جانب من جوانب المشروع، والطريقة التي أجريت بها المقابلات أو أي أسئلة حول حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، يمكنك الاتصال ب:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity,
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
Burwood Victoria 3125,
Telephone: 9251 7129,

Facsimile: 9244 6581;
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

مزيد من المعلومات والاستفسارات

إذا كنت تحتاج إلى مزيد من المعلومات أو ترغب في سحب مشاركتك أو إذا كان لديك أي ملاحظات حول هذا المشروع، يمكنك الاتصال بالباحث الرئيسي:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Wauran Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Wauran Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة

نموذج موافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة "

196-2014

لقد قرأت وفهمت بيان اللغة الواضحة المرفق هنا.

أوافق بحرية المشاركة في هذا المشروع وفقاً للشروط الواردة في بيان اللغة الواضحة. لقد تم إعطائي نسخة من بيان الموافقة على اللغة الواضحة والموافقة عليها.

وافق الباحث على عدم الكشف عن هويتي وتفصيلي الشخصية في نشر المعلومات حول هذا المشروع، أو تقديمها بأي شكل.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Wauron Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Wauron Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: لاعبات كرة القدم النخبة

الغاء نموذج الموافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة "
196-2014

أود هنا أن أسحب موافقتي للمشاركة في المشروع البحثي المذكور أعلاه وأنا أفهم أن هذا الانسحاب لن يعرض علاقتي مع جامعة ديكن أو مجلس الرياضة لأي للخطر.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurn Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Coaches

Plain Language Statement

Date: _____

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study*
(196-2014)

Principal Researchers: Professor Christopher Hickey.

Associate Researcher: Dr. Amanda Mooney, Dr. Perri Campbell, Mrs. Niloofar Rouhani

Your Consent

This research seeks to explore the experiences of successful women athletes. You are invited to take part in this research project that explores the experiences of Emirati women involved in the UAE's elite national football team. You have been identified, on the basis that you are included on the Abu Dhabi Sports Council list of United Arab Emirates UAE women footballers.

About the Research

We are particularly interested in how you came to be a coach at an elite level. We are also interested in your reflections about being a coach in the UAE and in exploring your thoughts about factors that might limit other women's involvement in football, sport and/or physical activity more generally.

In recent years, opportunities for women's sport participation in the UAE has greatly increased yet little is known about the factors that facilitate increased sports participation and its access, or some of the challenges faced by women athletes in the UAE. There are many benefits of regular physical activity and sporting participation for women, but we are aware that there are also social and cultural factors that influence which opportunities become available, and to whom. This research acknowledges that sport is often considered a relatively masculine domain in many parts of the world,

and as such is interested in how women athletes from the UAE negotiate this context. Drawing on your own experiences we are interested in understanding what current elite coaches consider to be key attributes required to be successful in this context.

Two coaches will be invited to participate (upon their consent) in one one-on-one semi-structured interviews (no longer than 60 min). The interview will be digitally recorded. The interview will focus on:

- an initial interview that explores biographical detail relating to how you came to be football coach at the elite level.
- what you consider to be factors that facilitated your sporting participation and to identify potential barriers for other women.
- What are the kinds of experiences that motivate you to continue in your sport.
- What has been your playing successes, and what have been your greatest challenges as a football coach in the UAE.

We are also seeking to interview participants who are Emirati elite female football players, as well as support staff and members of the Dubai Sports Council. The research will be monitored in accordance with the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee guidelines.

Results of Project and Expected Benefits

The literature review presented highlights several limitations to the research around women and sports participation in the UAE to date. This research will address a gap in literature by systematically examining various factors that may impact issues of access and participation in relation to woman's sport in the UAE. This data may inform future policies supporting woman's full participation in elite sport, by understanding the impact upon women's lives, and their differential access to resources and opportunities in sporting fields at the end of this project you can request to be sent a copy of the final report.

The expected benefits of this project are informing future research, educational and policy interventions relating to women's sport participation in UAE. This understanding could have a direct impact on the targeting of support offered to teams at different stages of their games, and to help identify expectations of team members. More broadly, this research will contribute to a growing research base aimed at understanding more about the policies that make women athlete's lives easier and gives them more opportunities in sport.

Confidentiality

Data collected over the course of this research will be stored in a non-identifiable form – we will assign you a false name (pseudonym) in all reported data so that we can protect your anonymity.

You will be able to review the transcripts of the interviews, if you specifically request so, which forms part of the monitoring processes adopted in this research design. Further, it provides you with an opportunity to confirm that the transcripts are a true and accurate representation of the views that you wish to convey in the project. It also provides you an opportunity to clarify or correct details if required.

Information collected for, used in, or generated through, this project will not be used for any other purpose. Information will be stored as paper files and computer files (with password protection). Personal identifiers will be replaced with a code. Access to digital files will require a password login. Access to hardcopy files will require a key to the filing cabinets (which will be in Dubai) and a key to the offices in which the filing cabinets are kept. Only members of the research team will have access to the passwords and key protection data.

In line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Deakin University's recommendation for data storage and management, this data will be stored for five years after the data of the thesis publication. After five years, soft copies will be permanently deleted, and hard copies will be shredded.

In agreeing to give your consent to participate in this research however, we would like to point out the limits of our ability to ensure we totally protect your anonymity. Because there are a limited number of football coaches for the women's team in the UAE, some of the comments and descriptions you give may be recognised by others who know you well. Outside of this immediate sphere we are extremely confident that your voice will be an anonymous one.

Potential Risk

One foreseeable risk associated with this project lies in the potential discomfort that may be associated with recounting experiences that have occurred during childhood or adolescence. While the results from the interviews will be anonymous, you do retain the right to withdraw consent to be part of the research at any stage in the completion of the interview by filling out the Withdrawal of Consent Form. If you experience discomfort during or after completing the interview, Dr. Nadia Buhannad from Sikologia Consultancy (www.sikologia.com) is offering her services to you. You can also refer to Deakin University offers counseling services by phone or in person at each campus.

