

Chapter 26

Gender and Diversity in Sport Governance

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the nuances and challenges of women in sport governance. Combined evidence from two independent studies on women in the governance of sport is used to illustrate that boards of directors have a key role in shaping organisational cultures and norms. The findings from these two studies as well as a synthesis of literature to date inform this chapter and show that it is vital to take a critical view of the composition and diversity of board membership. Drawing on the two distinct case studies, the chapter outlines some of the theories and concepts central to researching gender and diversity in sport governance, also providing a critique of the current status quo. In concluding, the chapter makes the link between gender diversity, corporate social responsibility and integrity, arguing for a shift from gender equality, to gender equity in sport governance.

Keywords: Gender Equity and Equality; Women and Sport Governance; Diversity in Sport; Women and Leadership

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Introduction

This chapter draws on information from two separate studies on women in the governance of sport to discuss the nuances and challenges in the area of gender and diversity in sport. Using this information, this chapter projects future areas of importance in sport governance and particular challenges for women in sport leadership roles (e.g., board of directors) as they relate to integrity, social responsibility and collective governance structures.

The movement to gender equality in sport (i.e., equal access or gender-neutral access to social goods, services and resources and to opportunities) has gained exponential support worldwide in the last decades (Rubin & Lough, 2015). Efforts to increase women's inclusion in sport have resulted in great advancements in their participation at grassroots levels via programs and competitions targeting women and girls in sport. Advancements are also prevalent in women's representation in the media and other communication platforms, as well as their successes at higher levels of competition such as the Olympic Games and World Championships. However, women's inclusion in decision-making (i.e., holding leadership roles in the governance of key sport organisations) has not reached equivalent milestones. Indicatively, the 2016 International Sports Report Card on Women in Leadership Roles (Lapchick, 2016) showed men chair 33 of the 35 International Federations (IFs) affiliated with the Olympics, and only two women lead IFs. A significantly small number of women (5.7%) are IF presidents or vice-presidents (12.2%), and only 24.4% of the IOC members are women.

The Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) [re-branded in 2018 as *Sport Australia*] (2015) Mandatory Sports Governance Principles require National Sporting Organisation (NSO) boards to

be represented by at least 40% of women directors. Quotas however do not address the near exclusion of women from national and international sport organisation boards. Women's inclusion in decision-making, through their appointment to leadership positions in sport organisations is and has been limited. In light of this challenge, the authors of this chapter conducted two research projects in order to (a) understand the factors that influence gender diversity in the governance of sport and (b) demonstrate the persistent and enduring marginalisation of women from sport governance and hence the urgent need for change.

This chapter offers a brief review of literature on sport governance and gender politics in sport. Then, the chapter presents an overview of the methods used to collect data for the two studies, followed by reporting key findings and their ramifications in the governance of sport. Based on the findings and a subsequent summary discussion, the chapter draws conclusions on the future challenges for women in sport governance and ways these might be mitigated to further enable collective governance in sport organisations.

Governing Bodies and Gender Politics in Sport

Worldwide, understanding the underrepresentation of women in sport governance has been, and remains, a stream of research for sport management scholars and for policy makers concerned with the broader participation of women in sport (Welty Peachey, Zhou, Damon, & Burton, 2015). Governance is critical to any sport organisation since it is concerned with issues of policy and sets the strategic direction of the organisation (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). Therefore, the board can influence attitudes to gender through its own composition and actions. In the general organisational literature there has been great strides in the ways gender and governance are conceptualised (e.g., Acker, 2006; 2012; Britton & Logan, 2008). The sport governance literature has also contributed

towards this rethinking (e.g., Cunningham, 2009; Geeraert, Alm, & Groll, 2014; Leberman & Burton, 2017; Ryan & Dickson, 2018; Shaw & Slack, 2002; Sibson, 2010). Yet, as a sociocultural site of movement and bodies (for sport is primarily concerned with moving bodies), these insights can be extended further.

As Knoppers, Hovden, and Elling (2018, p. 4) noted, governance “should also be seen as political process”. ‘Sport’ is often considered outside of the realm of government - as a voluntary, civic pursuit - yet of course this is often, if not always, not the case. First, sport is tightly woven into a range of lucrative and important markets including gambling and sport media (broadcasting and advertising) (e.g., Smart, 2007). Second, and more importantly, ‘power’, as Foucault (1972) observed, is always present. Power and politics are not the preserve of government, but are instead part of even our most intimate relationships, and is certainly part of sport in all its myriad of forms (including formal, informal, structured and unstructured) (e.g., Houlihan, 2002). This means that sport governance, including who is and how they are appointed to the board, the rules and regulations that regulate and shape decision making, and the activities being governed, are all inherently political (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). Sport governance is hence never ‘neutral’ and decisions made reverberate into other fields with a range of known and unknown effects.

