Gender Equity in UK Sport Leadership and Governance

Introduction

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As we were editing this text a high-profile example emerged of why a text on gender and sport leadership and governance is needed. Yoshiro Mori, the head of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee resigned in February 2021 after making derogatory comments about women in meetings. He had complained during a Japanese Olympic Committee meeting that talkative woman make meetings 'drag on too long' (McCurry, 2021). He went on to say that if one woman speaks, they then all feel the need to speak, suggesting this as a reason for limiting the number of women in meetings. Whilst this example is located within the culturally specific context of Japan, which has a long history of leadership positions being dominated by men across its society, it is also situated within the internationally focused Olympic Movement and reflects similar examples of discrimination towards women sport leaders that have been reported by researchers across the world, including within the UK. This high-profile case simultaneously highlights a changing sport governance landscape and the ongoing issues that women face working in the leadership and governance of the sector. On the one hand, the global media attention that resulted from Mori's comments, and his subsequent resignation, demonstrates how these comments are now publicly and globally viewed by many as being unacceptable. On the other hand, the fact that the comments were made in the first place demonstrates the everyday sexism that women continue to face within

sport governance. Mori resigned because his comments were made public, but this draws our attention to the fact that there is ongoing resistance to women's involvement in sport governance. There are then, many reasons why a book like this is needed: to challenge the perception that equity has been achieved, to reflect on progress and change over a long-term process and to highlight the ongoing experiences of women in the sport sector. When we discussed what a text on *Gender Equity and UK Sport Leadership and Governance* should include, we wanted to bring together a text that would engage people in thinking about gender equity and make visible the everyday experiences of women working in the sector. To do this we wanted to synthesise theoretical and evidence-based chapters that identify some of the ongoing inequalities in the sector.

To date, only two edited texts have focused on scholarship on gender and equity in sport governance – Burton and Leberman (2017) and Elling, Hovden and Knoppers (2019) – and both provide a broader context outside of the UK. We decided to bring together the work of scholars who have knowledge or research experience specific to the UK context into one collection. This includes: critical analyses of current strategy, policy, structure and practice across the contexts of the four home nations that form the UK; theoretical discussions of how we can think differently about gender relations in UK sport governance to uncover unexplored organisational practices that continue to contribute to gender inequity; and evidence-based suggestions on how to create change within the sector through future research and applied practice. In this introductory chapter we highlight the importance of the topic, outline existing literature in the field, contextualise key terms used throughout the book, and provide readers with an explanation of the organisation and structure of sport in the UK.

Why is a book on gender equity in UK sport governance still needed?

In response to increased professionalisation, commercialisation and accountability requirements for public funding in the sport sector, UK sport organisations have been placed under increased pressure to demonstrate 'good governance' in recent years. This reflects a process of transformation whereby national governing bodies (NGBs) have moved 'from volunteer driven entities to those experiencing the forces of commercialisation and the infusion of paid staff to fulfil roles historically performed by volunteers' (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015, p. 492). Sport England and UK Sport (2016, p. 4) stress that those entrusted with decision-making positions within the sport sector therefore 'need to constitute and equip themselves in a manner that allows them to thrive in this shifting environment … to protect the value for money the public receives from investment into sport and maximise the effectiveness of those investments'.

Both scholars and practitioners are increasingly arguing the benefits of gender-balanced sport boards for a range of meritocratic, democratic, and social justice reasons. Meritocratic arguments include that increased representation of women positively impacts upon: improved organisational performance, access to the widest talent pool, more informed decision-making, and creative and forward-thinking boards (Childs, 2016; Women in Sport, 2015; Women on Boards UK, 2011). Democratic arguments are based on claims that gender-balanced sport governance achieves a legitimacy that is more representative of the people it represents (i.e., stakeholders within the sport sector) and is therefore in a better position to respond to the needs of the 'market' (Szydlo, 2015). And finally, social justice arguments include that gender parity in sport governance is a matter of fairness, human rights, and a key dimension in achieving gender justice (Hovden, Knoppers, & Elling, 2019; Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). While there has historically been an

underrepresentation of women in UK sport governance, Table 1 highlights how female representation has improved on the boards of publicly funded NGBs over the last decade, reflecting changing behaviors and opportunities for women. Whilst the representation of female board members in sport organisations has increased, there remain variations across sports and across the four home countries. This highlights some of the ongoing challenges to female representation that this book seeks to address.

