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<a> Gender Representation and Policy Implementation in the Governance of International Paralympic Organizations

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 Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the extent to which international Paralympic organizations are proactive and successful in implementing actions to increase female representation across their governance teams and positions. We present comparative quantitative data on gender representation trends and the prevalence of gender equity policy across international Paralympic organizations (n=8) and international Olympic organizations (n=48). Our findings highlight that women remain marginal group members within international Paralympic organizations, as well as that Paralympic organizations are significantly less proactive in implementing gender and governance actions than their Olympic counterparts. We draw upon scholarship that explores organizational sources of non-compliance with governance policy, as well as Cohen's (1999) concept of secondary marginalization, to explore the reasons why women continue to face marginalization within organizations that form part of a marginalized community. Our discussion centers around two key factors: 1) differences in top-down gender and governance policy within the Paralympic and Olympic Movements, and 2) intersections between ableism and patriarchy within the governance of the Paralympic Movement.

Key words: gender, sport, governance, policy, Paralympic, secondary marginalization

** Introduction**

A significant and growing body of research has highlighted the underrepresentation of women within sport governance at both the national and international levels. However, this research has had a largely problem-based rather than solution-based focus, looking to reasons for an underrepresentation of women rather than the prevalence and effectiveness of strategies/actions to address this underrepresentation. Additionally, there has been a notable lack of attention toward gender representation and equity within organizations that are exclusively part of the Paralympic Movement. This is symptomatic of researchers often overlooking the effects of intersectionality when studying gender and sport leadership or governance (Evans & Pfister, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, we examine female representation across the most senior governance bodies and positions of international organizations exclusive to the Paralympic Movement (from now on called ‘Paralympic organizations’). Second, we explore the prevalence of strategies being implemented by Paralympic organizations to increase the representation of women within decision-making positions. We aim to draw on these combined findings to discuss the extent to which Paralympic organizations are proactive and successful in implementing actions to resist (abled) male dominance within Paralympic governance. The findings will also be compared to equivalent data for organizations that are part of the Olympic Movement (some of which also have a remit for governing Paralympic sport; from now on called ‘Olympic organizations’). This allows for an exploration of the extent to which the findings are unique to the Paralympic Movement or follow similar trends to Olympic organizations.

We draw upon scholarship that explores sources of non-compliance with gender and governance actions amongst sport organizations (Geeraert, 2019), as well as Cohen’s (1999) concept of secondary marginalization, to aid our discussion on the proactivity and success of Paralympic organizations in actioning strategies to make their governance gender inclusive. In particular, we use this work to explore reasons why women continue to face marginalization within organizations that form part of a marginalized community. Before we present our theoretical framework in more detail, we will first provide a brief overview of existing literature relating to the key themes of the chapter.

** Literature Review**

There have been numerous attempts over time to capture the statistical representation of gender within the governance and leadership of international sport organizations (Adriaanse, 2016; 2019; Association of Summer Olympic International Federations, 2020; Henry & Robinson, 2010). Yet researchers and consultants have struggled to produce consistent data sets given the challenging task of encompassing the array of organizations, their different structures, and accessing hard-to-reach demographic information. Nevertheless, the common finding is that the representation of women in the governance of international sport organizations is poor and inequitable gender power relations continue to persist. Various strategies have been implemented to counter the subordination of women in leadership positions, with gender quotas being the most discussed strategy across existing literature. Quotas have been praised for their potential in overcoming poor female representation within international sport organizations, whilst also critiqued for encouraging the stereotyping of women as token leaders rather than valued leaders who have achieved their position on merit (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Pfister, 2010). Generally, it is recognized that a portfolio of complementary actions is required for meaningful change due to the complex and multi-faceted ways in which gender relations operate in an organization (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014).

Whilst there has been a growing body of work exploring gender inclusion in sport organizations, little attention has been paid to leadership, governance, gender, and its intersection with ableism within the Paralympic Movement (Brittain & Beacom, 2018; Culver & Shaikh, 2020). The governance of Paralympic sport has a complex history¹. Since its establishment in 1992, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Paralympic Movement have been strongly influenced institutionally, financially, and administratively by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Movement (Hums & Pate, 2018). The IPC has also had to manage existing power relations with International Organizations for Sport for the Disabled (IOSDs) (Gerard et al., 2020). Therefore, efforts to influence gender inclusion are strongly impacted by the complex stakeholder management involved.