If sport governance is political, then the question of gender diversity in this context is also political. Using Hargraves (1990) phrasing, ‘gender’ is on the ‘sports agenda’ for sport governance. Therefore, it is important to unpack what we mean by ‘gender’ and acknowledge the various and sometimes vastly different approaches to gender inclusion. As Hovden, Elling, and Knoppers (2018) write, it is “important to examine who is in the position to shape determinations about

which equality norms are applied in the development of politics that aim to remove gender inequalities and bring about social change” (p. 192). As they go on to note “...the definition of the problem influences the selection and implementation of gender political strategies” (p. 192). There are numerous ways to conceptualise women’s inclusion/exclusion in sport governance. These include a) liberal feminism, where the goal has been to provide equal access and rights, usually in law, b) radical feminism, concerned with critiquing and dismantling patriarchy (systems of male dominance and power) (Scraton & Flintoff, 2002), and (c) post structural feminism, focusing on the notion of ‘phallogentrism’, which “denotes male control of language, symbols, definitions, discourses, sexuality, theory and logocentric thinking” (Wearing, 1998, p. 39). Although not exclusive – as there are many other types of feminist theories – these three have been central to understanding women’s long exclusion and marginalisation in sport governance. In the following section, we outline the two case studies that form that basis of this chapter’s discussion, demonstrating the diverse ways gender inclusion has been conceptualised in practice and theory.

Methods and Case Studies

This chapter reports findings from two studies. The first case study reports on findings from a study that was funded by the IOC and was led by the first author in this chapter with two colleagues residing in the Netherlands to investigate the role that men can play in working towards gender equity in sport governance. That study (Sotiriadou, De Haan, & Knoppers, 2017b) used a qualitative approach to investigate gender balance across the boards from various sport organisations, and it focused on triathlon and rowing in Australia and the Netherlands; two countries that have announced their support for and engagement with gender balance in governance. The full report is available online at the Olympic Studies Centre library (see

<https://library.olympic.org/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/171304/understanding-and-redefining-the-role-of-men-in-achieving-gender-equity-in-sport-leadership-popi-so>).

The study drew information from organisational documents and semi-structured interviews with 22 men and 12 women from organisations involved in sport governance at the national or international level. These organisations included two NOCs, the two international sport federations (IFs) and their national level counterparts (i.e., four national sport federations [NFs], two from each country). Besides convenience on location and access to data, the Netherlands and Australia were selected because these countries are committed to gender balanced boards (critical mass of a minimum of 30%). This commitment is also consistent with worldwide trends that indicate that these countries rank between 10th and 15th in women in corporate board seats suggesting a relatively similar commitment to gender equality in other sectors (Catalyst, 2017). The two sports included in this study (i.e., triathlon and rowing) were also chosen carefully, as they have a strong organisational commitment to gender equality, as shown by consistently working towards gender balance on and off the field, their boards attain a gender balanced representation, and they employ campaigns targeting the appointment of women to sport boards.

The second case study focuses on an Australian example, the Australian Football League (AFL) and the development of the Australian Football League Women's (AFLW) competition. The second author of this chapter was awarded funding by her University in 2017 and by the Australian Research Council in 2018 to research the rise of women's participation in contact sport and related management and governance issues. Central to these projects was an emphasis on innovative theories, taking a new lens to the enduring problem of women's marginalisation in sport more

broadly. Relevant to this chapter were the in-depth interviews conducted with administrators involved in a range of AFL governance bodies, including community boards, state organisations, and the national office (n=16). Analysis of public documents, including annual reports, media articles, books and policies also supported this case study. The interviews were focused on asking participants to reflect on issues of leadership related to the first season of AFLW. This included questions about governance, women as players, women as leaders, and the efficacy of the decision-making processes in relation to women in the sport.