Insert Table 1

As Table 1 shows, there is a lack of consistency of data collected on gender representation in UK sport governance across the four home countries, with notable gaps in data from organisations outside of England.

Chapters within this book highlight that there is still some way to go in achieving gender equity in UK Sport governance as well as illustrating the lack of diversity and need to address the issue through an intersectional lens. From a historical perspective, Nicholson (Chapter 3) stresses the need to better understand the historic processes and practices (particularly mergers) that have shaped the contemporary cultures of UK NGBs. This can help to inform the continued challenges facing many merged NGBs in achieving gender equity within their governance. At the policy level, various authors discuss continued challenges in how policy is implemented and how it translates at the everyday level. This includes non-compliance from some NGBs with gender representation targets that are part of governance rules in English sport (see Piggott, Chapter 4). At the cultural level, Preston and Velija (Chapter 8) discuss findings that women continue to experience the English Football Association (The FA) as an exclusionary space due to intersecting forms of power continuing to privilege men and masculinity. Clayton-Hathway (Chapter 9) explores governance

and leadership in horse racing. Furthermore, theoretically positioned chapters highlight the importance of drawing upon different theoretical perspectives, including critical/queer theory (see Knoppers, Chapter 1) and intersectional frameworks (see Simpkins, Chapter 2) to make visible and question organisational processes that may contribute to the exclusion of women and minorities.

Definitions of key terms

In this section we define the key terms and concepts utilised by authors throughout this book, not only to aid understanding of the key issues discussed throughout the book, but also to provide our understanding of the terms that are often used interchangeably to provide conceptual clarity.

Gender equality vs gender equity

The terms gender equality and gender equity are often used interchangeably, despite having different meanings and requiring different approaches when they are implemented through policy or strategy. Gender equality is concerned with 'sameness' and treating men and women equally (Coakley & Pike, 2014). This includes equal treatment in laws and policies and promoting equal access to resources and services. The concept of gender equality has been criticised by feminists because, 'treating women and men in the same way does not give them equal opportunity because they start from different points' (Skirstad, 2009, p. 12).

Criticisms of gender equality has led others to argue that men and women should be treated differently to achieve equality of outcome (Skirstad, 2009). This is known as gender equity, which 'denotes fairness and justice in the distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits available to men and women, and the strategies and processes used to achieve gender equality' (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019, p. 367). For example, gender equity is the focus of positive action

through strategies such as gender/diversity quotas, always shortlisting a woman when recruiting for leadership positions or having women-only leadership programmes or mentoring schemes (including schemes and programmes for minority women). These strategies and policies are focused on achieving equality of outcome for a diversity of men and a diversity of women. While the terms gender equality and gender equity are used by authors throughout the different chapters of this book depending on the focus of the chapter, they are not used interchangeably and are explained by the authors. For instance, in Chapter 12 Renfree, Burgess and Jones provide an example of how to engage Generation Z in Gender Equality and Sport Governance.

Governance / Leadership

As with gender equality/equity, governance and leadership are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably within the sport literature. Governance is concerned with 'the system by which the elements of an organisation are directed, controlled and regulated' (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007, p. 3). Sport governance is, therefore, the responsible management of sport and all its components across clubs, educational institutions, NGBs, government agencies, sport service organisations, and professional teams (Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2009). This includes the implementation of planning, policy, and strategy, and is more than simply the day-to-day management of the organisation.