Details about these services can be accessed online at <http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>. You may want to discuss aspects of the interview results following completion of the interview. Referral to support service will also be made available at the local level through the Dubai Sports Council. If you have any further queries about the research design or schedule, please contact:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
Phone 61-3-52272666
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au

Your Involvement and Participation

Participation in this research will be dependent upon free and voluntary consent being provided by you. **If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until the data is processed or your identifying details are removed. There are no consequences if you choose to withdraw from this research. **Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed.** If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached.

To reiterate what will be required of you: if you choose to consent to participate in this research, your involvement will be limited to the two sets of interviews explained above on page 1-2 under 'about the research'. The interview should not take more than 60minutes in duration.

Your decision to be involved in this research or not to take part is independent of your relationship with your team, your organization or Deakin University, Australia. There will be no reimbursement of expenses offered to participants.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

Ethical Guidelines

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University has approved the ethics aspects of this research project.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Further Information, Queries or Any Problems

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact the principal researcher:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Coaches

Consent Form

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women’s Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurn Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Elite Female Football Coaches

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardize my relationship with Deakin University or the Sports Council.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurnd Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurnd Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

ملحق "ب"

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج الموافقة

الى: مدربين فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة

بيان اللغة الواضحة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع :

"مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة"

196-2014

الباحث الرئيسي: بروفيسور كريستوفر هيكي

الباحثون المشاركون: دكتورة أماندا موني , دكتورة بيبي كامبل و السيدة نيلوفر روحاني

موافقتك

يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف خبرات مدربين فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة. أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا الدراسة الذي يستكشف تجارب النساء الإماراتيات المشاركات في رياضة كرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. لقد تم تحديد هويتك ، على أساس أنك مشمول في موقع مجلس أبوظبي الرياضي.

عن الدراسة

نحن مهتمون بشكل خاص بكيفية انضمامك كمدرّب/مدربة لفريق كرة القدم النخبة. نحن مهتمون أيضاً بتأملاتك حول كونك مدرّب/مدربة لفريق كرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة وفي استكشاف أفكارك حول العوامل التي قد تساعد/تسهل أم لا تساعد في مشاركة المرأة الإماراتية في رياضة كرة القدم / أو النشاط البدني بشكل عام.

في السنوات الأخيرة ازدادت، بشكل كبير، فرص المشاركة للمرأة الإماراتية في الرياضة في الإمارات ، ومع ذلك لم يُعرف الكثير عن العوامل التي تسهل زيادة المشاركة الرياضية والوصول إليها ، أو بعض التحديات التي يواجهها لاعبات الإماراتيات لكرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات. هناك العديد من الفوائد للنشاط البدني المنتظم والمشاركة الرياضية ، لكننا ندرك أن هناك أيضًا عوامل اجتماعية وثقافية تؤثر على الفرص المتاحة للمشاركة في الرياضة.

يعترف هذا البحث بأن الرياضة تعتبر في كثير من الأحيان مجالًا ذكوريًا نسبيًا في أجزاء كثيرة من العالم، ولذلك فهذا البحث مهتم بكيفية تفاوض النساء في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. بالاعتماد على تجاربك الخاصة فنحن مهتمون حقًا بفهم ما يعتبره اللاعبون الحاليون من مستوى النخبة من السمات الأساسية المطلوبة للنجاح في هذا السياق.

سيدعى اثنان من مدربي كرة القدم النخبة للمشاركة (بناءً على موافقتهم) في مقابلة فردية (لا يتجاوز 60 دقيقة). سيتم تسجيل جميع المقابلات رقمياً. سوف تركز المقابلات على المواضيع التالية:

- مقابلة أولية تستكشف تفاصيل السيرة الذاتية المتعلقة بكيفية انضمامك كمدرّب لفريق كرة القدم النسائية على مستوى النخبة.

- ما هي العوامل التي ساعدت في مشاركتك في الرياضة و ما هي العوائق المحتملة أمام النساء التي تودن المشاركة في الرياضة في الإمارات.

- ما هي التجارب التي حفزتك على الاستمرار في رياضتك.

- ما الذي ساهمت في نجاحك في الرياضة ، وما هي أعظم التحديات التي واجهتك بصفقتك كمدرّب كرة قدم النسائي في الإمارات.

كما نسعى أيضًا لإجراء مقابلات مع لاعبات فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة ، ، بالإضافة إلى أربع موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي. سيتم مراقبة البحث وفقاً لمبادئ لجنة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي التابعة لجامعة ديكن.

نتائج البحث و الفوائد المتوقعة

استعراض الأدبيات في هذا البحث يلقي الضوء على عدد من الموانع لمشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. سيعالج هذا البحث فجوة لهذا الموضوع في الأدبيات من خلال فحص منهجي

للعديد من العوامل التي قد تؤثر على قضايا الوصول والمشاركة في رياضة المرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. قد تسهم هذه الدراسة البيانات السياسات المستقبلية التي تدعم المشاركة الكاملة للمرأة في رياضة النخبة ، من خلال فهم تأثير حياة المرأة ، وفرصها التفاضلي في الوصول إلى الموارد والفرص في المجالات الرياضية . يمكنك طلب نسخة نهائية للدراسة.

تتمثل الفوائد المتوقعة لهذه الدراسة في توعية الأبحاث المستقبلية والتدخلات التعليمية والسياسية المتعلقة بالمشاركة الرياضية للمرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. يمكن أن يكون لهذا الفهم تأثير مباشر على الدعم في المستقبل للفرق في مراحل مختلفة من الألعاب ، وتهدف هذه الدراسة في المساعدة في تحديد توقعات أعضاء الفريق. على نطاق أوسع ، سيساهم هذا البحث في قاعدة بحثية متزايدة تهدف إلى فهم المزيد حول السياسات التي تدعم النساء ويمنحهم المزيد من الفرص في الرياضة. هذا الفهم يمكن أن يكون له تأثير مباشر في دعم النساء في كل مراحل الرياضة و موازنة توقعات أعضاء الفريق.

السرية

سيتم تخزين البيانات التي يتم جمعها على مدار هذا البحث في نموذج غير قابل للتعريف - سنقوم بتعيين اسم مستعار لك في جميع البيانات المبلغ عنها حتى نتتمكن من حماية هويتك.