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In 2003, the IPC established its Women in Sport Committee. One of its first objectives was ensuring a greater number of women in leadership roles, including a target that 30 per cent of all offices in IPC decision-making structures should be held by women by 2009 (International Paralympic Committee, 2010). Yet, over a decade later, this target has still not been achieved. According to Dean et al. (2021, p. 221), ‘only four of 14 (28%) IPC Governing Board members are women and only 29 (16%) of 173 listed National Paralympic Committees’ presidents are women’. Itoh et al. (2017) add that vertical gender segregation exists within the Paralympic Movement when women leaders encounter barriers in national structures and continental and international sport governance. Other contemporary research demonstrates the underrepresentation of women leaders in broader disability sport (Clark & Mesch, 2018) and, more generally, the ‘dearth of female athletes with disabilities in leadership positions’ (Slocum et al., 2018, p. 375). This aligns with broader contemporary findings of the underrepresentation of people with disabilities (both male and female) in sport leadership positions in some national sporting contexts (e.g., Sport England & UK Sport, 2019), as well as a history of sport for disabled people being a system that is largely organized and controlled by non-disabled people (Howe & Purdue, 2012).

Scholars have highlighted a double oppression of ableism and patriarchy that are experienced by women with disabilities in (sport) leadership (e.g., Culver & Shaikh, 2020; Hanlon & Taylor, 2022; Lindstrom et al., 2020; Majiet & Africa, 2015; Noonan et al., 2004). Within this chapter, we conceptualize patriarchy as a social system that ‘encourages male leadership, male domination and male power’ and consequently subjects women to the peripherals of decision-making (Adisa, et al., 2018, p. 22). The patriarchal positioning of women and femininity as inferior to men and masculinity has historically been amplified for women with disabilities. This is because they are ‘doubly disadvantaged when gender interacts with disability’ due to a combination of restrictive gender roles and low expectations based on disability (Noonan et al. 2004, p. 69). This has led to women with disabilities being viewed as ‘incapable of leading full and successful lives’, let alone capable of leading people and organizations (Majiet & Africa, 2015, p. 101). Such double oppression can limit

women with disabilities' sporting careers and work to prevent them from transitioning from an athletic career into a sport leadership career.

More recently, the IPC has worked to encourage greater self-governance and autonomy of Paralympic sport governance, including an intention of gender balance across its organizations (Dean et al., 2021). Yet, in practice, this does not exist. Paralympic organizations tend to be more focused on creating sustainable disability sport programming than committing resources to developing opportunities specifically for women with disabilities. Therefore, our chapter extends an understanding of the actions undertaken by Paralympic organizations to improve gender representation in senior governance whilst considering how intersectional and organizational power dynamics constrain Paralympic organizations in embracing such actions.

** Theoretical Framework: Secondary Marginalization**

The theory of intersectionality was first developed by Kimberley Crenshaw to draw attention to the ways in which the experiences of Black women are formed of intersecting oppressions and unique injustices because of the various identities that they embody (Crenshaw, 1991). Researchers working in the fields of work, organization, and management studies have drawn on the theory of intersectionality to highlight disadvantages associated with recruitment and promotion processes, working conditions, pay conditions, the distribution of work, and leadership/decision-making (Brown & Moloney, 2019). A limited body of work has explored the intersectional experiences of women sport administrators, managers, and leaders, including the experiences of indigenous women (Palmer & Masters, 2010), lesbian women (Robertson et al., 2019), Black women (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Simpkins et al., 2022), and multiple marginal identities (Walker & Melton, 2015). Particularly relevant to our discussions is a study by Hanlon and Taylor (2022) exploring the experiences of women with disabilities working within (Australian) sport organizations. They found that the women interviewed felt “othered” due to the intersectional bias they experienced from being both a woman and a person with a disability. This intersectional bias was attributed to an inherently abled and masculine sporting culture with entrenched entry barriers for women leaders.