The governance of most UK sport organisations is led by two key groups of leaders. First, the board of directors is the highest decision-making level within the governance of UK sport organisations. Boards are voluntary and typically concerned with the development of strategy to improve or maintain the organisation's performance. Second, the executive/senior

leadership/management team is typically a team of paid employees who head the different departments of the organisation and are led by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or equivalent role. The role of this team is to lead and make operational decisions on the delivery of the strategy of the organisation which has been agreed by the board.

Whereas governance is concerned with the systematic workings of organisations, leadership relates to the positions, behaviours, and interactions of individuals. The term leadership has many meanings and can mean different things for different people. The concept of leadership can, for example, refer to: a trait or behaviour (a leadership style); a transactional event to achieve a common goal, such as rewarding or punishing a follower based on their performance (a leadership process); or a formal organisational role of an individual (a leadership position; Northouse, 2010; Western, 2008). Western (2008, p. 23) describes leadership as 'a certain type of social interaction between people', and a leader as 'a person who has influence over others'. For Thorpe and Gold (2010), leadership is an 'activity that is visionary, creative, inspirational, energising and transformational' (p. 3).

Chapters within this book cover topics relating to gender equity in both sport governance and sport leadership. Some chapters present discussions that are solely focused on leadership, such as Booth (Chapter 10) who uses the findings and recommendations from her research to outline how a model of everyday leadership can challenge the inequalities in UK sporting systems. Some chapters discuss issues relating specifically to governance, such as Dennehy (Chapter 6) who examines gender power relations that drive governance and sport in Scotland. And other chapters discuss both leadership and governance, such as Renfree, Burgess and Jones (Chapter 12), who present a

case study of a collaborative project (the Gender Equality Toolkit for Generation Z) as part of their discussion on how to engage Generation Z in understanding and challenging gender inequality in sport leadership and governance.

Targets/Quotas

Both gender targets and gender quotas are discussed in various chapters within this book. Whilst both have the aim of increasing female representation in sport leadership and governance according to a requirement of a minimum number/percentage of women or of each gender, they are two distinctly different approaches. They also have different strengths and limitations. The key difference between the two approaches is that targets are voluntary and aspirational, whereas quotas are mandatory (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). Due to their voluntary and aspirational nature, targets can allow organisations to take more time to focus more on the process of sustainably committing to achieving minimum gender representation as there are no sanctions if the target is not achieved (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). In contrast, the mandatory nature of quotas places pressure on organisations to achieve a gender representation outcome by a certain deadline. This can make the actions of these organisations more outcome- rather than process-focused and are sometimes negatively referred to as 'tick-box exercises'.

Despite their limitations, quotas have been found to be a more effective method of increasing gender representation compared to targets. Piggott (2021) compared Norwegian and English sport governance policy and noted a key difference in the approaches of the two countries. Whilst English sport governance policy has a relatively short history of implementing gender targets, Norway was the first country to implement gender quotas to increase the number of women in

decision-making positions in sport. It is no coincidence that Norway has long been a world-leader in female representation in sport governance. In 2020, average female representation was 44% across the boards of Norwegian sport federations. Within this book, the issue of quotas are discussed by Liston (Chapter 5) in her discussion on gender and sport governance in Northern Ireland.

The Organisation and Structure of UK Sport Governance

The governance of sport in the UK is complex. There are different power and funding relationships that exist at various levels of sport governance, and organisations hold different levels of autonomy and power. The key organisations involved in the governance of sport in the UK, and their relationships to each other, are presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1

The stakeholders highlighted in blue in Figure 1 are the most influential stakeholders within UK sport governance and we will introduce the role of each of these in turn.

UK Government

The department in government responsible for overseeing sport policy and funding is the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS). In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the amount of funding that DCMS has channeled into the sport sector, with a major reason for this being the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994. Such increased funding has meant that the UK Government has increased power over the sport organisations it funds, including the power to demand higher governance standards from organisations in receipt of public funding. Prior to this, the sport sector was dominated by powerful bodies beyond the direct control of the Government, such as private clubs and NGBs (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2013).

