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## Chapter 4

### **Past, Present, Future: Policy and Gender Equity in English Sport Leadership and Governance**

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#### **Abstract**

Within this chapter I explore how national policy that influences gender equity in English sport governance has developed over time. This includes a discussion on the impact of domestic equal treatment legislation and women and sport activism on the development of gender-related governance policy within the sector. I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to aid analysis of the effectiveness of top-down policy in creating transformational organisational change in the sector. I conclude that the extent to which sport governance policy has created transformational change within national governing bodies (NGBs) is uncertain. Some short-term success has been seen with increased average female representation across the boards of NGBs, but internalisation of the value of equitable, diverse, and inclusive governance appears to be lacking.

**Key words:** Sport governance, gender equity, policy, Bourdieu, England

#### **Introduction**

Within this chapter I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to aid analysis of how national policy related to gender equity in English sport governance has developed over time, and the extent to which this policy has created transformational change in the sector. Policy documents were identified from online searches, academic literature, and colleague recommendations. England is the largest of the four home countries that form the United

Kingdom (UK). In mid-2019 it had an estimated population of 56.29 million out of a total UK population of 66.8 million, with 50.6% of the population being female (Office for National Statistics, 2020). In 2019/20, 62.8% of the total population were active (engaging in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week), with 61% of women being active compared to 65% of men (Sport England, 2020). As highlighted in the introduction to this text, the English sport sector has a complex governance hierarchy due to the different power/funding relationships that exist at various levels and the differing levels of autonomy and power of organisations. While no single organisation controls the field, the two sports councils that have responsibility for England (currently UK Sport and Sport England) hold significant power within the sector because of their position, size, and control of the distribution of public funds. UK Sport has a primary focus on the management and distribution of funds for high performance sport (UK Sport, 2017b), whereas Sport England manages and distributes public investment to increase sport participation, develop and nurture talent, and invest in facilities (Sport England, 2021). National governing bodies of sport (NGBs) govern their individual sports in a semi-autonomous nature. Whilst they form their own strategies and governance rules that are bespoke to their sport and organisational resources, most NGBs are dependent on public funding to operate and are therefore subject to funding criteria set by UK Sport and Sport England.

English sport governance has in recent years moved ‘from volunteer driven entities to those experiencing the forces of commercialization and the infusion of paid staff to fulfil roles historically performed by volunteers’ (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015, p. 492). This ‘modernisation process’ has seen increased focus on improving the governance of English sport. One area of ‘good governance’ that has received increased policy attention over the past decade is gender representation within leadership positions, with a particular focus on increasing the

representation of women on the boards of NGBs. Despite positive action such as gender targets being relatively recent introductions to national sport governance policy, gender equity in sport governance is not a new topic of discussion. The underrepresentation of women leaders in sport has been formally identified as a key issue by activists and scholars since the 1980s. Over the past four decades, a growing number of scholars, activists, practitioners, and organisations have taken action to attempt to increase the number of women in sport governance positions. Alongside the development of sport governance policy, domestic equal treatment legislation has been introduced and developed at the national level, which has had varying degrees of influence over the governance of the sport sector. Before discussing the development and impact of national policy that influences gender equity in English sport governance, I will first introduce the theoretical framework of this chapter.

### **Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

Bourdieu's theory of practice provides a framework for understanding how cultural resources, processes, and institutions continually hold certain individuals and institutions within hierarchies of domination (Swartz, 2012). Within the theory of practice, Bourdieu's concept of the field refers to distinctive sectors of society that have a semi-autonomous, objective hierarchy constituted by individuals and institutions who follow the same sets of rules, rituals, and conventions (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) developed the concept of a 'field of forces' to describe how actors seek, 'individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position' within the field (p. 101). Bourdieu (1993) introduced the concept of a 'field of struggles', where a field of forces is either transformed or conserved depending on the success of individuals and groups of individuals in obtaining positions of power (p. 30). The rules of the field are legitimated by the very act of individuals following them (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Within the English sport sector, governance

rules have been developed by the two sports councils to, ‘protect the value for money the public receives from investment into sport and maximise the effectiveness of those investments’ (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016, p. 4).