Case 1: Women in Leadership Roles in Sport Governance

Sotiriadou et al. (2017b) discussed a paradox related to gender supply versus demand in sport leadership and governance. They suggested that, on one hand, knowledge on gendering, heroic masculinity, social and other barriers offers a good understanding of why there is an underrepresentation of women in sport organisations (low demand). However, evidence suggests that there are many females (supply) that can take on various leadership roles in Board of Directors (BoDs) including marketing, finance, and law (Pletzer, Nikolova, Kedzior, & Voelpel, 2015). Hence, as Burton (2015) alluded to, it is likely that there are certain contextual, sport-system related, cultural, social, and psychological factors that potentially act as barriers to gender equity (i.e., macro, meso and micro level research/factors).

The macro level in this case is the sport sector where masculinity is institutionalised and the gendered structure of sport is an operating principle. Therefore, in their investigation, Sotiriadou et al. (2017b) examined “What do BoDs *think* and *do* about gender and sport governance?” The meso level is an analysis within sport organisations (policies, procedures in place). Specifically, in their research, Sotiriadou, de Haan, and Knoppers (2017a) explored the question: “What

evidence is there of stereotypes, discrimination, and gendered organisational cultures?” Last, the micro level is individual experiences, practices and interactions. The question at the micro level was: “What do individuals perceive to be the roles of males/females on implementing or bringing about changes on gender leadership?” What follows is a discussion of the key findings at the macro, meso and micro level respectively.

The results at the macro level show that the BoDs ‘thinking’ is that they see a lot of “room for improvement” and a “need for a lot more” that needs to be done to improve gender equity and shift the existing gendered culture in the boardroom. What many participants thought was that “the board should reflect what's going on in society. It cannot be that only men are in charge ... That may have happened because that [male dominance] is also part of the world of sports” (Sotiriadou et al., 2017b, p. 20). That thinking however was not aligned with the ‘doing’, because when it came down to strategies and actions that the BoDs had in place to ensure more women take up leadership roles in the governance of sport organisations, these led predominantly to a sense of equality and represented short term solutions. For example, efforts to bring about a balanced gender ratio on BoDs and enforcing a quota of 30% representation of women in boards reflect gender equality strategies.

Another strategy to balancing BoDs was the creation of women’s groups/commissions within federations. Both of these approaches have limited results (Women in Sport, 2015) as merely including more women on sport boards and in leadership positions does not change the gender constructs (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001). This is because gender equality may change the gender ratio but does not explicitly encourage men to collaborate with women or to be involved in

changing male-dominated governance cultures and producing gender equity (Knoppers, 2016). Gender equality is equal treatment of women and men in laws and policies with equal access to resources and services whereas gender equity reflects fairness in the distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits available to men and women, and the strategies used to achieve gender equality (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2017). Therefore, a focus on gender equity requires an exploration of what men and women think and do and the practices they engage to bring about changes (Martin, 2003). Consequently, to enable equity in sport leadership it is important that the thinking and doing of BoDs is more aligned.

The results at the meso level report on gender stereotypes and board culture/interactions. The participants drew on several stereotypes to describe behavioral and skill related differences between male and female directors and leaders. When highlighting differences in perceived confidence between men and women in a meeting environment, one of the participants explained: “Even if they have no clue what they are doing, men say ‘yes, I can’. And women think, ‘I’ve never done that, so I don’t think that I can do that’”. Another participant pointed out that “Many men like to demonstrate that they are smarter or more strategic, that is an ego thing. I think females bring sensitivity to discussions and ego comes out of it” (Sotiriadou et al., 2017b). Overall, males were quoted as being “ambitious” and “opinionated” with “strong egos” and “confidence”, and “very good at lobbying”, “politicking” and “networking”, and “competitive”. Some participants attributed these male traits to the nature of sport being gendered and one female participant claimed that sport governance “does tend to attract those who have operated at a very high level within their sports. It is quite often a sort of high ego environment...in my experience men have a little

more tendency to be like this”. Women on the other hand were portrayed as “emotional”, “insulated”, and “lacking confidence”.

As Knoppers (2016) explained, the prevalence of these stereotypes means that even when sport organisations strive for gender equality by focusing on reducing the male to female ratio, they continue to (re)produce social relations based on gender. Males were seen as “dominant”, “assertive” and “results-oriented” directors, whereas women combine leadership with “sensitivity”, “passion” and “realism”. In the context of this finding, it was not surprising when data supported the notion that women “help dominant males maintain their status quo” precisely because they are not a threat. A quotation from a director at the triathlon federation illustrating this point was as follows: “I think the previous president was so dominant that he probably didn’t surround himself with alpha males. That he surrounded himself with good quality people that weren’t after his position. Three of those happen to be women”. These findings suggest that stereotypes on women’s availability and traits could result in situations where women are less likely to be considered for certain positions (e.g., the top job) that are perceived to require masculine attributes and behaviors. However, upon reflection, there is no evidence in the leadership literature suggesting that sensitivity, passion, and realism are weaknesses in leaders (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019). Therefore, at the meso level, what participants perceived as gender differences are leadership traits that could potentially allow for skill complementarity in BoDs. Therefore, women add value and their leadership traits may offer a competitive advantage to gender balanced boards.