ستتمكن من مراجعة نصوص المقابلات ، إذا طلبت ذلك تحديداً ، والتي تشكل جزءاً من عمليات المراقبة المعتمدة في هذا التصميم البحثي. وعلاوة على ذلك ، فإنه يوفر لك فرصة للتأكد من أن النصوص هي تمثيل حقيقي ودقيق للآراء التي ترغب في نقلها في هذه الدراسة. كما يوفر لك فرصة لتوضيح أو تصحيح التفاصيل إذا لزم الأمر.

لن يتم استخدام المعلومات التي تم جمعها لهذه الدراسة لأي غرض آخر. سيتم تخزين المعلومات كملفات ورقية وملفات كمبيوتر (مع الحماية بكلمة مرور). سيتم استبدال المعرفات الشخصية برمز. يتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الرقمية كلمة مرور لتسجيل الدخول. سيتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الورقية مفتاحاً لخزائن حفظ الملفات (التي ستكون في دبي) ومفتاحاً للمكاتب التي يتم الاحتفاظ بها في خزائن التعبئة. لن يتمكن لأي شخص سوى أعضاء فريق البحث من الوصول إلى كلمات المرور وبيانات الحماية الرئيسية.

ومع منح موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، نود أن نشير إلى حدود قدرتنا على ضمان حمايتنا تماماً من إخفاء هويتك. نظرًا لوجود عدد محدود من مدربي كرة القدم النسائية النخبة في دولة الإمارات العربية

المتحدة، فإن بعض التعليقات والأوصاف التي تعطيها قد يتعرف بها الآخرون الذين يعرفونك جيدًا. خارج هذا المجال المباشر نحن واثقون للغاية من أن صوتك سيكون مجهولاً.

المخاطر المحتملة

تضمن إحدى المخاطر المتوقعة المرتبطة بهذه الدراسة في الانزعاج المحتمل الذي قد يترافق مع إعادة سرد التجارب التي حدثت أثناء مرحلة الطفولة أو المراهقة. في حين ستكون نتائج المقابلات مجهول الهوية ، فإنك تحتفظ بالحق في سحب الموافقة على أن تكون جزءاً من البحث في أي مرحلة من مراحل إكمال المقابلة عن طريق ملء نموذج الغاء الموافقة. إذا شعرت بعدم الراحة أثناء أو بعد انتهاء المقابلة يمكنك التواصل مع الدكتورة ناديا بوهناد في سيكولوجيا للأستشارات:

(www.sikologia.com)

قد ترغب في مناقشة جوانب نتائج المقابلة بعد الانتهاء منها. كما سيتم توفير الإحالة إلى خدمة الدعم على المستوى المحلي من خلال مجلس دبي الرياضي.

إذا كانت لديك أية استفسارات أخرى حول تصميم البحث أو الجدول الزمني ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ:

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
Phone 61-3-52272666
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au

تعتمد المشاركة في هذا البحث على الموافقة الكاملة والتطوعية من قبلك. إذا كنت لا ترغب في المشاركة فأنت غير ملزم بذلك. إذا قررت المشاركة وغيّرت رأيك في وقت لاحق ، فأنت حر في الانسحاب من المشروع في أي مرحلة حتى تتم معالجة البيانات أو إزالة التفاصيل التعريفية الخاصة بك. لا توجد عواقب إذا اخترت الانسحاب من هذا البحث. إذا اخترت الانسحاب فلن يتم استخدام أي معلومات تم الحصول

عليها منك حتى الآن وسيتم تدميرها. إذا قررت الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة ، فيرجى إبلاغ أحد أعضاء فريق البحث أو استكمال وإرجاع نموذج "إلغاء الموافقة" المرفق هنا.

لإعادة التأكيد على ما هو مطلوب منك:

إذا اخترت الموافقة على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، سنتنصر مشاركتك على مجموعتين من المقابلات المشروحة أعلاه في الصفحة 1-2 ضمن "عن الدراسة". لن تستغرق المقابلات أكثر من 60 دقيقة في كل مرة

قرارك للمشاركة في هذا البحث أو عدم المشاركة مستقل عن علاقتك بفريقك أو منطمتك أو جامعة ديكن بأستراليا. لن يكون هناك سداد للنفقات المقدمة للمشاركين قبل اتخاذ قرارك ، سيكون أحد أعضاء فريق البحث متاحًا لك للإجابة عن أي أسئلة لديك حول المشروع البحثي (هذه الدراسة). يمكنك أن تطلب أي معلومات تريدها. قم بتوقيع نموذج الموافقة فقط بعد أن تتاح لك الفرصة لطرح أسئلتك والحصول على إجابات مرضية.

المبادئ التوجيهية الأخلاقية

وسيتم تنفيذ هذا المشروع وفقا للبيان الوطني بشأن السلوك الأخلاقي في البحوث البشرية (2007) التي تنتجها . لقد تم تطوير هذا البيان لحماية مصالح الأشخاص الذين يوافقون على المشاركة في الدراسات البحثية البشرية.

وافقت لجنة أخلاقيات البحث الإنساني بجامعة ديكن على الجوانب الأخلاقية لهذا المشروع البحثي.

الشكاوى

إذا كان لديك أي شكاوى حول أي جانب من جوانب المشروع، والطريقة التي أجريت بها المقابلات أو أي أسئلة حول حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، يمكنك الاتصال ب:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity,
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
Burwood Victoria 3125,
Telephone: 9251 7129,

Facsimile: 9244 6581;
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

مزيد من المعلومات والاستفسارات

إذا كنت تحتاج إلى مزيد من المعلومات أو ترغب في سحب مشاركتك أو إذا كان لديك أي ملاحظات حول هذا المشروع، يمكنك الاتصال بالباحث الرئيسي:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: مدربين فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة

نموذج موافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة النخبة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة "

196-2014

لقد قرأت وفهمت بيان اللغة الواضحة المرفق هنا.

أوافق بحرية المشاركة في هذا المشروع وفقاً للشروط الواردة في بيان اللغة الواضحة. لقد تم إعطائي نسخة من بيان الموافقة على اللغة الواضحة والموافقة عليها.