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Much of the existing literature drawing on intersectionality theory has explored the exercise of power by dominant groups over ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘powerless’ groups (Cohen, 1999). Within this chapter, we explore gender power dynamics within organizations that form part of a marginalized community. We are interested in the underrepresentation of women and lack of action to increase the representation of women within Paralympic organizations that govern sport for people with disabilities (PWD): a social group that continues to face marginalization across all sectors of society (Egard et al., 2022). In doing so, we draw upon Cathy Cohen’s (1999) concept of secondary marginalization. This concept explores ways in which more privileged members of marginalized groups have control over the political interests and strategies of a group by managing or policing the boundaries of group identity. Within her work, Cohen examined ways in which already marginalized African American communities further marginalized black AIDS sufferers because they were ‘perceived as a disgrace to ‘the community’ and thus not worth the expense of the limited political capital controlled by black elites’ (Cohen, 1999, p. 70). Cohen argued that such secondary marginalization is comprehensible (but not condonable) when leaders of marginalized groups are directing most of their resources to protecting or increasing the limited political capital and opportunity for social mobility that exists within the group. This is linked to “politics of respectability”, where marginalized groups are ‘concerned above all with social acceptance ... to disprove dominant stereotypes about the group and to regulate and ‘improve’ the behavior of its members in line with socially approved norms’ (Gould, 2009, p. 89). The motivation for respectability politics is, therefore, that ‘by constituting the group as unthreatening and normatively acceptable, it becomes deserving of rights, equality, and fair treatment’ (Strolovitch & Crowder, 2018, p. 341). Examples of Paralympic organizations engaging in respectability politics include efforts to disprove negative stereotypes associated with PWD, to make Paralympic sport more entertaining for ‘mainstream’ spectators and, in turn, to make Paralympic sport more marketable (Brittain, 2018). Such marketability efforts in relation to female Paralympians have been found to emphasize discourses of heteronormativity and ableism through the sexualization, and in turn trivialization, of these athletes. For example, Weaving and Samson (2018) critiqued images of female Paralympic athletes in the ESPN *The Magazine’s Body Issue* for capitalizing on ableist hyperfeminine ideals by

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only including nude conventionally attractive young women, de-emphasizing the disabilities of the athletes, and capturing passive, non-sport specific poses.

Within this chapter we do not suggest that women leaders are positioned as ‘a disgrace’ to the Paralympic Movement, as was Cohen’s description of the perception of AIDS sufferers within African American communities. Quite the opposite, the IPC states within its Governance Review that diversity amongst leaders of the Movement ‘reflects the diverse nature of the Paralympic Movement’ (International Paralympic Committee, 2019, p. 9). Instead, we are drawing on this theoretical framework to explore how the positioning of Paralympic organizations within a marginalized PWD community impacts upon the prioritization of limited organizational resources, and in turn the influence of this on the reproduction and/or resistance of male dominance within decision-making positions of Paralympic organizations. In this regard, we see a lack of gender inclusion in Paralympic governance as an indirect result of secondary marginalization. That is, it is not an active strategy to marginalize women through fear of threat to the normative status of Paralympic organizations. Instead, it is symptomatic of the marginalized status of the PWD community assigning more resources/priority to respectability politics, leaving gender equitable governance as a lower priority. Before we discuss our findings, we will first outline our methodological approach.

** Methods**

We use the term ‘gender and governance actions’ to describe the range of strategies being implemented by the organizations that form our sample. We focus on six different forms of action: gender quotas; gender targets; gender election and recruitment rules; official documents that refer to gender and governance (e.g., a gender strategy); gender, equality, diversity, and inclusion-focused groups; and hosting or supporting women to attend women’s leadership development programs (WLDPs). Our empirical data was generated from an extensive focused search of the websites of 59 international sport organizations. The organizations spanned across six different groups: international multi-sport organizations (including the IOC and IPC; n=5), continental Olympic committees/councils (n=5), continental Paralympic committees/councils (n=5), summer Olympic international sport federations (IFs) that are members of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations

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(ASOIF; n=33), winter Olympic IFs that are members of the Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations (AIOWF; n=7), and IPC-recognized IFs that are not recognized by the International Olympic Committee (n=4)². For this chapter, we split the data across Paralympic (n=10) and Olympic (n=49) organizations. Data were communicated with each international sport organization to check for accuracy and 20 organizations responded with very few comments.