The results at the micro level revealed several nuances related to the role of individuals within BoDs in advancing gender equity in sport leadership. The findings revealed that both males and females in leadership positions play a key role in gender diversity when they actively support other women in taking up leadership roles or mentor and promote their interests. Previous research has indicated how males can act as change agents (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008) and this study shows how women too, when they hold positions of power, can support gender equity practices. In particular, strategies include “active approaching” and “selecting and recruiting” of women on boards, as well as adopting a “whole of sport approach” where equity is evident in all aspects of the sport (e.g., sport participation, coaching, competitions, and prize money). In comparison to female champions of change, the results show that males can play a significant role in “advocacy” for women’s inclusion, and for women to be heard on gender equity issues. It is quite likely that this active and pro-active positioning of male equity champions has the potential to enable sport boards to reach high levels of female representation on the board. Because of their dominant and powerful position, male leaders more so than their female counterparts, can have more influence when acting as equity champions for gender equity in sport. Champions of change have the ability to influence or even undo stereotypes and promote a gender friendly culture where women on boards “doesn’t feel forced, it feels like something that’s natural and the people who are there are the best people for the job” (Triathlon).

Case 2: AFL, Women and Governance

...we’re sitting in this board room and there’s all these kind of chairmen of the AFL around the wall, like it was really blokey. (Kelly)

AFL is a code of football, indigenous to Australia, and one of the most popular football codes in Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2012), the AFL is the most popular spectator sport in Australia. It is also the most lucrative. The AFL reported AUD\$650.6 million in revenue in their 2017 annual report (AFL, 2017) compared to AUD\$313,005 million by Cricket Australia (2017) and AUD\$354 million by the National Rugby League (NRL) (2017). AFL is popular Australia wide, but predominately in Victoria, Western Australia, and Queensland. 'Footy', as AFL is commonly referred to in Australia, has been historically a game for men and boys. This is despite girls and women making up a growing proportion of AFL fans (Toffoletti, 2017) with a long history of women competing (Wedgwood, 2005).

The game itself is a contact sport. Nikki Wedgwood (2004) has called it "a local variant of the rugby family of football games". The ball is kicked in the air and play moves forward, with teams of 16 to 18 pitched against each other on a large grass field. Girls and women have played, but their participation has been hampered and in some instances they have been actively excluded. The AFL presented the launch of AFLW as unique and ground-breaking, but as sports historian Hess (2017) writes:

However the AFL presents the AFLW, women's football is not a "revolution" that starts with the first whistle on Friday [February 3rd 2017]. Nor did it begin with the advent of the modern women's leagues in the 1980s. It began in 1915, when 36 pioneering young women in modest and cumbersome outfits took to the field and showed that women belonged there, too. (n.p.)

Considering this history, it was not until the 2000s that numbers of girls and women wanting to compete in AFL grew. There had been some opportunities for youth girls under 12 to play, but

they were unsupported from 12 onwards due to a ban on mixed gender competitions (and there being no girl competitions). This ban was overturned in 2003 when three teenage girls (Helen Taylor, Emily Stanyer, and Penny CullaReid) challenged the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal arguing it was contrary to the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Victoria). This legal win pushed AFL Victoria to provide competitions for girls in the 2000s, while the senior women continued, in the Victorian case¹, to be organised and governed by the majority-women board of the Victorian Women's Football League. As one participant went on to explain,

once that [the youth girl's competition] was happening then we [AFL Victoria] started looking at the senior women's space and that was the Victorian Women's Football League. So we worked closely with them to look at well, what is the future of the Victorian Women's Football League, what's the best governance and management structure. They were an independent organisation that crossed over all regions. So it wasn't consistent with the model we'd put in place for the youth girls (Gerry).