Because of the field’s rules and regularities, Bourdieu (1993) compares the field to a game that will only function if there are stakes available and people prepared to ‘play the game’ (p. 72). For Bourdieu (1986), the stakes available within a field are four forms of capital: economic (e.g. money and assets); cultural (e.g. knowledge, experience, language, and taste/preferences); social (e.g. affiliations and networks); and symbolic (recognition and legitimation because of holding the other forms of capital). Capital is field- and situation-specific, and within this chapter I will explore the extent to which prospective capital accumulation (or loss) is used effectively as an influencing tool for compliance with governance rules in English sport.

Bourdieu argued that individuals learn the rules of the field in a semi-conscious fashion and embody this learning as habitus – “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” which are both “structured structures” that are impacted by the behaviours and interactions of individuals, and “structuring structures” that impact upon the future actions and behaviours of individuals (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). In this chapter I focus on behaviour and action at the organisational level rather than the individual level, and to do so I draw on the concept of organisational habitus. Organisational habitus conceptualises the ‘informal, unconscious practices which interact to guide the dispositions of the organisation as a whole’ (Kitchin & Howe, 2013, p. 129) and ‘governs the allocation of power positions in the organisational context’ (Tatli, 2010, p. 12). Within this chapter I will use Bourdieu’s theory of practice to analyse the development of national ‘rules’ in the form of policy that has influenced gender equity in the governance of

English sport over time, and the extent to which these ‘rules’ have been followed to create transformational change in the sector.

### **1970s: The Introduction of Domestic Equal Treatment Legislation**

The 1970s was a key decade for many countries in the Global North in implementing domestic equal treatment legislation amid growing pressure from women’s rights groups, unions, and women’s professional organisations. The implementation of such policy at the national level was an important preceding factor in the development of gender-related policy in the administration and governance of the sport sector. This is because it gave legitimacy to the opposition of traditional patriarchal structures of power and provided a platform from which sport gender policy could develop. The direct influences of such legislation on the improvement of the working conditions and rights of women in the English sport sector were less visible at the time of their implementation, however.

In England, a Labour government first introduced domestic equal treatment legislation during this decade (Alter & Vargas, 2000). The two most noticeable forms of legislation were the Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) of 1975. The EPA was enacted to prevent discrimination in relation to the terms and conditions of employment between men and women. However, continued issues of gendered job segregation meant that ‘the law, as a solution, still lagged seriously behind the actuality of the problem’ (Conley, 2014, p. 313). That is, women continued to be overrepresented in positions that were deemed to be junior and low-skilled (e.g. secretaries and machinists) and underrepresented in positions that were deemed to be senior and skilled (e.g. management and leadership positions). The implementation of the EPA was, therefore, a ‘conservation strategy’ that did little to change the conventions of the field because a greater volume of economic capital (i.e. higher pay) and

symbolic capital (i.e. prestige) continued to be more available to men working in male-dominated roles and sectors than women working in female-dominated roles and sector. With a severe underrepresentation of women in English sport leadership positions, the EPA did little to change gender inequitable power relations within the administration and governance of the sector.

Following the implementation of the EPA, the SDA was passed ‘to render unlawful certain kinds of sex discrimination ... and establish a Commission with the function of working towards the elimination of such discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between men and women’ (legislation.gov.uk, 2016, para. 1). The purpose of the act was to eliminate discrimination within public contexts, which meant that private and single-sex clubs were exempt from the SDA. As most sports clubs fall into these categories, the SDA did little to prevent the subordination of women within sports clubs. Many voluntary sport leaders start their sport leadership career within club governance and therefore the SDA failed to disrupt a male-dominated pipeline for senior voluntary governance positions. Additionally, the SDA failed to address racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination that women sport leaders experienced both inside and outside of the workplace. Despite this, the SDA did protect women working in paid sport administration in several ways, including its protection of women from being discriminated on the basis of gender in recruitment, during employment, or by dismissal (legislation.gov.uk, 2016). Bourdieu argues that external influences are ‘retranslated’ into the internal logic of fields because they are mediated through the structure and dynamic of fields (Swartz, 1996). Whilst the policies discussed in this section are not specific to the field of sport, they have still been important external influences on when and how policy directly related to gender equity in sport governance has developed.