The UK Government devolves its power in the sport sector to two quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos): UK Sport and Sport England.

UK Sport

The United Kingdom Sports Council (UK Sport) forms part of the former British Sports Council alongside the four Home Country Sports Councils (HCSCs). UK Sport receives £150 million of public funds each year and has a primary focus on the management and distribution of funds for high performance sport (UK Sport, 2017). A significant way in which UK Sport exerts executive power over the governance of sport organisations is through its process of awarding funding to NGBs of Olympic and Paralympic sports. Good practice for governance and leadership is a key performance indicator (KPI) which is used by UK Sport to determine which NGBs are eligible for receipt of funding (UK Sport, 2014). The most recent example of this is the publication of the latest national sport governance code, *A Code for Sports Governance*, in 2016 (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). This strategy will be explained and discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (Piggott, 2021).

Home Country Sports Councils

The four HCSCs are made up of Sport England, SportScotland, Sport Wales, and Sport Northern Ireland. Although there are slight differences between the four Sports Councils that are specific to each home country, they all have the same basic principles and responsibilities: the management and distribution of public investment to increase sport participation in all areas of society, the development and nurturing of talent, and investment in sport facilities (Sport England, 2021; Sport Northern Ireland, 2021; Sport Wales, 2021; SportScotland, 2021). In this text, gender and sport

governance is explored across the four home countries, showing similarities in representation and policy, but also drawing out the different political and social cultural contexts in each of the home nations. In Chapter 4, Piggott analyses the development of gender equity policy in English sport governance and draws on Bourdieu as a theoretical perspective to critically analyse the extent to which sport organisations have complied with this policy to transform their governance structures to be more gender inclusive and equitable. In Chapter 5, Liston provides a critical historical perspective on Northern Ireland, drawing out the unique political climate and complexity of sport governance and how this has impacted on the representation of women in sport governance and leadership positions. In Chapter 6, Dennehy adopts a feminist standpoint analysis to consider the ways in which involving women in sport leadership and governance can aid a more inclusive approach to gender equity within Scottish sport. And in Chapter 7, Edwards et al discuss the challenges faced in increasing female representation in Welsh sport governance, including the role sport has played in the national identity of Wales and how men's sport has been most associated with this form of national identity.

National Governing Bodies

The roles and responsibilities of national governing bodies (NGBs) have developed significantly over the past 100 years as sport has developed as a global phenomenon and is increasingly seen as a valuable political tool. NGBs are broadly responsible for the management of major facilities, the development of their sport from grassroots to international level, and the performance of national teams. The size and wealth of NGBs vary from sport to sport, but most NGBs are heavily reliant on the funding they receive from UK Sport and the HCSCs to operate. NGBs have varied histories and have developed at various times in diverse ways. With a few notable exceptions (e.g. Guttman,

1991; Hargreaves, 1994), the history books have tended to write about the formation of NGBs from androcentric perspectives that ignore the separate development of many women's sporting governing bodies (Hargreaves, 1994).

The sex-segregation of men's and women's governing bodies has brought challenges for the development of women's sport in the UK because men have historically monopolized resources and held positions with the most control and decision-making power (Hargreaves, 1994). Women have struggled for equality of opportunity due to exclusion, discrimination, and the denial of equal rights. This has included women being denied access to funding, resources, and facilities (Hargreaves, 1994). Most separate NGBs merged later in their development to bring together the men's and women's governing bodies, which was first encouraged by the GB Sports Council in the 1990s. The merging of NGBs and the challenges that this presented women in sport is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3 (Nicholson).

The Position of This Book in Relation to Previous Research on Gender Equity and Sport Governance

There has been a growing body of literature focusing on gender equity in sport governance at the international and national levels over the past decade. This section of the chapter is not a systematic review of this literature but has the purpose of providing an overview of existing literature at three different levels: the international context, UK commentaries and sport specific case studies.