The reasons given for the AFL Victoria intervention into VWFL's board and overall structure were that, first, there needed to be an alignment between youth girls and consistency, and second, as stated by a participant, "to provide greater service to the clubs from a governance and management point of view" (Gerry). He went on to explain:

We restructured the Victorian Women's Football League where we transitioned the governance and management into AFL Victoria so that we could then restructure how it was managed with a view to then transitioning those competitions into community

¹ Each state and territory had a different governance structure for women's football. However, it is outside of the scope of this chapter to provide a historical account of all states.

leagues as well. So [we] sort of replicated the model of what we did with the youth girls.

In short, AFL Victoria, with the support of many women from the VWFL, ‘wound up’ the entire governance structure of the VWFL. This was a highly emotionally charged and sensitive issue as women who had volunteered and committed to the VWFL for many years were losing all decision making power.

This was an important event in understanding gender and governance in women’s AFL. Where previously women held the majority of decision-making power through the board of the VWFL, through this event and the dismantling of the board of the VWFL – a board of women, (with the exception of one man) – men now had control. Hence, the predominately all-male board of AFL Victoria decided that it was ‘in the best interests’ of women for them to be subsumed/incorporated into the governance and hence political power of AFL Vic. AFL Victoria sent in employees to dismantle the board of the Victorian Women Football Association VWFA, and bring the women’s competition ‘into the fold’ so to speak - to bring women’s football into the governance realm of the AFL, creating new pathways, ultimately leading to the development and launch of AFLW – a national, televised and ‘professionalised’ women’s competition. These pathways were previously unsupported by the AFL and women had operated independently of AFL Victoria prior to this.

The governance of sport is complex, where there are, as Pavlidis and Fullagar (2014) noted, “multiple focus points – for example, community/elite, profitable/voluntary, spectators/players” (p. 40). These multiple focus points are sometimes in tension, yet it is often forgotten that central to sport governance are decisions about athletes/players. These athletes are “mobile, diverse,

corporeal bodies” (p. 40). Women’s corporeal bodies are often positioned as less rational, undisciplined, and vulnerable, whereas men’s corporeal bodies are often assumed to behave in rational and controlled ways (Grosz, 1994; Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2014). This assumption spills over to governance where, in this case of the AFL, women are assumed to be less able to fulfil leadership roles. As Pippas (2017) noted, the AFL has an “unofficial policy of one woman [in leadership] at a time” (p. 208).

The VWFL was a space where women took up most of the roles in sport, including governance. Whereas in the AFL and AFL Victoria it was and remains to a large extent men who are in positions of power and authority to govern. The answer is of course not simple. In line with Ashcraft (2001) we argue that there is a need to discard the notion that “the only way to manage competing goals is to subordinate one to the other” (p. 1317).

It is on the record that it was a woman, the AFL’s first woman commissioner Sam Mostyn, who began conversations about a national women’s AFL competition (Pippas, 2017). This was then also supported by the league’s second woman commissioner, Dessau and the pair persisted in the boardroom until change began to happen. It is worth noting at this point that Sam Mostyn was appointed in 2005 as the first woman only because they had *created a position on the Commission especially for a woman* (Wilson, 2012). They were not alone in their efforts of course as there were a number of key - woman - employees who were on the ground working hard to support women’s football to grow and nurture talent and mentor the next generation of leaders, including women such as Jan Cooper. There was, and continues to be, a push for the inclusion of women and girls in AFL at all levels (girls, youth, women) and in a range of spaces (boards, fields,

stadiums, change rooms). Yet despite this push, women continue to be marginalised in decision-making processes, which potentially, has a direct influence on the opportunities for women and girls to make their mark in AFL more broadly.

Women have enjoyed playing Australian football for over 100 years (Lenkic & Hess, 2016). They have played in their own competitions, organised and governed by (mostly) women. Despite this history of involvement, AFL has been, in all intents and purposes, considered a ‘man’s game’ and women have been excluded. As one research participant stated “I went back and looked at the 2005 AFL report and there’s nothing even in there about female participation. And then it talks about women being volunteers and helping in canteens and raising money for – even in 2005”. Moira Gatens (1997), in her hugely influential article, ‘Corporeal representation in/and the body politic’, draws our attention to the way the modern body politic “uses the human body as its model or metaphor” (p. 80). This ‘human body’ is a masculine image of unity and independence from women and nature, “the infantile wish for independence from the maternal body” (p. 82). Gatens goes on to argue that women are “made part of the corporation not by pact, nor by covenant, but by incorporation” (p. 82). One women interviewed articulated this experience of not being represented in the (masculine) model of AFL governance:

...you have the advantage of being in the heart of footy, you know how it works, you don’t ever have to think outside the box. You’re in a position of control, you’re a man, you belong in the space, you can operate as a man would in that space, you don’t have to question how you work, it just works for you, really restricts the skills you develop in terms of thinking about how things could work differently. Whereas if you’ve been excluded from those positions of power and that way of operating you have to think

much more creatively, you have to have a much more flexible world view and thinking to make what you're excluded from and what isn't necessarily how you work, work for you.