## **1980 – 1999: Critical discussions and action plans in the sport sector**

Following from the introduction of domestic equal treatment legislation in the 1970s, the 1980s and 90s were important decades in activists heightening awareness and consciousness of the underrepresentation of women in English (and global) sport governance. Increased reflexivity ‘allows us to alter our perception of the situation and thereby our reaction to it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 136), and so the work of activists in initiating a public conversation about how to increase the representation of women in sport governance was an extremely important step in action being taken. At the European level, women’s underrepresentation in sport governance was formally discussed for the first time by activists at a senior level in the 1980s. The first recorded discussion was at a Council of Europe seminar held in Dublin in 1980, although this seminar did not have much impact on national sport policies (Matthews, 2014). The 1980s also saw the publication of the first significant research study on gender balance in British sport governance (White & Brackenridge, 1985). This paper found that little change had occurred in female representation in the male-dominated leadership teams of British national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) between 1960 and 1985.

Around the same time that their study was published, Anita White and Celia Brackenridge played a key role in co-founding the Women’s Sport Foundation (WSF) in 1985. WSF was formed by a group of women who wanted to address issues of male-domination, discrimination, and inequalities faced by women in sport (White, 2003). This included campaigning for increased representation of women in sport governance. Women were identified as a target group within national sport policy in the early 1980s, but the focus was largely on sports participation (Green & Houlihan, 2005). White took up a position as Assistant Director of National Services (later promoted to Director of Development) at the GB Sports Council (now Sport England and UK Sport) in 1990, which provided the opportunity for her to use her social

and cultural capital to bridge her activist work within the WSF and her administrative work within the Sports Council. The GB Sports Council first formally addressed the issue of an underrepresentation of women in sport leadership positions in 1993, with the publication of *Women and Sport: Policy and Framework for Action* (Sports Council, 1993). One of the frameworks for action was to increase the number of women involved in the organisation of sport and to encourage them to reach senior positions (Sports Council, 1993). The policy was influenced by the 'women and sport movement' in the UK at the time and was produced alongside equality and anti-discrimination documents (White, 2003).

Further calls for improved gender balance in sport leadership were made in 1999 when the WSF published the *National Action Plan for Women's and Girls' Sport and Physical Activity* in partnership with Sport England's Women and Sport Advisory Group (Women's Sports Foundation/Sport England, 1999). The *National Action Plan* identified eight areas where change was needed, one of which was leadership. Associated aims included increasing the number of women leaders at all levels of sport, seeking at least equal representation of women on decision-making bodies and within decision-making positions, and supporting the development of women within sport administration and management positions (Women's Sports Foundation/Sport England, 1999).

In addition to the 1980s and 90s seeing the start of critical discussion and action plans on gender equity in sport governance at the national level, England was also a hub for the development of international action to increase the representation of women in sport governance. For example, Anita White and the GB Sports Council were central to the organisation of the first International Conference on Women and Sport that took place in Brighton, UK, in 1994. One legacy of the Brighton conference was the formation of the International Working Group for



Women and Sport (IWG), which was established to coordinate and monitor different strands of an international strategy to advance women and sport globally, and to organise future international women and sport conferences (Matthews, 2014). White was Co-Chair of the IWG during its first secretariat between 1994 and 1998, at a time when the IWG and other women and sport organisations (e.g. WomenSport International) utilised personal connections within the global sport administration to lobby major organisations for change. This included influencing the IOC's introduction of leadership targets for women's membership of National Olympic Committee (NOC) Executive Committees in 1997 (Matthews, 2014). These targets were an important step forward in the IOC demonstrating a seriousness in their approach to gender equality. However, NOCs only affect part of the system of Olympic and sport administration and mere compliance with these targets did not address the multi-layered nature of gender inequity within international sport governance, including problematic male-dominated organisational cultures.