وافق الباحث على عدم الكشف عن هويتي وتفصيلي الشخصية في نشر المعلومات حول هذا المشروع، أو تقديمها بأي شكل.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurnd Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurnd Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: مدربين فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة

الغاء نموذج الموافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة النخبة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة "
196-2014

أود هنا أن أسحب موافقتي للمشاركة في المشروع البحثي المذكور أعلاه وأنا أفهم أن هذا الانسحاب لن يعرض علاقتي مع جامعة ديكن أو مجلس الرياضة لأي للخطر.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurn Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Support staff and members of the Dubai Sports Council

Plain Language Statement

Date: _____

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study*
(196-2014)

Principal Researchers: Professor Christopher Hickey.

Associate Researcher: Dr. Amanda Mooney, Dr. Perri Campbell, Mrs. Niloofar Rouhani

Your Consent

This research seeks to explore the experiences of successful women athletes. You are invited to take part in this research project that explores the experiences of Emirati women involved in the UAE's elite national football team. You have been identified, on the basis that you are included on the Abu Dhabi Sports Council list of United Arab Emirates UAE women footballers.

About the Research

We are particularly interested in how you came to be a support staff/member of the Dubai Sports Council. We are also interested in your reflections about being a support staff/member of the Dubai Sports Council in the UAE and in exploring your thoughts about factors that might limit other women's involvement in this area as well as sport and/or physical activity more generally.

In recent years, opportunities for women's sport participation in the UAE has greatly increased yet little is known about the factors that facilitate increased sports participation and its access, or some of the challenges faced by women athletes in the UAE. There are many benefits of regular physical activity and sporting participation for women, but we are aware that there are also social and cultural factors that influence which opportunities become available, and to whom. This research acknowledges that sport is

often considered a relatively masculine domain in many parts of the world, and as such is interested in how women athletes from the UAE negotiate this context. Drawing on your own experiences we are interested in understanding what current elite coaches consider to be key attributes required to be successful in this context.

Four support staff/members of the Dubai Sports Council will be invited to participate (upon their consent) in one one-on-one semi-structured interviews (no longer than 60 min). The interview will be digitally recorded. The interview will focus on:

- an initial interview that explores biographical detail relating to how you came to be at your current position.
- what you consider to be factors that facilitated your involvement and to identify potential barriers for other women.
- What are the kinds of experiences that motivate you to continue in your position.
- What has been your successes, and what have been your greatest challenges in your current position.

We are also seeking to interview participants who are Emirati elite female football players, as well as coaches of the Emirati elite female football team. The research will be monitored in accordance with the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee guidelines.

Results of Project and Expected Benefits

The literature review presented highlights several limitations to the research around women and sports participation in the UAE to date. This research will address a gap in literature by systematically examining various factors that may impact issues of access and participation in relation to woman's sport in the UAE. This data may inform future policies supporting woman's full participation in elite sport, by understanding the impact upon women's lives, and their differential access to resources and opportunities in sporting fields at the end of this project you can request to be sent a copy of the final report.

The expected benefits of this project are informing future research, educational and policy interventions relating to women's sport participation in UAE. This understanding could have a direct impact on the targeting of support offered to teams at different stages of their games, and to help identify expectations of team members. More broadly, this research will contribute to a growing research base aimed at understanding more about the policies that make women athlete's lives easier and gives them more opportunities in sport.

Confidentiality

Data collected over the course of this research will be stored in a non-identifiable form – we will assign you a false name (pseudonym) in all reported data so that we can protect your anonymity.

You will be able to review the transcripts of the interviews, if you specifically request so, which forms part of the monitoring processes adopted in this research design. Further, it provides you with an opportunity to confirm that the transcripts are a true and accurate representation of the views that you wish to convey in the project. It also provides you an opportunity to clarify or correct details if required.

Information collected for, used in, or generated through, this project will not be used for any other purpose. Information will be stored as paper files and computer files (with password protection). Personal identifiers will be replaced with a code. Access to digital files will require a password login. Access to hardcopy files will require a key to the filing cabinets (which will be in Dubai) and a key to the offices in which the filing cabinets are kept. Only members of the research team will have access to the passwords and key protection data.

In line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Deakin University's recommendation for data storage and management, this data will be stored for five years after the data of the thesis publication. After five years, soft copies will be permanently deleted, and hard copies will be shredded.

In agreeing to give your consent to participate in this research however, we would like to point out the limits of our ability to ensure we totally protect your anonymity. Because there are a limited number of support staff/members of the Dubai Sports Council in the UAE, some of the comments and descriptions you give may be recognised by others who know you well. Outside of this immediate sphere we are extremely confident that your voice will be an anonymous one.

Potential Risk

One foreseeable risk associated with this project lies in the potential discomfort that may be associated with recounting experiences that have occurred during childhood or adolescence. While the results from the interviews will be anonymous, you do retain the right to withdraw consent to be part of the research at any stage in the completion of the interview by filling out the Withdrawal of Consent Form. If you experience discomfort during or after completing the interview, Dr. Nadia Buhannad from Sikologia Consultancy (www.sikologia.com) is offering her services to you. You can also refer to Deakin University offers counseling services by phone or in person at each campus.

Details about these services can be accessed online at <http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>. You may want to discuss aspects of the interview results following completion of the interview. Referral to support service will also be made available at the local level through the Dubai Sports Council. If you have any further queries about the research design or schedule, please contact:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
Phone 61-3-52272666
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au

Your Involvement and Participation

Participation in this research will be dependent upon free and voluntary consent being provided by you. **If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until the data is processed or your identifying details are removed. There are no consequences if you choose to withdraw from this research. **Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed.** If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached.

To reiterate what will be required of you: if you choose to consent to participate in this research, your involvement will be limited to the two sets of interviews explained above on page 1-2 under 'about the research'. The interview should not take more than 60minutes in duration.