This form of feminist theory has yet to be considered in the context of sport governance research - indeed to speak of these things is certainly an anomaly in the field - yet we do speak of 'bodies' all the time. Governing bodies, national sport bodies, state sport bodies. These 'bodies' also regulate other bodies, directing who and what and where a body can move and play (Woodward, 2016).

These bodies have been, overwhelmingly, male. Anderson's (2009) review article in *Sport Management Review* takes a detailed look at the persistent masculine cultures in sport organisations and presents a comprehensive review of the literature. His insights as to the ongoing promotion and recruitment of men in leadership positions and sport governance resonates with Gatens' (1997) arguments regarding the masculine body politic. He noted:

In order for men to be successful in sport, they must spend most of their youth and young adulthood dedicated to their athletic endeavours. Accordingly, they predicate their social and personal identities as that of an athlete. This then means that when they fail to make their athletic dreams, they desire to be associated with sport in an ancillary fashion. In this aspect, *it is failed athletes who self-segregate into sporting related occupations, like sport management.* (Anderson, 2009, p. 10, emphasis added).

Anderson (2009) described how managers hire men who have sporting experience, hence preventing those without this experience from entering many professions related to sport. This also, he argued, “influences the system to forego a more rigorous manner for judging the abilities of a job candidate” (Anderson, 2009, p. 10).

There is a view that the ‘best person for the job’ is someone with experience in the sport. Anderson (2009) explained that “Gatekeepers (ex-sportsmen) are likely to consider that their former sporting histories have well prepared them for their current occupation; accordingly, they would seek similar qualities in people they hire - appointing clones to reproduce the masculinized nature of their sport” (p. 11). In this case study one participant commented on the promotion practices of the AFL board reflecting on the recent appointment of the new CEO of one of the teams, stating:

I mean, classic to me was the Gold Coast Suns CEO. It was never put out there. It was just whoever is on the ... the President just went straight to somebody that he wanted and never considering that it could be a female to add a different perspective to everything. Then up the line it goes, okay, well, the next person in line is yet another male, so we will elevate him to football ops and no advertising of the role, nothing like that. No going broader into the organisation to say, Sue, would you like to be general manager of football ops? (Sue)

Whether at an international level, or a small sport club, governing bodies in sport are granted power (through terms of reference, constitutions and so forth) to regulate the practice, representation, and organisation of sport. In much sport governance literature little reflection is given to the taken-for-grantedness of these ‘bodies’ and how women - previously refused admission completely - might be

included. This refusal or reluctance to interrogate the model of governance currently in place is often predicated on an assumption of functionality - 'it works'. Yet, those people saying 'it works' are those that are included in governance. These people are, in the huge majority, men.

The first home game that the Western Bulldogs had was against Fremantle, an interstate team. Not one senior management or board member from Fremantle attended Fremantle's first AFLW game ever. Then at the function for Western Bulldogs, every keynote speaker was a male. (Lisa)

The lack of support for the AFLW by the BoDs, and the lack of foresight in terms of gender diversity at major functions were major faux pas that visibly demonstrate the ways men in decision making positions in AFL have been failing to support women. This failure is in the spotlight and the need for diversity in AFL governance clear. As the participant noted,

It definitely has to be that the influences and decision making groups within our industry change because whilst everything going into the talent programs is changing at a rate of knots, to improve player welfare, improve the talent pathway, that's great and needed to happen as well but what has to be front and centre is making all of those changes quite sustainable because the decision-making groups such as the board, senior management, are all across diversity. It reflects our community, so we have to have a variety of ages. We have to have a variety of genders. (Sue)

Yet, despite the clarity of voices calling for diversity, there remains a persistent cultural norm that is difficult to shift without concerted effort. Many of the women interviewed had been involved in Australian Rules football for 20 years or more - as players, administrators and board members, as

well as parents of players and volunteers. Yet their experience, and the experience of many women in sport, is sidelined as irrelevant because they haven't been involved in the 'men's game' (read as 'the main game').