Women and sport organisations and activists that formed the 'women and sport movement' were central to starting critical conversations on the underrepresentation of women in sport governance and importantly used their social and cultural capital to influence policy change. Despite the importance of this work, 'white, Western, middle-class discourse did come to dominate the movement, and ... attempts to embrace difference were shackled by broader political environments and resources' (Matthews, 2018, pp. 184-185). As will be outlined in the following section, the roles of women and sport organisations continue to be important in holding policy makers accountable for the top-down measures they implement. Therefore, it is important that those individuals and groups who continue to lobby for change include the voices of *all women* to avoid the reproduction of sport organisations as 'inequality regimes' that give dominant women greater access to decision-making positions due to their privileged

positionality (see Chapter 2 within this text). It is particularly important for a diversity of activist voices to push for governance measures that contribute to genuine, transformational change towards gender equitable sport governance rather than tokenistic or a tick-box exercises that fail to disrupt deep-rooted male-dominated organisational habitus and transform the gendered logic of practice of NGBs.

### **2000 - 2020: The reform of domestic equal treatment legislation and development of national sport governance policy**

Gender-related domestic equal treatment legislation introduced in the 1970s, including the EPA and SDA, was heavily criticised for containing numerous exemptions, applying only to a proportion of the female workforce, and employing a limited conception of equality of employment opportunity (Alter & Vargas, 2000). In response to such criticism, as well as a need to simplify and integrate the numerous anti-discrimination laws that were in place, the SDA was replaced by the Equality Act in October 2010. This is a single Act that brought together nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation (Government Equalities Office, 2010). The Equality Act highlights intersectionality within society and helps to legally protect all women (and men) from discrimination rather than homogenising the experiences of women. There are two key components of the Equality Act that have more influence over gender equity in sport governance than the SDA. First, all sports clubs come under the Equality Act, either as a provider of service to the public or an association whose access is controlled by membership rules. Second, the Act permits positive action through favourable treatment towards persons who suffer a disadvantage that is connected to a protected characteristic. Positive action is different to positive discrimination, with the latter being illegal in the UK. Positive action in the form of funding-related gender governance

targets has been a key strategy for increasing the number of women in English sport governance.

New policy was also implemented in response to criticism of the EPA failing to address the actuality of the problem of wage disparity in the UK. Gender pay gap reporting was introduced to identify ‘the difference in the average hourly wage of all men and women across a workforce’ (HM Government, 2018, para. 1). Since April 2017, employers in the UK with more than 250 staff are required, by law, to publish figures on their gender pay gap, gender bonus gap, the proportion of men and women receiving bonuses, and the proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation’s pay structure (Government Equalities Office, 2017). Whilst there are no consequences for organisations that have particularly wide gender pay gaps, the process of reporting increases awareness of the issue and publicly scrutinises the gendered practices of organisations. In Chapter 11 of this text, Velija provides gender pay gap data for 56 sport organisations, including national sector organisations, governing bodies and professional clubs. As discussed by Velija, the publication of gender pay gap data has the potential to shift behavioural expectations in sport organisations as the shame associated with non-compliance may impact on potential reputational damage. I will not discuss gender pay gap reporting and the performance of sport organisations in any further depth here as Velija’s chapter is dedicated to this topic.