International context

In one of the first studies to explore the numbers of women in sport governance globally, Adriaanse (2016) utilised data from the Sydney Scoreboard, which monitors the gender composition of

boards of national and international governing bodies, to provide a global analysis of gender representation in the governance of sport organisations. The Sydney Scoreboard provides data on three key indicators in National Sport Organisations (NSO): the number of women board members, gender of the chair and the gender of the chief executive. This approach to understanding gender diversity within an organisation is based on the concept of critical mass (Kanter, 1977), which suggests that for a minority group to alter power relations within an organisation there needs to be a critical mass of around one third representation on a board (Kanter, 1977). In a later study, by Joeck et al. (2013), critical mass is identified as 30% or more for representation to influence or shift the culture of an organisation (Joecks et al, 2013). The Sydney Scoreboard focuses on the three indexes as it recognises that these positions hold power and may influence others within an organisation, and the analysis focuses on whether NSOs meet critical mass in these indexes. Adriaanse's (2016) study of the Sydney Scoreboard draws on data from NSOs in 45 countries and over 1600 NSOs. The results indicate there is variation between women's representation on NSO boards ranging from 5.0 to 50.5%, with a global mean of 19.7%. For women chairs on NSO boards, women's representation in this role ranged from 0 to 50% with a global mean of 10.8%. Overall, the results from this research showed that women directors were underrepresented on most NSO boards (n = 1,600) in the 45 participating countries. The data also highlighted how few countries have achieved gender balance or a critical mass of women's representation in sport governance.

In a later chapter in Elling et al's (2019) text on *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance,* Adriaanse (2019) revisited the Sydney Scoreboard Data to highlight and discuss the European context. Women's representation on boards in the European context ranged from 9% to 37%, with an average of 18%. In terms of women chairs, the data ranged from was 0 to 23% with a mean of

8%. The analysis of the data also highlighted significant differences across European regions, between those with the highest representation of female board members in Northern and Western Europe and the lowest in Southern and Eastern Europe. Adriaanse (2019) suggested that to fully understand this, the relationship between female board membership and broader gender equality in society, as well as women's involvement in the labour market in different countries/contexts, needs to be considered.

One of the unique aspects of Elling et al's (2019) text is the authors' meta-analysis chapters which summarise the data, policies and theories presented across the chapters of the book. In their meta-analysis of data they discuss the importance of systematic and standardized data on women in governance to be able to compare over time and between countries. The authors argue that this approach can assist with understanding gender distribution, and without such standardization it is difficult to make comparisons (Elling, Knoppers, & Hovden, 2019). They also suggest that we need to extend our analysis to look at other indicators such as women as top elite coaches, presidents and highest paid managers of federations for meaningful data and comparisons to be made. In addition to summarizing data at the national level, Elling et al's (2019) analysis also highlighted differences in women's representation in gender governance across specific sports. They highlighted that boxing, football and taekwondo are sports where women's representation is lower than 15% and discussed how male dominated sports are more likely to resist change. Furthermore, the authors discussed the need to be wary of women being placed on boards to meet quotas while gender inequality continues at all other levels within an organisation. The culture of an organisation and the need to have a better understanding of women's experiences of working

within an organisation is discussed in this book by Booth (Chapter 10) and Preston and Velija (Chapter 8).

In Evans and Pfister's (2020) paper that provides a systematic narrative review, the authors explore the narratives that exist from 154 pieces of research on women and gender equity in sport governance globally, although they acknowledge the dominance of research in the western world and the absence of analysis in the Global South. Their analysis looks at (a) gender inequity in sport governance, (b) micro level quotas and laws, (c) gendered selection, (d) organizational culture, (e) gender stereotyping and (f) resistance to and transformation of gender inequity. Evans and Pfister (2000) discuss how research has focused on women in leadership, and has not fully considered women who leave sport leadership. In Chapter 8 of this book, Preston and Velija's participants include women who had left the FA. Furthermore, in Chapter 10, Booth reflects on her own experience of working in the sport sector and discusses how it is only now that she no longer works in sport organisations that she can fully reflect and articulate her gendered experiences during this time. Researching those who leave the sector provides an opportunity to develop further insight on the structural and/or everyday barriers that can make sport governance spaces hostile to females.