I've been involved with it [my local club] for 20 years and I hate the f... stupid blokes who run it. I'm sorry. It breaks my heart that something I love so much with these kids that I could be really good at, always feels like a battle. It's really, really sad and it's just because they won't even talk to you about how things could be done differently or how you can make this place ... They just go, the answer always is oh we've tried that before. Oh that doesn't work. Oh we know what we're doing and it's just so dumb.

(Peita)

There is a struggle to account for women's historical, cultural and social marginalisation in terms of power to govern, and the situation is becoming more complex. As an organisation, AFL have had a number of parallel processes 1) the development of AFLW, 2) the inclusion of women in AFL (the men's game) governance, 3) women in community and grassroots Australian football. These processes overlap and interlink and together they provide an informative demonstration of the ways bodies - governing bodies and corporeal bodies - are gendered masculine, in need of change at all levels.

Discussion: Shifting Cultures, Processes and Stereotypes

Wood (2013) argued that the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the governance of sport prevents sport organisations from making better use of their available talent and improving decision-making. Studies over time reiterated the need for women to have greater involvement in decision-making (e.g., Adriaanse & Claringbould, 2016; Toohey, Taylor, &

Vescio, 1999). The results from the exploratory study that Sotiriadou et al. (2017b) conducted showed that women and men might have different leadership styles and attributes that complement each other. This skill complementarity means that the inclusion of women in leadership positions is not just a matter of fairness. Gender diversity can increase this skill complementarity and subsequently improve decision-making and organisational efficiencies (Hartarska & Nadolnyak, 2012). A study conducted by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) on the connection between gender, skills and leadership styles revealed differences in the behaviours of women and men, and found that these differences influence and shape decisions on boards. However, it is unclear how these differences influence board performance, and how the gender-related capabilities (skill-sets) of male and female directors complement each other in the governance setting. The Commonwealth Secretariat report stressed that a nation's competitiveness depends significantly on how it utilises its female talent, and suggested that if women (who comprise half of the population) are not represented in a nation's decision-making processes, then that country's economic potential is inhibited. However, little is known about the ways skill complementarity in a gender-balanced sport governance setting can increase socio-economic value.

Directors are collectively able to influence board attitudes to gender equality (i.e., equal access to social goods, services, resources and opportunities) and equity (i.e., fairness of treatment by gender needs) (Knoppers, 2016) throughout a sport organisation. However, men's perceptions (or thinking) about women's skills are not always positive (Sotiriadou et al., 2017b), particularly if they perceive women's attributes (e.g., empathy and asking questions) as a burden to decision-making rather than enabling skill complementarity. Therefore, as this chapter has demonstrated and other authors reiterated in their work (e.g., Knoppers, 2016), understanding existing attitudes,

stereotypes and organisational culture is necessary to enable sustainable changes in sport governance.

There is an increasing expectation in society that women be included in governance. Yet, despite this expectation, and as Case Study two serves to demonstrate, sport has been very slow to change. This resistance can be understood through the persistent and enduring coupling of sport and masculinity (Anderson, 2009), where sport is considered to be the preserve of men, with women participating for ‘fun’ and usually preferring non-competitive endeavours (see Pavlidis & Fullagar, 2014 for a more nuanced account of these ideas). If ‘sport’ is for men, then including women in the governance of sport does not ‘make sense’. This is despite consistent and oftentimes passionate efforts of women to gain entree to sport, be included in all aspects and levels of sport, and contribute their skills and capabilities in decision-making, governance and law.

Making space (literal and figurative) for women in sport governance is about more than the discursive; it is about more than a written policy, target, or even quotas; it also about financial and social benefits, it is about political and cultural change at the molecular level. Scholars such as Hovden et al. (2018) and Fullagar (2017) have begun to note this, but on a broader level, theory and approaches to gender and sport governance have predominantly focused on either individual strategies (e.g., mentoring for women) or structural changes (policies and procedures). As demonstrated in Case Study two, despite the AFL providing resources to launch the AFLW, the status quo – privileging men over women, and failing to shift the organisational culture – persisted. In this chapter, we use a range of theoretical approaches that specifically look at the “gendering of

governance” (Hovden et al., 2018, p. 214) to demonstrate the ways future challenges in sport governance might be addressed.