Your decision to be involved in this research or not to take part is independent of your relationship with your team, your organization or Deakin University, Australia. There will be no reimbursement of expenses offered to participants.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

Ethical Guidelines

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University has approved the ethics aspects of this research project.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Further Information, Queries or Any Problems

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact the principal researcher:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurm Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Support staff and members of the Dubai Sports Council

Consent Form

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women’s Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study*
(196-2014)

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor Chris Hickey
Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus,
75 Pigdons Road
Waurn Ponds, 3216
chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Support staff and members of the Dubai Sports Council

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: *Women's Sport Participation in the United Arab Emirates: A Case Study (196-2014)*

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardize my relationship with Deakin University or the Sports Council.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax this form to:

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جامعة ديكن

ملحق "ب"

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج الموافقة

الى: موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي

بيان اللغة الواضحة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع :

"مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة"

196-2014

الباحث الرئيسي: بروفيسور كريستوفر هيكي

الباحثون المشاركون: دكتورة أماندا موني , دكتورة بييري كامبل و السيدة نيلوفر روحاني

موافقتك

يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف خبرات موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي. أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا الدراسة الذي يستكشف تجارب النساء الإماراتيات المشاركات في رياضة كرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. لقد تم تحديد هويتك ، على أساس أنك مشمول في موقع مجلس أبوظبي الرياضي.

عن الدراسة

نحن مهتمون بشكل خاص بكيفية انضمامك كموظف الدعم وعضو في مجلس دبي الرياضي. نحن مهتمون أيضاً بتأملاتك حول كونك موظف الدعم أو عضو في مجلس دبي الرياضي في الإمارات العربية المتحدة وفي استكشاف أفكارك حول العوامل التي قد تساعد/تسهل أم لا تساعد في مشاركة المرأة الإماراتية في رياضة كرة القدم / أو النشاط البدني بشكل عام.

في السنوات الأخيرة ازدادت، بشكل كبير، فرص المشاركة للمرأة الإماراتية في الرياضة في الإمارات ، ومع ذلك لم يُعرف الكثير عن العوامل التي تسهل زيادة المشاركة الرياضية والوصول إليها ، أو بعض التحديات التي يواجهها لاعبات الإماراتيات لكرة القدم النخبة في الإمارات. هناك العديد من الفوائد للنشاط البدني المنتظم والمشاركة الرياضية ، لكننا ندرك أن هناك أيضًا عوامل اجتماعية وثقافية تؤثر على الفرص المتاحة للمشاركة في الرياضة.

يعترف هذا البحث بأن الرياضة تعتبر في كثير من الأحيان مجالًا ذكوريًا نسبيًا في أجزاء كثيرة من العالم، ولذلك فهذا البحث مهتم بكيفية تفاوض النساء في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. بالاعتماد على تجاربك الخاصة فنحن مهتمون حقًا بفهم ما يعتبره اللاعبون الحاليون من مستوى النخبة من السمات الأساسية المطلوبة للنجاح في هذا السياق.

سيدعى أربع من موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي للمشاركة (بناءً على موافقتهم) في مقابلة فردية (لا يتجاوز 60 دقيقة). سيتم تسجيل جميع المقابلات رقمياً. سوف تركز المقابلات على المواضيع التالية:

- مقابلة أولية تستكشف تفاصيل السيرة الذاتية المتعلقة بكيفية انضمامك كموظف الدعم أو عضو مجلس دبي الرياضي.

- ما هي العوامل التي ساعدت في مشاركتك في هذا السياق و ما هي العوائق المحتملة أمام النساء التي تودن المشاركة في الرياضة في الإمارات.

- ما هي التجارب التي حفزتك على الاستمرار في دورك.

- ما الذي ساهمت في نجاحك في دورك ، وما هي أعظم التحديات التي واجهتك.

كما نسعى أيضًا لإجراء مقابلات مع لاعبات فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة ، بالإضافة إلى اثنين من مدربي فريق كرة القدم النسائية النخبة. سيتم مراقبة البحث وفقًا لمبادئ لجنة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي التابعة لجامعة ديكن.

نتائج البحث و الفوائد المتوقعة

استعراض الأدبيات في هذا البحث يلقي الضوء على عدد من الموانع لمشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. سيعالج هذا البحث فجوة لهذا الموضوع في الأدبيات من خلال فحص منهجي للعديد من العوامل التي قد تؤثر على قضايا الوصول والمشاركة في رياضة المرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. قد تسهم هذه الدراسة البيانات السياسات المستقبلية التي تدعم المشاركة الكاملة للمرأة في رياضة النخبة ، من خلال فهم تأثير حياة المرأة ، وفرصها التفاضلي في الوصول إلى الموارد والفرص في المجالات الرياضية . يمكنك طلب نسخة نهائية للدراسة.

تتمثل الفوائد المتوقعة لهذه الدراسة في توعية الأبحاث المستقبلية والتدخلات التعليمية والسياسية المتعلقة بالمشاركة الرياضية للمرأة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. يمكن أن يكون لهذا الفهم تأثير مباشر على الدعم في المستقبل للفرق في مراحل مختلفة من الألعاب ، وتهدف هذه الدراسة في المساعدة في تحديد توقعات أعضاء الفريق. على نطاق أوسع ، سيساهم هذا البحث في قاعدة بحثية متزايدة تهدف إلى فهم المزيد حول السياسات التي تدعم النساء ويمنحهم المزيد من الفرص في الرياضة. هذا الفهم يمكن أن يكون له تأثير مباشر في دعم النساء في كل مراحل الرياضة و موازنة توقعات أعضاء الفريق.

السرية

سيتم تخزين البيانات التي يتم جمعها على مدار هذا البحث في نموذج غير قابل للتعريف - سنقوم بتعيين اسم مستعار لك في جميع البيانات المبلغ عنها حتى نتأكد من حماية هويتك. ستتمكن من مراجعة نصوص المقابلات ، إذا طلبت ذلك تحديداً ، والتي تشكل جزءاً من عمليات المراقبة المعتمدة في هذا التصميم البحثي. وعلاوة على ذلك ، فإنه يوفر لك فرصة للتأكد من أن النصوص هي تمثيل حقيقي ودقيق للآراء التي ترغب في نقلها في هذه الدراسة. كما يوفر لك فرصة لتوضيح أو تصحيح التفاصيل إذا لزم الأمر.