Two data sets are used to inform this chapter: a) female representation across senior leadership and governance positions of international sport organizations, and b) the prevalence of gender and governance actions within international sport organizations. The first data set comprised statistical information regarding female representation on: the highest governance body within each organization (board, council, or executive committee), the highest governance position within each organization (President or Chair), and the highest leadership position within each organization (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Director/Secretary General/Director General). The second data set comprised information on the prevalence of the six forms of gender and governance action studied. Data were generated from formal organizational documents, including terms of reference, statutes, policies, and articles of association that we downloaded and analyzed to understand the prevalence and nature of gender and governance actions being undertaken. The data collection period was January-February 2021. All data are accurate as of 19th February 2021. Data were collated into a master spreadsheet for descriptive statistical analysis.

** Findings**

We split our findings into two parts ahead of our discussion. First, we present and describe a comparison of the number of women in senior decision-making positions across Paralympic and Olympic organizations. Second, we present and describe data showing the prevalence of gender and governance actions across Paralympic and Olympic organizations. It should be noted that the sample size is much larger for Olympic organizations than Paralympic organizations.

Table 2.1. Percentage and Frequencies of the Representation of Women in Senior Decision-Making Positions across Olympic and Paralympic Organizations

	Women on the highest governance body		Women in the highest governance position		Women in the highest leadership position	
	Frequency/total positions		Frequency/total positions		Frequency/total positions	
International Paralympic organizations						
IPC	4/14		0/1		0/1	
Continental Paralympic Associations	8/34		0/3		1/3	
IPC-recognized IFs	10/39		0/4		0/4	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>22/87</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>0/8</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>1/8</i>	<i>13%</i>
International Olympic organizations						
International multi-sport organizations	14/53		0/4		2/4	
Continental Olympic Associations	19/95		0/5		0/5	
Summer Olympic IFs	181/817		2/33		8/31	
Winter Olympic IFs	15/86		1/7		1/7	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>229/1051</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>3/49</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>11/47</i>	<i>23%</i>
Total across organizations/ Percentage	251/1138	22%	3/57	5%	12/55	22%

The representation of women in international Paralympic governance remains poor (see Table 1) despite gender inclusion in Paralympic governance being an increasing concern for the IPC. There is particularly poor female representation across the most senior governance and leadership positions within Paralympic organizations, with just one of the 16 most powerful positions in international Paralympic governance being held by a woman (6%). This is in comparison to 14 of the 96 most powerful positions in international Olympic governance (15%), demonstrating poor female representation across both Olympic and Paralympic governance. Additionally, whilst female representation on the highest governance bodies of international Paralympic organizations (22/87; 25%) is significantly higher than female representation in the most powerful positions, and slightly higher percentagewise than their international Olympic counterparts (229/1051; 22%), there are still three times the number of men than women in international Paralympic decision-making positions. This is also below 30 per cent female representation, which is commonly presented as a minimum

requirement to reach a ‘critical mass’ where the voices of both genders are heard rather than simply representing a minority (Joecks et al., 2013). Furthermore, this is significantly below the 50% target set by the IPC (2017) for all decision-making structures of IPC members.

Table 2.2. Prevalence of gender and governance actions across Olympic and Paralympic organizations³

	Targets	Quotas	Election and recruitment rules	G, E, D, I groups	Official documents	WLDPs
<i>International Paralympic organisations</i>						
IPC (n=1)	1	0	1	1	1	1
CPAs (n=3)	1	0	0	1	0	1/2
IPC-recognised IFs (n=4)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Sub-frequency (percentage)</i>	<i>2/8 (25%)</i>	<i>0/8 (0%)</i>	<i>1/8 (13%)</i>	<i>2/8 (25%)</i>	<i>1/8 (13%)</i>	<i>2/7 (29%)</i>
<i>International Olympic organisations</i>						
International multi-sport organisations (n=3)	1	2	2	3	1	2
COAs (n=5)	0	3	1	5	1	2/4
Summer IFs (n=33)	11	28	15	23	18/32	13
Winter IFs (n=7)	2	6	3	3	5	1
<i>Sub-frequency (percentage)</i>	<i>14/48 (29%)</i>	<i>39/48 (81%)</i>	<i>21/48 (44%)</i>	<i>34/48 (71%)</i>	<i>25/47 (53%)</i>	<i>18/47 (38%)</i>
Frequency (percentage)	16/56 (29%)	39/56 (70%)	22/56 (39%)	36/56 (64%)	26/55 (47%)	20/54 (37%)