Anderson (2009) concluded his review by arguing for a completely new approach to thinking about gender diversity in sport, moving away from liberal feminist perspectives (see also de Haan & Dumbell, 2017) and towards structural and material change. He argued: “gender-equality in sport is not enough; we need to instead experiment with the gender-integration of both sporting programs and their management” (Anderson, 2009, p. 11). In the Case of the AFL, this could be an exciting and potentially successful experiment, as the co-existing men’s and women’s teams learn to work *together* for their shared club, rather than in competition. A shift in discourse from gender equality to gender equity is necessary if we are to *undo gender* in sport leadership roles. This can be achieved by converging thinking into explicit strategies that enable active recruitment, support, advocacy and mentoring of women.

Unconscious bias remains an inconvenient truth in sport organisations, even the ones that are set up to cater for gender equity (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019). There appears to be so much more *doing* that is needed before change in the context and culture where governance takes place is pervasive enough to lift the burden of stereotypes, empower women to join and stay engaged as leaders and act as advocates for other women to follow suit. Therefore, in answering a rhetorical question - whether gender can be undone in sport governance - the most powerful message in this chapter is the need to harness the role of *equity champions of change* (both by conducting further research with a focus on the micro level and in terms of practical recommendations) to advance positive changes in gender equity in sport leadership.

Conclusion

Modern sport management practice and governance points toward examining sport business with an integrity focus. Integrity is a fundamental pillar of all good sport administration (ASC, 2015) as it ensures sporting organisations and programs meet social obligations, reduce social disadvantage and eliminate barriers to participation. The social responsibility that sport organisations carry is becoming increasingly important. In August 2018, the Federal sports minister Bridget McKenzie released the findings of an integrity review of Australian sport, which recommended comprehensive governance changes (Gowthorp, 2018). This legislative and policy framework recommended the establishment of a national integrity commission signposting the need to strengthen public confidence in the Australian government, address corruption and misconduct in sport and show stronger respect to men and women's human rights. To protect the integrity of sport and the decisions made from BoDs for sport, two of the ASC's fundamental principles for good governance dictate the need for (a) balanced board composition, roles and powers and (b) ethical and responsible decision-making (ASC, 2015).

Governance structures have a significant impact on the performance of sporting organisations and lack or low representation of women in decision-making is seen as a sign of poor governance (ASC, 2015). Social responsibility offers a platform where accountability for gender inclusive leadership becomes a requirement. Organisations at various levels within the sporting sphere have increasingly focused their social responsibility efforts on creating opportunities for women and girls. For example, campaigns like 'Girls make your move' and organisations like 'Women Sport Australia' show a devotion to providing women and girls with access to opportunities to play sport and advance women in sport. This capacity building is important. However, if women remain out

of the boardroom and outside the realm of leadership roles then the decision-making is compromised.

Prior Catalyst research (Carter, Joy, & Wagner, 2007) has established that companies with the highest representation of women leaders financially outperform companies with the lowest. Further to this, data that is more recent suggests that gender-inclusive leadership and corporate social responsibility are also linked and that both companies and society win when leaders are gender diverse (Soares, Marquis, & Lee, 2011). Hence, the gains are far more than economic, they are social too. A key area of social responsibility is concerned with initiatives and changes on ethical business practices including gender-inclusive leadership and governance. Social responsibility and gender diverse leadership are highly correlated with one positively influencing the other. Sport organisations with both women and men leaders in the boardroom and at the executive table are bound to achieve sustainable wins for both sport and society.

In conclusion, increased gender leadership in the governance of sport organisations is necessary if gender equality is to be addressed by all the main actors in emerging new systems of societal governance. In their discussion on collective leadership, Ferkins, Shilbury, and O'Boyle (2018) challenge our thinking and pose the question of 'how can boards enable and enact collective leadership?' They argued that "the need for unity of purpose brings into question the skills and behaviours of the board as a collective in relation to their ability to enact collective leadership" (p. 229). In that sense, skill complementarity presents the potential to strengthen efforts toward enabling collective leadership. This chapter concludes that gender balanced leadership and an equal representation of women in the governance of sport may offer an enabler to collective

leadership advancements in the world of sport. To this end, future research is needed in this area to not only attend to the numbers of women on boards, but to explore why this seemingly more diverse voice is needed – taking an intersectional approach focused on race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, (dis)ability, indigeneity - and what keeps these diverse bodies out of board rooms. More importantly, future research is needed to explore what sport governance researchers can do to support boards to include more diverse bodies for collective leadership.

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