لن يتم استخدام المعلومات التي تم جمعها لهذه الدراسة لأي غرض آخر. سيتم تخزين المعلومات كملفات ورقية وملفات كمبيوتر (مع الحماية بكلمة مرور). سيتم استبدال المعرفات الشخصية برموز. يتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الرقمية كلمة مرور لتسجيل الدخول. سيتطلب الوصول إلى الملفات الورقية مفتاحاً لخزائن حفظ الملفات (التي ستكون في دبي) ومفتاحاً للمكاتب التي يتم الاحتفاظ بها في خزائن التعبئة. لن يتمكن لأي شخص سوى أعضاء فريق البحث من الوصول إلى كلمات المرور وبيانات الحماية الرئيسية.

ومع منح موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، نود أن نشير إلى حدود قدرتنا على ضمان حمايتنا تمامًا من إخفاء هويتك. نظرًا لوجود عدد محدود من موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، فإن بعض التعليقات والأوصاف التي تعطيتها قد يتعرف بها الآخرون الذين يعرفونك جيدًا. خارج هذا المجال المباشر نحن واثقون للغاية من أن صوتك سيكون مجهولاً.

المخاطر المحتملة

تكمّن إحدى المخاطر المتوقعة المرتبطة بهذه الدراسة في الانزعاج المحتمل الذي قد يترافق مع إعادة سرد التجارب التي حدثت أثناء مرحلة الطفولة أو المراهقة. في حين ستكون نتائج المقابلات مجهول الهوية ، فإنك تحتفظ بالحق في سحب الموافقة على أن تكون جزءًا من البحث في أي مرحلة من مراحل إكمال المقابلة عن طريق ملء نموذج الغاء الموافقة. إذا شعرت بعدم الراحة أثناء أو بعد انتهاء المقابلة يمكنك التواصل مع الدكتورة ناديا بوهناد في سيكولوجيا للأستشارات:

www.sikologia.com

قد ترغب في مناقشة جوانب نتائج المقابلة بعد الانتهاء منها. كما سيتم توفير الإحالة إلى خدمة الدعم على المستوى المحلي من خلال مجلس دبي الرياضي.

إذا كانت لديك أية استفسارات أخرى حول تصميم البحث أو الجدول الزمني ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ:

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/life-at-deakin/health-safety-wellbeing/counselling>

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تعتمد المشاركة في هذا البحث على الموافقة الكاملة والتطوعية من قبلك. إذا كنت لا ترغب في المشاركة

فأنت غير ملزم بذلك. إذا قررت المشاركة وغيّرت رأيك في وقت لاحق ، فأنت حر في الانسحاب من

المشروع في أي مرحلة حتى تتم معالجة البيانات أو إزالة التفاصيل التعريفية الخاصة بك. لا توجد عواقب إذا اخترت الانسحاب من هذا البحث. إذا اخترت الانسحاب فلن يتم استخدام أي معلومات تم الحصول عليها منك حتى الآن وسيتم تدميرها. إذا قررت الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة ، فيرجى إبلاغ أحد أعضاء فريق البحث أو استكمال وإرجاع نموذج "إلغاء الموافقة" المرفق هنا.

لإعادة التأكيد على ما هو مطلوب منك:

إذا اخترت الموافقة على المشاركة في هذا البحث ، ستقتصر مشاركتك على مجموعتين من المقابلات المشروحة أعلاه في الصفحة 1-2 ضمن "عن الدراسة". لن تستغرق المقابلات أكثر من 60 دقيقة في كل مرة .

قرارك للمشاركة في هذا البحث أو عدم المشاركة مستقل عن علاقتك بفريقك أو منطمتك أو جامعة ديكن بأستراليا. لن يكون هناك سداد للنفقات المقدمة للمشاركين قبل اتخاذ قرارك ، سيكون أحد أعضاء فريق البحث متاحًا لك للإجابة عن أي أسئلة لديك حول المشروع البحثي (هذه الدراسة). يمكنك أن تطلب أي معلومات تريدها. قم بتوقيع نموذج الموافقة فقط بعد أن تتاح لك الفرصة لطرح أسئلتك والحصول على إجابات مرضية.

المبادئ التوجيهية الأخلاقية

وسيتم تنفيذ هذا المشروع وفقا للبيان الوطني بشأن السلوك الأخلاقي في البحوث البشرية (2007) التي تنتجها . لقد تم تطوير هذا البيان لحماية مصالح الأشخاص الذين يوافقون على المشاركة في الدراسات البحثية البشرية.

وافقت لجنة أخلاقيات البحث الإنساني بجامعة ديكن على الجوانب الأخلاقية لهذا المشروع البحثي.

الشكاوى

إذا كان لديك أي شكاوى حول أي جانب من جوانب المشروع، والطريقة التي أجريت بها المقابلات أو أي أسئلة حول حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، يمكنك الاتصال ب:

The Manager, Office of Research Integrity,
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
Burwood Victoria 3125,
Telephone: 9251 7129,
Facsimile: 9244 6581;
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

مزيد من المعلومات والاستفسارات

إذا كنت تحتاج إلى مزيد من المعلومات أو ترغب في سحب مشاركتك أو إذا كان لديك أي ملاحظات حول هذا المشروع، يمكنك الاتصال بالباحث الرئيسي:

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جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي

نموذج موافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة النخبة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة "

196-2014

لقد قرأت وفهمت بيان اللغة الواضحة المرفق هنا.

أوافق بحرية المشاركة في هذا المشروع وفقاً للشروط الواردة في بيان اللغة الواضحة. لقد تم إعطائي نسخة من بيان الموافقة على اللغة الواضحة والموافقة عليها.

وافق الباحث على عدم الكشف عن هويتي وتفصيلي الشخصية في نشر المعلومات حول هذا المشروع، أو تقديمها بأي شكل.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

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جامعة ديكن

بيان اللغة الواضحة و نموذج موافقة

الى: موظفي الدعم وأعضاء مجلس دبي الرياضي

الغاء نموذج الموافقة

التاريخ: _____

العنوان الكامل للمشروع:

"مشاركة المرأة النخبة في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة : دراسة الحالة " 196-2014

أود هنا أن أسحب موافقتي للمشاركة في المشروع البحثي المذكور أعلاه وأنا أفهم أن هذا الانسحاب لن يعرض علاقتي مع جامعة ديكن أو مجلس الرياضة لأي للخطر.