The data presented in Table 2 demonstrate the second key finding of this chapter: despite continuing to have poor female representation across their governance, few international Paralympic organizations are implementing gender and governance actions as a strategy to improve female representation across their governance bodies and leadership positions. It is unsurprising that the IPC is the only international Paralympic organization to demonstrate a clear commitment to gender and governance actions (it accounts for over half of the gender and governance actions undertaken by Paralympic organizations) given its position at the top of the Paralympic Movement governance

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hierarchy and its self-claimed mission ‘to lead the Paralympic Movement’ (International Paralympic Committee, 2022). It is also notable that international Paralympic organizations are less proactive than their Olympic counterparts across all six of the gender and governance actions researched in this study. In some cases, this is a significant difference, such as 81% (39/48) of Olympic organizations implementing quotas compared to no Paralympic organizations. As quotas are the only action to concretely ensure positive change in female representation (assuming compliance measures are in place), this is a particularly notable finding. Overall, it is clear that the portfolio of complementary governance actions recommended by Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) is some way from being a reality within the Paralympic Movement.

** Discussion**

In context of Paralympic organizations continuing to have poor female representation across their governance, in this section we start to address the question of why Paralympic organizations are so much less proactive than their Olympic counterparts in implementing gender and governance actions. We discuss two factors specific to the Paralympic Movement that we believe are influential in the discrepancy between the actions of Olympic and Paralympic organizations: 1) differences in top-down gender and governance policy within the Paralympic and Olympic Movements, and 2) intersections between ableism and patriarchy within the governance of the Paralympic Movement.

<c> Differences in top-down gender and governance policy within the Paralympic and Olympic Movements

Geeraert (2019) analyzed potential sources of non-compliance with governance policy by IFs to conclude that a key source of involuntary non-compliance is a lack of clarity on the requirements of governance principles. It is clear from studying recent policy documents of the IOC and IPC that differences exist in the extent to which they inform and encourage their member organizations to implement specific gender and governance actions. For example, the IOC presents specific ‘action-oriented recommendations for change’ for Olympic partner organizations within its *Gender Equality Report* as part of the IOC Equality Review Project (International Olympic Committee, 2018, p. 4).

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This report not only includes a 30 per cent gender target for decision-making positions across IOC members and partners, but also recommendations for the implementation of gender and governance actions such as governance restructuring, reformed electoral processes, more effective/embedded women in sport commissions/committees, and gender equality self-assessment (International Olympic Committee, 2018). It is clear from Tables 1 and 2 that not all international Olympic organizations have complied with the recommendations presented in the *IOC Gender Equality Report*, drawing into question the effectiveness of compliance measures attached to the IOC Gender Equality Review Project. However, there is clearly an existence of top-down policy encouraging the implementation of gender and governance actions amongst Olympic organizations.

Within the Paralympic Movement, in 2017 the IPC published its IPC Diversity and Inclusion Policy which came from recognition of ‘the importance of diversity and inclusion within all levels of the organization and throughout the wider Paralympic Movement’ (International Paralympic Committee, 2017, p. 2). Within this policy, the IPC set a target of at least 50 per cent women in all decision-making structures of all offices. However, no recommendations were provided on how organizations can achieve this target. Within the IPC’s (2010) Women in Sport Leadership Toolkit, which was published by the IPC’s Women in Sport Committee, there is a recommendation for organizations to establish a Women in Sport Committee with some recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the committee. However, the reach of this document across Paralympic organizations is unclear, as well as the extent to which any follow-up measures were implemented.