Research on the UK National context

The first significant study published in the UK was by White and Brackenridge (1985) who examined female representation within British sport governance. This paper found that little change occurred in female representation in the male-dominated leadership teams of British NGBs between 1960 and 1985. A key finding was that, as NGBs started to move away from the voluntary

sector to an increasingly professionalised state-controlled model, women seemed to lose their positions of power and male-dominance increased. Explanations given for such male-dominance in positions included a lack of access to political systems for women, issues surrounding the recruitment processes that exist in sport organisations, and the male model of sport being inappropriate for women because it was defined and constructed by men (A. White & Brackenridge, 1985). This work was followed up twenty years later in the UK by M. White and Kay (2006), who found that considerable change in female representation within decision-making positions had taken place in NGBs since White and Brackenridge's (1985) study twenty years earlier. Despite this, there were mixed findings within this research as sports considered typically 'male' were still found to have small female representation with few women in decision-making positions, notably football (2%) and rugby (2%; M. White & Kay, 2006). Both papers made important contributions in initiating academic discussions on the representation of women in UK sport governance.

Later studies by Shaw and colleagues took this scholarship to a deeper level of analysis in their exploration of the gender power relations that influence poor female representation in UK sport leadership and governance. These researchers studied several related topics: discourses of masculinity and femininity, including their influence on women's and men's access to power in sport organisations (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003; Shaw & Penney, 2003); social processes as an integral part of gender relations within NGBs (Shaw, 2006b); and the historical construction of gender relations within British sport organisations (Shaw & Slack, 2002). Additionally, Shaw and Frisby (2006) proposed an alternative theoretical framework for understanding gender equity in British sport management. They provide a theoretical analysis which builds on the work of Ely and

Meyerson (2000a) and Rao et al (1999) to address the complexities of gender relations in sport organisations. They argue the need for greater analysis of intersectionality and deconstruction of traditional discourses that position gender equity in opposition to organisational effectiveness.

Sport Specific UK Case Studies

At the sport-specific level, Piggott and colleagues have drawn on Bourdieu's theory of practice to explore gender power relations and their impact on gender representation in the governance of two large, established NGBs in England: England Golf and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). Piggott and Pike (2020) found that informal organisational practices such as gendered dress codes, gendered language, informal gender segregation and working patterns and expectations contributed to normalising and naturalising the position of men as leaders within both organisations. There were also some examples of resistance against informal organizational practices, including the introduction of flexible working at the LTA. This contributed to norms around working practice shifting to better align to the habitus of a diversity of people and particularly working mothers. The authors concluded that there is a requirement for organisations to better understand and invest in the value of gender-equitable organisational cultures to bridge actual and espoused organizational values.

Piggott and Matthews (2020) investigated the impact of the formal hierarchies, rules and processes of England Golf and the LTA on male dominance within their leadership and governance. They found that formal administrative and governance rules at England Golf, such as board election rules and merger terms, very directly contributed to the conservation of male dominance within both the board and executive leadership team. At the LTA it was found that the impacts were more

indirect, such as the high valuing of the experience of those from traditionally male-dominated professions and male executive staying in their positions for extended periods of time, leaving little room for upcoming women to come into leadership positions. There were more examples of resistance to male dominance through formal processes and practices than the informal practices reported by Piggott and Pike (2020). This included the introduction of career advancement planning and new governance rules to increase female board representation. The authors concluded that, whilst resistance to gender inequitable practices was clear, there was a lack of transformative change. Key indicators of this lack of transformative change were continued male dominance in the most senior positions and a stark underrepresentation of women on the executive leadership teams of the two organisations.