Alongside legislative reform at the national level, the second decade of the new millennium also saw significant developments in sport governance policy to address the issue of an underrepresentation of women within decision-making positions. Women and sport organisations continued to play an important role in this, with the WSF maintaining their central voice in lobbying for change. WSF changed its name to the Women’s Sport and Fitness

Foundation (WSFF) in 2007, before becoming Women in Sport (WIS) in 2014. Since 2004, WSF/WSFF/WIS have developed an annual audit on the gender make-up of boards and executive teams of British NGBs and released the first *Trophy Women?* audit in 2010 (Women in Sport, 2018). In 2015, WIS published *A Checklist for Change*, a document that offers recommendations to organisations on how to increase senior-level female representation within their leadership and governance (Women in Sport, 2015). WIS have used the findings of their audits to support continued campaigns for action to be taken at the national level to increase the number of women in English sport governance, including the introduction of national gender governance targets (Women in Sport, 2017). A notable weakness of these audits is that they only record representation of women in comparison to men. Moving forward, it would be beneficial for these audits to also record the social location of the women who are increasingly taking up decision-making positions within English sport governance to develop a greater understanding of *which* women are being represented and *which* women continue to be unseen and unheard within the sector.

The first time that gender governance targets were introduced for English NGBs was in 2012 when Sport England published the *On Board for Better Governance Strategy*. This national sport governance strategy set an expectation for NGBs applying for public funding to reflect good governance (Sport England, 2012). The strategy outlined six key requirements for an effectively governed NGB. This included expectations that their governance structures demonstrate transparency, that they engage in open recruitment practices, and that they aim to attract a diverse range of candidates to the board that are representative of the community that the NGB serves or seeks to engage (Sport England, 2012). This latter expectation included a target that the boards of NGBs should comprise of at least 25% women by 2017. The 25% target was established in line with the *Davies Report*, a review of the underrepresentation of

women on the corporate boards of Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 companies (Sport England, 2012; Women on Boards UK, 2011).

Another significant development for progressing action in increasing the number of women in sport governance was the establishment of The Women and Sport Advisory Board in 2013. The aim of the Advisory Board was to bring together experts from a number of fields, including politics, business, media, sponsorship, sport business, and sport coaching, to formulate practical solutions for making progress on women's involvement in sport (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2014, 2015a). The Advisory Board produced a final report before disbanding in 2015 that offered recommendations across five areas of work, one of which was improving women's representation in leadership and the workforce (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015a). It was recommended within the report that sport organisations set a 30% target for minimum representation of women and men on their boards by the end of next Parliament (2020; Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015a). This target was drawn from the women's leadership campaign group, 'The 30% Club', who argue that a minimum of 30% representation of each gender on boards is needed to reach a 'critical mass' where the voices of both genders are heard rather than simply representing a minority (30% Club, 2015). This aligns with research that has found that organisations with at least 30% representation of women and men on their boards outperform those with a skewed representation (Joecks, Pull, & Vetter, 2013), and that women have more confidence to speak up and raise issues when there are at least three women on the board (Kramer, Konrad, & Hooper, 2006).

Recommendations presented by the Women and Sport Advisory Board informed the 2015 national sport strategy *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015b). *Sporting Future* was the first national strategy to dedicate a

whole section to the governance and leadership of sport (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015b). A 25% target for female representation on boards was repeated within this strategy document along with a requirement for Sport England and UK Sport to agree a new sports governance code by September 2016. In response to this request, Sport England and UK Sport jointly published *A Code for Sports Governance* in 2016 (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). *A Code for Sports Governance* was influenced by a range of models of governance from both inside and outside of sport. Additionally, Sport England and UK Sport consulted with over 200 sporting and non-sporting organisations to understand some of the key issues in sport governance (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). The greater breadth of governance models informing the Code and input from various ‘players’ within the field was a marked improvement from the previous strategy.

Compliance with *A Code for Sports Governance* is mandatory for all organisations seeking public funding, but the level of compliance required is based on a tiered approach. Each tier has bespoke timelines and requirements depending on the level of investment the organisation receives. All NGBs sit within tier three, which represents the top level of mandatory governance requirements within the Code (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). Tier 3 is for organisations that request funding over a period of years for a continuing activity and/or that receive funding that amounts to more than £1 million (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). Five principles of good governance structure the Code, and each principle has a list of mandatory requirements that are tailored to each tier.