اسم المشارك (اطبع)-----

التوقيع:-----

التاريخ:-----

يرجى ارسال هذا النموذج بالبريد الإلكتروني أو الفاكس ل:

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Appendix C: Interview Question Prompts

Interviews Questions as per NEAF section 8

All participants will be asked biographic questions that include: -

- Name, age, ethnicity
- Relationship status
- Family details, including parent's educational attainment and occupation
- Details of any siblings
- Sporting participation experience (including highest level of sporting involvement)
- Participants highest level of educational qualification

6 Women football players

Initial one-on-one semi structured Interview 28 Dec 2014

Question Prompts (max 60min):

- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about your sporting experience?
هل لك أن تخبرنا قليلا عن تجربك في الرياضة؟
- ❖ When did you first start participating in sport? (Do you think that was unique to your neighbourhood/ was it common?)
متى بدأت المشاركة في الألعاب الرياضية؟
هل تعتقد أن هذه المشاركة كانت فريدة من نوعها لمنطقتك؟
- ❖ Can you remember what influenced you to do this?
هل تتذكر ما الذي أثرت عليك لتشاركي في الرياضة؟
- ❖ How did you first come to play football?
كيف بدأت اللعب بكرة القدم لأول مرة؟
- ❖ Can you describe your pathway to being involved in the National Women's Football Team?
هل يمكنك وصف مسارك في المشاركة في فريق كرة القدم الوطنية للمرأة الإماراتية؟
- ❖ What does being involved as a member of the UAE National Women's Football Team involve?
ماذا تعني مشاركتك كعضو في فريق كرة القدم النسائية الإماراتية النخبة؟
- ❖ What does being part of the training involve?
ماذا ينطوي مشاركتك في التدريب؟
- ❖ What does commitment to team involve?
ماذا ينطوي التزامك للفريق؟

- ❖ Do these commitments present any challenges to you?
هل هذه الالتزامات تمثل أي تحديات بالنسبة لك؟
- ❖ Were there any other factors that you think contributed to, or facilitated, your participation in sport in UAE?
هل كانت هناك أي عوامل أخرى تعتقد أنه ساهم أو سهل مشاركتك في الرياضة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about how you think women's sport participation in the UAE is viewed?
هل لك أن تخبرنا قليلاً عن نظرت المجتمع لمشاركة رياضة المرأة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
- ❖ Knowing that football is out on the field and visible, how do you think society views a sport like that?
بما أننا نعرف أن كرة القدم هي في الميدان الخارجي و لذا مرئي، كيف تعتقد هي نظرة المجتمع لرياضة المرأة في هذا الحال؟
- ❖ What were your perceptions of women's football prior to playing?
❖ Have those perceptions changed- if so, in what way?
ماذا كانت تصوراتك لكرة القدم النسائية قبل أن تبدأي اللعب؟
وهل تغيرت تصوراتك الآن؟ كيف تغيرت تلك التصورات؟
- ❖ How did your social circumstances, mindset and actions change after you were part of the team?
كيف تغيرت ظروفك الاجتماعية / أفكارك و أعمالك بعد أن أصبحت جزءاً من الفريق؟
- ❖ Do you think it is important to have an elite Emirati woman's football team in the UAE?
هل تعتقد أنه من المهم أن يكون هناك فريق نخبة لكرة القدم للنساء الإماراتيات في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
- ❖ What other avenues for elite level sporting participation exists for women here? Is this different to the males?
ما هناك سبل أخرى في الإمارات لمشاركة النساء على مستوى النخبة في الرياضة؟
هل يختلف هذا السبل عن فرص المشاركة للذكور؟
- ❖ How do you think the culture of Emirati women's football might be different from other elite sports settings such as UAE Olympic weight lifting?
كيف تعتقد أن ثقافة كرة القدم النسائية الإماراتية قد تكون مختلفة عن غيرها من الإعدادات الرياضية النخبة مثل ألعاب القوى ورفع الأثقال؟
- ❖ How do you think the culture of women's football might be different from men's elite sport and women's elite sport in other countries?
كيف تعتقد أن ثقافة كرة القدم النسائية قد تكون مختلفة من رياضة النخبة الرجالية؟
و كيف تعتقد أن رياضة النخبة النسائية في الإمارات تختلف عن البلدان الأخرى؟

- ❖ Did you experience any barriers that limited or impacted your participation in sport? If so, could you tell us a bit about these?
هل واجهتي أي عوائق أو تحديات لمشاركتك في الرياضة؟
إذا نعم، أخبرينا قليلا عن هذه التحديات؟
 - ❖ What barriers do you think might exist for other women who are interested in participating in sport in the UAE?
ما هي التحديات الموجودة للنساء الذين يرغبون في المشاركة في الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
 - ❖ What are the obstacles for these women and what are the challenges?
ما هي الموانع و التحديات الموجوده لدخول النساء في عالم الرياضة في الإمارات؟
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6 Women football players

Second one-on-one semi structured Interview 27 May 2015

Question Prompts (max 60min):

- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about your experiences playing football at this elite level? What do you enjoy about it?
هل لك أن تخبرينا قليلا عن خبراتك في لعب كرة القدم على هذا المستوى النخبة؟
بماذا تستمتعي في لعب كرة القدم؟
- ❖ Are there any challenges or aspects you don't like at this elite level?
Can you tell us a little bit more about this, or do you have any examples you can share?
هل هناك تحديات تواجهينها أو أشياء لا تحبي في هذا المستوى النخبة؟
هل لك أن تخبرينا أكثر عن هذه التحديات، هل لديك أي أمثلة يمكنك مشاركة؟
- ❖ What kinds of attributes do you think you have to have to be considered a successful member of the UAE's women's football team? Are there areas that you would like to improve on?
ما هي الصفات التي يجب أن يكون لدى المرء لاعتباره عضوا ناجحا في فريق كرة القدم النسائية في الإمارات؟
هل هناك أشياء تودني تحسينها؟
- ❖ What kinds of support exist for elite sportswomen in the UAE?
ما هي أنواع الدعم الموجودة في دولة الإمارات للرياضة النسائية النخبة؟
- ❖ Can you tell us a bit about the professional challenges that you have faced since playing at this level? What about personal challenges?