Velija (2019) and Velija, Ratna and Flintoff (2014) discussed women's cricket and the changing governance structures to illustrate how changes to sport governance are affected by wider social processes and broader gender relations. In 1926, the Women's Cricket Association (WCA) was formed by a group of women who had been gathering annually at Colwall to play a friendly cricket tournament (Heyhoe Flint and Rheinberg 1976). The formation of the WCA at this time can be understood as part of broader changes in power relations between the sexes post-WWI, in which women had greater access to public spaces and institutions (for example education and the vote) (Hargreaves 1994). The WCA were amateur and this, as well as their separatist strategy, enabled the WCA to organise their own game, and all leadership and key roles were held by women. The WCA managed the national side and England have played international matches since the first tour to Australia in 1934-5. Despite the growth of women's cricket and international success, throughout the WCA's historical records there is evidence of

financial concerns about the sustainability of the organisation (Velija, 2015). Conversations about the future of the organisation became increasingly more serious and in 1989 this culminated in a discussion about whether the organisation could continue and formal discussions with the ECB began in 1997. Prior to the merger concerns were widely discussed by WCA members around several key issues: developing elite levels of the women's game at the expense of the grassroots, the potential loss of identity for the women's game, and concern that women would lose autonomy over how the game would develop (Velija et al., 2014). Despite these concerns, at the Emergency General Meeting (EGM) held on 29th March 1998, and with 30 members abstaining in protest of the merger (Velija 2015), the proposal was accepted. The WCA dissolved and women's cricket became administered within the ECB (The England and Wales Cricket Board). Due to the financial situation, the size of the organisation, and the amateur structure, the WCA went into the merger as the weaker organisation and all bar one of those working at the WCA were not part of the ECB. This meant there was a loss of knowledge and institutional memory about the women's game, something discussed by Nicolson in Chapter 3.

What next for research and practice in this area?

Through the process of editing this text, three key themes emerged as being important subjects for future research in this field. Firstly, we need research to explore the experiences of a diversity of women who experience intersecting forms of oppressions that produce unique experiences of injustice within sport leadership and governance. There is a very notable lack of intersectional approaches within gender and sport leadership and governance research at both the national and international levels, and it is critical to develop a more detailed understanding of how identities intersect to exclude people from sport leadership and governance positions in the UK and beyond.

This lack of intersectional research may be neglecting the opportunity to engage in issues relating to gender equity in sport leadership and governance in more meaningful ways than a mere recognition of diversity and difference (Watson & Scraton, 2013). In Chapter 1 of this book, Knoppers outlines the need to adopt perspectives that require researchers to think differently about organisations rather than the dominant ways of thinking that has characterised most studies within the field. Within Chapter 2, Simpkins, Velija and Piggott highlight a need to acknowledge Black women's positionality within organisational cultures to understand the ways in which they may be influenced by access, power, and privilege in intersectional ways.

The second key theme to emerge as needing further investigation in the field is the experiences of individuals who have left sport administration and leadership. Researching those who have been unsuccessful in reaching leadership positions or who have left sport administration and governance could provide a greater depth of information as to the gendered challenges faced by women (and men) in the pursuit of position and power. Identifying and accessing such participants is a challenge. Thirdly, we would advocate for more theoretically informed critiques of gender equity in the leadership and governance of sport to provide a critical lens for exploring issues of gender, and to avoid the adoption of perspectives which may overlook the nuanced ways in which gender power relations can be produced and reinforced.

Finally, as editors we would emphasise how much we have enjoyed working with all the authors in this text, and we hope as readers you find the chapters in this book helpful to your understanding of the complexities of gender equity in UK sport leadership and governance. We encourage and challenge scholars and students to find new and innovative ways to critically analyse issues of

gender equity in the leadership and governance of the ever-dynamic UK sport sector, which

continues to change, develop and encounter new challenges.

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