Two of the principles outlined within the Code are related to gender equity in sport governance: ‘structure’ and ‘people’. ‘Structure’ requires organisations to have a clear and appropriate governance structure to drive the success of the organisation and ensure it is well managed

(Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). Key areas of focus under this principle include the structure of the board, the structure of the council, the board size and composition, the term limits of board members, and board committees. The governance structure of an organisation can impact upon gender equity in governance in different ways. For example, bringing in independent directors can disrupt ‘the prevalence and power of field-specific dominant male habitus ... on the board’ (Piggott & Matthews, 2020, p. 7). Additionally, having term limits can prevent male board members from being ‘stuck to their seats’ (Pfister & Radtke, 2009). Furthermore, having committees dedicated to gender and/or diversity, equality and inclusion can give a voice to related issues at the highest level of governance.

‘People’ requires that ‘each organisation adopt a target of, and take all appropriate actions to encourage, a minimum of 30% of each gender on its board’ (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016, p. 42). The Code explicitly states that 30% is a target and not a quota because it is more process-focused on organisations demonstrably committing to working towards this target rather being outcome-focused on achieving 30% representation. This encourages NGBs to develop a plan over time that best suits the organisation and its resources. At the end of 2017, it was reported that 55 out of the 58 NGBs required to comply with the code had demonstrated that they were ‘playing by the rules’ and working towards achieving the requirements (UK Sport, 2017a). In 2019, Sport England and UK Sport reported that women now make up an average of 40% of board members across Sport England and UK Sport-funded bodies (Sport England & UK Sport, 2019). This demonstrates short-term success in increasing female representation in English sport governance. However, these statistics do not provide a complete picture of the application of the Code and the current state of gender equity in English sport governance.

In August 2020, *The Telegraph* reported that seven NGBs had not ‘followed the rules’ and failed to meet the 30% gender target set out in *A Code for Sports Governance*, including two of the largest NGBs in England: the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and England Hockey (Rumbsy, 2020). It was also reported that a provision in the Code for non-compliant bodies to be stripped of public money was not applied to these seven NGBs. Furthermore, research has found that informal practices (e.g. gendered language/humour, discrimination, gendered dress codes, expectations around working hours, and informal gender segregation) continue to contribute to problematic organisational habitus that reinforce gendered structures of dominance that privilege (dominant) men and masculinity, and normalise and naturalise the positions of men as leaders within English sport governance (Piggott & Pike, 2020; *Women in Sport*, 2018). It has also been found that there is continued male dominance in the most senior positions across the governance hierarchies of NGBs (e.g. Chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and President), and a continued underrepresentation of women in the pipeline for board positions and across paid administrative hierarchies of English NGBs (Piggott, 2019; Piggott, Pike, & Matthews, 2019). These positions are not influenced by the Code as it is only focused at the board-level.

UK Sport and Sport England responded to the *Telegraph* article by saying that ‘huge progress has been made’ but admitted that ‘the reality is there is still a long way to go’ (Rumbsy, 2020, para. 14). They have also highlighted that there is still a long way to go in terms of board representation across minority groups. Sport England and UK Sport (2019) reported that positions on the boards of Olympic and Paralympic national governing bodies (NGBs) in the UK had 5% representation by people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (compared to 13% in the wider UK population), 5% representation from people who declared themselves as having a disability (compared to 22% in the wider UK population),



and 3% representation of people who identified as being openly LGBT+ (compared to 2% in the wider UK population). These statistics show that we should not just be investigating the *number* of women on sport boards, but also *which* women have representation and a voice. There is a distinct lack of academic research on the experiences of people from minority groups in English sport governance to shed light on the reasons for continued trends of representation injustice amongst these groups. UK Sport and Sport England announced in July 2020 that they will conduct an immediate joint review of *A Code for Sport Governance* that will focus on three key areas, including a substantive review of the elements of the Code that support equality, diversity, and inclusion, with a particular focus on greater representation of people from BAME backgrounds, people with a disability or long-term health condition, and women (UK Sport, 2020).