Clear differences in the policy approaches of the IOC and IPC can be seen, with the IOC implementing SMARTer (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goals for member organizations in comparison to the IPC. Such differences in top-down policy approaches are likely to be influential in the differences seen in our findings relating to the proactivity of international Olympic and Paralympic organizations in implementing gender and governance actions. Therefore, we agree with Geeraert’s (2019) suggestion that interpretation and specification are important tasks for the IPC to carry out when clarifying the governance principles being implemented and the specific requirements of the Paralympic organizations that are required to comply with them.

<c> Intersections between ableism and patriarchy within the governance of the Paralympic

Movement

Paralympic and disability sport has a history of marginalization. For Cohen (1999, p. 37), the ‘framework of marginalization begins with the basic concept of marginal groups – those who, to varying degrees, exist politically, socially, or economically “outside” of dominant norms and institutions’. In the context of Paralympic sport, marginalization has been anchored in stereotypes and social stigma relating to physical signs of difference between PWD and people without disabilities (Kolotouchkina et al., 2021). This has led to a lack of status and visibility of Paralympic sports and the organizations that govern them, resulting in a historical lack of funding and resource for these organizations compared to their Olympic counterparts (Brittain, 2019). This is significant in relation to our findings. Geeraert (2019) argued that an involuntary reason for sport organizations failing to comply with governance regulations is that they lack the resources and support to implement good governance actions. In other words, their resources are directed toward agendas deemed more essential to the immediate survival of the organization.

Cohen (1999) explained that the lack of access by marginalized groups to resources and skills can lead to a shortage of political and social capital. Marginalized groups, thus, must ‘develop strategies to address their needs and to challenge those structures that constrain their life choices’ (Cohen, 1999, p. 48). Paralympic organizations have historically held lower economic, political, social, and symbolic capital than their Olympic counterparts due to receiving less visibility, legitimation, and funding. This means that they must prioritize resources more carefully, with income generation, marketing/promotional work, and the operational functioning of organizations and sports being prioritized over efforts towards gender parity in their governance (Dean et al., 2021). Furthermore, Paralympic sport has historically been used as a platform for disability advocacy to advance the rights of PWD both in sport and wider society. Such ‘politics of respectability’ take additional resource from Paralympic organizations that Olympic organizations do not have to sacrifice due to their dominant position.

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The lack of prioritization of gender parity within Paralympic governance is further heightened by intersectionality bias in relation to patriarchy and ableism. Men continue to be overrepresented in Paralympic organizations across governance bodies and positions (as highlighted in Table 1). This can result in a patriarchal value system that prioritizes the interests of the majority (male) group (Hanlon & Taylor, 2022). Such a patriarchal value system can also result in a lack of understanding, visibility, and legitimization of the “double discrimination” that women with disabilities can face in sport. Specifically related to Paralympic governance, Dean et al. (2021, p. 7) discussed the influence of socially constructed ideas about the intersections of gender and disability, with women with disabilities often having to cope with ‘feelings of inadequacy and weakness associated with disability while simultaneously dealing with masculine values that subordinate and view them as the weaker gender’. Such internalized ableism, combined with gendered barriers, can prevent women with disabilities from actively pursuing opportunities to engage in Paralympic governance. With a key pipeline for Paralympic governance positions being PWD who are already engaged in the Paralympic Movement (e.g., athletes), it is particularly important for gender and governance actions to address and resist the double discrimination that women with disabilities face in accessing governance positions. Until patriarchal value systems are transformed, gender and governance actions are likely to remain subdued within Paralympic organizations.

Drawing on Cohen’s (1999) secondary marginalization theory, we suggest that the lower proactivity of Paralympic organizations in implementing gender and governance actions compared to their Olympic counterparts is partly due to their combined marginalized status and patriarchal value system. These (male-led) organizations are focusing their limited resources on advocacy work combined with establishing sustainability for the operation of disability sport rather than overcoming (gender) inequalities within the Paralympic Movement. We agree with Dean et al. (2021) who advocate that bespoke support and training must be provided to Paralympic organizations on how to generate more opportunities for women within the Paralympic Movement. However, importantly, this needs to be provided in combination with strategies to support the ongoing development of Paralympic organizations’ activities. This is because Paralympic organizations ‘may not even be able

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to apply to granting opportunities offered by the IPC to develop women athletes or women in leadership positions if they do not have the structural support for the ongoing development of women within their own sporting infrastructure' (Dean et al., 2021, p. 6).