هل لك أن تخبرنا قليلا عن التحديات المهنية التي واجهتك منذ اللعب في هذا المستوى؟ ماذا عن التحديات الشخصية؟

- ❖ What kind of support did you feel you received (or did not receive)?
ما هي نوع الدعم التي تلقتني حاليا (أم لم تتلقي)؟
- ❖ What have been the change in structure and future of family? Did those issues/ factors help attitudes towards you?
ما هي التغيير في هيكل ومستقبل العائلة في دولة الإمارات؟ هل هذه القضايا / العوامل ساعد موقفك في اللعب؟
- ❖ Have you ever considered ending your football career? Why?
هل فكرت في يوم ما عن إنهاء مهنتك في لعب كرة القدم؟ لماذا؟
- ❖ Are there particular things that might help improve opportunities for women to participate in sport? If so, can you describe these for us?
هل هناك أشياء معينة يمكن أن تساعد على تحسين الفرص للنساء والفتيات للمشاركة في الرياضة؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، هل يمكنك وصف هذه الأشياء؟
- ❖ If there was someone new to the UAE women's football team, what kind of advice do you think might be helpful for them?
ما النصيحة التي يمكن أن تقدمها لشخص يجب أن ينظم لفريق كرة القدم للسيدات في الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
- ❖ Do you feel sport is a vehicle for social change?
هل تشعر أن الرياضة وسيلة للتغيير الاجتماعي؟

Two Coaching one-on-one semi structured Interview 27 May 2015

Question Prompts (max 60min):

- ❖ Can you tell me about how you became involved with women's football?
How long have you been in your role with women's football?
هل يمكن أن تخبرني شيئا عن كيفية مشاركتك في كرة القدم النسائية؟ منذ متى وانت في دورك الحالي؟
- ❖ What does your role involve? Did you have any experience in this role prior to your current position?
ماذا تنطوي دورك؟ هل كان لديك أي خبرة في هذا الدور قبل انضمامك الحالي؟
- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about the women's UAE national football team?

- How were they formed?
 - Who do they compete against?
 - How are they viewed in UAE society?
هل لك أن تخبرينا قليلا عن المنتخب الوطني لكرة القدم للسيدات في الإمارات العربية المتحدة:
- كيف شكلوا?
- من الذي يتنافسون ضده?
- ماذا يفكر المجتمع الإماراتي عنهم?
 - ❖ How are women selected into this team? What pathways exist for them to develop skills in competitive football?
كيف يتم اختيار النساء لهذا الفريق?
ما هي المسارات الموجودة بالنسبة لهم لتطوير مهاراتهم في كرة القدم التنافسية?
 - ❖ In what ways might the women's team differ from the male's team in the UAE in terms of support and structures?
ما هي الطرق التي تختلف فيها فريق النساء عن فريق الرجال في الإمارات من حيث الدعم والهيكل?
 - ❖ What do you consider to be the highlights of working in this role with the women's team?
ما هي الأمور التي تعتديريها من أبرز النقاط في عملك مع فريق النساء?
 - ❖ What do you consider to be the challenges?
ما هي في نظرتك التحديات الموجودة في فريق النساء?
 - ❖ What factors do you think encourage women to play football?
ما هي العوامل في رأيك لتشجيع النساء على لعب كرة القدم?
 - ❖ What factors do you think encourage Emirati women to aspire to elite sports participation? What factors do you think act as barriers?
ما هي العوامل التي تشجع النساء الإماراتيات على المشاركة في الرياضة النخبة?
ما هي الموانع للمشاركة في الرياضة النخبة?
 - ❖ If you could change one thing in the UAE that might improve the Emirati women's participation in sport, what might this be?
إذا كنت تستطيع تغيير شيء واحد في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة التي قد تؤدي لتحسين مشاركة المرأة الإماراتية في الرياضة، ما يمكن أن يكون هذا الشيء?
 - ❖ Do you feel sport is therefore a vehicle for social change?
هل تشعر إذا أن الرياضة وسيلة للتغيير الاجتماعي?
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**Four support staff / members of the Dubai Sports Council
one-on-one semi structured Interview
19 & 30 May 2015**

Question Prompts (max 60min):

- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about your role?
هل لك أن تخبرنا قليلا عن دورك؟
- ❖ How does the policy and legislative framework in the UAE support women's involvement in sport?
كيف تساعد الإطار السياسي والتشريعي في دعم مشاركة المرأة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة في الرياضة؟
- ❖ Are there particular factors that prohibit further improvements in women's participation rates?
هل هناك عوامل معينة تمنع التحسن في مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة؟
- ❖ Can you tell us a little bit about how the UAE women's football team was established? What were the drivers for this?
هل لك أن تخبرنا قليلا عن كيفية تأسيس فريق كرة القدم للسيدات في الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ ما هي الدوافع لهذا التأسيس؟
- ❖ What do you do within your role that directly influences women's sport participation?
ماذا تفعل في دورك و الذي له تأثير مباشر في الرياضية النسائية؟
- ❖ Can you describe the key policies or legislation that guide what is possible in sporting contexts in the UAE? Are there any that specifically address women's sport?
هل يمكنك وصف السياسات أو التشريعات الرئيسية التي توجه ما هو ممكن في سياقات الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ هل هناك أي من السياسات التي تؤثر مباشرة على رياضة المرأة؟
- ❖ How do you think UAE society has responded to a women's football team in the UAE? and what about their response to other elite sport level representations?
كيف تعتقد أن المجتمع الإماراتي استجاب لوجود كرة القدم النسائي في الإمارات؟ وماذا عن استجابات المجتمع لغيرها من الرياضات النخبة؟
- ❖ What do you think presents the biggest challenge to increasing women's participation in sport in the UAE?
ما برأيك يطرح أكبر التحديات لزيادة مشاركة المرأة في الرياضة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