Some positive steps have been taken over the past two decades to work towards achieving gender-balanced boards in English sport. The governance rules of the field have been changed to encourage organisational sub-fields (NGBs) to reform their internal governance rules and structures to be more gender equitable, most notably with the introduction of targets for minimum gender representation on NGB boards. Despite short-term success in increasing the representation of women on the boards of NGBs, the transformative impact of gender targets and quotas on gender equity in sport governance have been questioned by scholars, including concerns of ‘tokenism’ leading to reduced quality of board members and increased discrimination against female board members (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Pfister, 2010). Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) argued that quotas are essential for advancing gender *equality* through reducing the dominance that men have both in power and production, but gender quotas are not sufficient to advance gender *equity* within sport organisations because there are other gendered dimensions operating simultaneously. Furthermore, in

addition to gender inequity, other hierarchies of domination have also been revealed with a continued underrepresentation of minority groups across English sport governance. With the organisational habitus of NGBs continuing to privilege dominant (i.e. white, heterosexual, able-bodied) men and masculinity, there is an indication that English sport governance policy has not yet created transformational change. Instead, it is an example of what Bourdieu (1991) calls a ‘regulated liberty’: an exercise of power that arises within the context of the existing social order.

### **Summary**

Within this chapter I have explored how national policy has influenced gender equity in the governance of English sport. Adopting a Bourdieusian framework has aided a multi-layered understanding of the extent to which national policy implemented both inside and outside of the sport sector has been internalised by sport organisations and has transformed the internal gendered logic of the field. Domestic equal treatment legislation has been important in protecting the rights of women working in sport administration and legitimating the opposition of organisational practices that privilege dominant men. These external influences were important in legitimating the efforts of women and sport activists lobbying for action in increasing the representation of women in sport leadership positions. Such lobbying attempts influenced the ‘retranslation’ of legislation and policy towards gender equality within wider English society into the internal logic of English sport, with the eventual introduction of gender-related governance rules within sport policy. It is noticeable, however, that the ‘retranslation’ of this legislation has led to sport policy mirroring national policy in lacking in addressing the underrepresentation and intersectional inequalities that minority women continue to face.

The extent to which governance rules in English sport have been internalised by NGBs is still uncertain. Some impact has been seen with increased female representation on the boards of most NGBs, but a small group of NGBs have failed to comply with *A Code for Sports Governance* with no punitive action taken against them. Non-compliance, from in some cases established and influential NGBs, contributes to the disempowering of gender targets. The lack of punitive action against non-compliant bodies reduces the stakes at play (i.e. highly valued economic capital in the form of public funding) for not following the rules of the field. Furthermore, the internalisation of the value of equitable, diverse, and inclusive governance seems to be lacking across NGBs, with continued underrepresentation of women across positions and hierarchies that are not stipulated by the Code and a severe underrepresentation of minority groups across all organisational hierarchies. This demonstrates that top-down governance requirements tied to funding that only target the voluntary governance hierarchies of sport organisations do not go far enough in transforming the deep-rooted organisational habitus of NGBs.

A review of *A Code for Sports Governance* is a welcome step from UK Sport and Sport England, but it will be important that organisations are supported to address cultural change, meet the diverse needs the workforce, and understand the value of equitable, diverse, and inclusive governance. Future research can support attempts to transform English sport organisations into more diverse and inclusive organisations by focusing on diversity and inclusion more broadly than a sole gender-focus and contributing to a better understanding of the reasons for certain demographic trends across leadership and governance positions. This includes a need for more intersectional research that explores how an individual's positionality can assist or hinder their ability to progress within the leadership and governance of English sport. Furthermore, research on gendered organisations has historically tended to focus more

on demonstrating the existence of gendered organisations rather than theorising about how to create transformational change within organisations to advance gender equity. As sport governance policy continues to develop, it is important that scholarship continues to analyse the adequacy of top-down interventions and understand what is required to achieve transformative change in the gendered logic of English sport leadership and governance.

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