** Conclusion**

Within this chapter we aimed to explore the extent to which Paralympic organizations are proactive and successful in implementing actions to provide opportunities for more women to positively influence Paralympic governance. This contributes to a severe lack of existing literature examining issues related to gender inclusion in Paralympic sport. According to Cohen (1999), marginal group members are denied access to the resources and skills that allow for substantial participation in decision-making. Women clearly remain marginal group members within Paralympic organizations, with a continued lack of female representation across the governance bodies and leadership positions of these organizations. Significantly, our findings also highlight the lack of proactivity amongst Paralympic organizations in implementing gender and governance actions as strategies to improve female representation within their governance. Notably, international Paralympic organizations are vastly outperformed by their Olympic counterparts in terms of organizational proactivity in implementing gender and governance actions.

Drawing on Geeraert's (2019) insights on involuntary non-compliance, we argue that one key reason for such stark differences in the proactivity of Paralympic and Olympic organizations is discrepancies in top-down gender and governance policy within the Paralympic and Olympic Movements. Drawing on this work allowed us to highlight how the lack of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) top-down governance principles, and fewer resources to implement them, can negatively impact the opportunity for gender-inclusive actions to be embedded within the governance of international Paralympic organizations. To extend our analysis, Cohen's (1999) concept of secondary marginalization was useful in exploring how the position of Paralympic organizations within a marginalized PWD community, in combination with a dominant patriarchal value system, impacts upon their lack of action in addressing women's underrepresentation in their senior governance and leadership. We discussed how Paralympic sport has historically been

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marginalized and those with responsibility for its advancement prioritize limited organizational resources toward its sustainability and their own mobility status (Cohen, 1999). As Dean et al. (2021) argued, the ability of national Paralympic organizations to commit resources to developing opportunities for gender-inclusive actions are hampered by a lack of agility in their structure, meaning operational functioning remains the core concern. This contributes to a continued lack of support for women to obtain governance positions within Paralympic organizations, including women with disabilities who have been found to encounter double discrimination in relation to both their gender and disability status. According to Cohen (1999), a unified response to such “stigmatizing, cross-cutting issues” that women (and particularly women with disabilities) face within Paralympic sport will not be advanced whilst leaders within a patriarchal value system continue to maintain control of the organization and direct resources in ways that continue to privilege men and masculinity.

At the time of writing, we are aware that the IPC are reviewing the Paralympic Movement’s provision of actions for gender-inclusivity. Following Dean et al. (2021), we recommend that greater support of international Paralympic organizations is required to share knowledge on how to encourage more gender-inclusive governance and grow the resources dedicated toward achieving gender-inclusive governance. This should, in turn, begin to challenge the dominance of privileged (male) members within these marginalized organizations. The dearth of research on Paralympic governance is noteworthy, though not entirely unsurprising given that the study of Olympic governance was slow to develop. The Paralympic Movement would benefit from more critical insights into its practice, particularly more (qualitative) attention being paid to micro/lived experiences and meso/cultural procedures and processes. Drawing on a diversity of theoretical perspectives will enable a greater exploration of the power complexities that exist within Paralympic governance: a sector that continues to exist politically, socially, and economically outside of the dominant norms and institutions of international sport.

 Notes

¹ The history of the governance of the Paralympic Movement is beyond the scope of this chapter. Gerard et al's. (2020) archival analysis and chronological ordering of significant events are useful here.

² These organisations are the Boccia International Sports Federation, World ParaVolley, the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation and the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation.

³ The number of organisations in each group is indicated in the first column. Where a difference to this number occurs, this is illustrated in the frequency. AIOWF is missing for all IMSO actions. The African and American Paralympic Associations are missing for all CPA actions. For official documents, World Skate is missing for Summer IFs. For WLDPs, Africa is missing from the COAs and Europe is missing from the CPAs.

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