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Article in *Journal of Sport Management* · September 2014

DOI: 10.1123/jsm.2013-0108

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The Impact of Gender Quotas on Gender Equality in Sport Governance

Johanna Adriaanse and Toni Schofield

University of Technology

A common intervention to address women's underrepresentation in governance has been the introduction of gender quotas. This study examined the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in governance among boards of National Sport Organizations (NSOs) in Australia. Central to the study was the theoretical concept of a gender regime. Part of a larger study, the research design comprised a comparative case study of five NSOs with data collected mainly through semistructured interviews with directors and CEOs. The findings suggest that a quota of a minimum of three women was a first condition to advance gender equality in governance. It needed to operate, however, in conjunction with other gender dynamics to move toward equal participation by men and women in board decision making. These included women in influential board positions, solidaristic emotional relations between men and women directors, and directors' adoption of gender equality as an organizational value.

Keywords: sport governance, gender equality, gender quotas, gender regimes, national sport organizations

A significant milestone for women's participation in sport was reached at the London Olympic Games in 2012. Women represented 44.3% of all athletes at these Games (Donnelly & Donnelly, 2013). The participation of female athletes on the teams of Brunei, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia meant that for the first time in the history of the Olympic Games, every National Olympic Committee (NOC) had sent women to the Games. Furthermore, with the inclusion of women's boxing in the 2012 Games program, female athletes were able to compete for the first time in all featured sports (Donnelly & Donnelly, 2013).

However, women's representation *off* the field has not progressed in the same way as their participation on the field, because women continue to be markedly underrepresented in sport governance. Henry and Robinson (2010) report that women's representation on NOCs was 17.6% and on International Federations (IFs) was 18.3%, which is clearly below parity with men's. Data on the Sydney Scoreboard (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2012), which tracks gender representation in sport governance globally, indicate that in 40 of the 44 participating countries, women hold between 5% and 30% of board positions on National Sport Organizations (NSOs). In only 4 of the 44 countries does women's

board representation in NSOs exceed 30%: Cook Islands (50.5%), Fiji (32.5%), Norway (39.4%), and Sweden (32.1%). In Australia, the context of the current study, women's board representation is 22.3%. These data suggest that, overall, women remain underrepresented on NSO boards.

Yet a considerable body of research in the corporate domain (Branson, 2007; Erhardt, Werbel, & Shrader, 2003; Huse & Solberg, 2006; Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004; Terjesen, Sealy, & Singh, 2009; van der Walt & Ingley, 2003) has demonstrated that the ratio of women directors is positively related to board effectiveness and good governance. So the business case for gender diversity on these boards is now solidly established. Furthermore, according to a comprehensive review of research on women directors on corporate boards, based on more than 400 publications over the past 30 years (Terjesen et al., 2009), corporate governance was improved when women were appointed to boards because they brought "value-adding" talents and represented stakeholders who had previously been excluded.

A common intervention to increase gender diversity in governance has been the introduction of gender targets and quotas. In the realm of sport, although a growing body of studies has emerged to examine and understand women's underrepresentation in sport governance (Clar-ingbould & Knoppers, 2007, 2008, 2012; Fasting, 2000; Hall, Cullen, & Slack, 1989; Hovden, 2000; McKay, 1992; Ottesen, Skirstad, Pfister, & Habermann, 2010; Pfister & Radtke, 2009; Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Penney, 2003; Shaw & Slack, 2002; Sibson, 2010; Skirstad,

Johanna Adriaanse is with the Business School, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. Toni Schofield is in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney, Australia. Address author correspondence to Johanna Adriaanse at johanna.adriaanse@uts.edu.au.

2009; White & Brackenridge, 1985), research into the impact of gender targets and quotas is rare. The aim of this article is to investigate the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance. The article is part of a larger study conducted to examine gender dynamics in sport governance in Australian NSOs (Adriaanse, 2012; Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013). This article reports on and discusses results from the study relating to the relationship between gender quotas and gender equality in sport governance.

Central to the study was the theoretical concept of a *gender regime*, a pattern of gender relations characterized by four interwoven dimensions of social life: production relations, power relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations (Connell, 2009). This concept provides a theoretical foundation for identifying and understanding how gender works in organizational processes, such as those pertaining to sport board governance, and whether the configurations of gender dynamics identified pose barriers to or opportunities for gender change, especially the advancement of gender equality. Adoption of a gender-regimes approach to analyze the impact of gender quotas represents a new contribution to the field of gender and sport governance.

This article seeks to contribute to prevailing knowledge and understanding of the relationship between gender quotas and gender equality in sport governance. By using a new theoretical approach in the context of sport, the four-dimensional gender model, we provide a systematic and deeper level of analysis on how gender works on sport boards. This approach is a marked departure from previous studies investigating women's underrepresentation in sport governance. In focusing on the impact of gender quotas on board governance, the study also offers an opportunity to contribute directly to the development of strategies and policies for the advancement of gender equality in sport governance. The research questions that framed the study's findings were: (a) What is the impact of gender quotas on the gender relations that characterize the composition and operation of sport boards in terms of a gender-regimes approach? and (b) What is the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance?

In this article, we first review the literature on board diversity in nonprofit governance. Subsequently, we clarify the core concepts of quotas and gender equality before critically reviewing the few studies that have investigated gender quotas and sport governance. It is in the light of the limited theoretical development of this topic that we present our conceptual framework, drawing on notions of organizational management, gendered social practice and gender regimes. Second, we explain the research design and method of the study. The study comprised mainly a comparative case study of five NSO boards in Australia and involved an analysis of semi-structured interviews with 26 directors and CEOs and collection of documents in relation to gender equality on sport boards. Third, we outline and discuss the results for three case studies. Finally, we consider the implications

of the study for the advancement of gender equality in sport governance.

Board Diversity in Nonprofit Governance

In contrast to research in corporate governance, studies on the impact of board diversity, including gender diversity, in nonprofit governance are rare (Saidel, 2002). One notable exception is a study by Callen, Klein and Tinkelman (2003) that found that organizational efficiency was improved by greater diversity in board composition.

Another more recent study by Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012) explored the link between board diversity and performance within community-funded organizations in the United States. They also found that gender diversity had a positive impact on organizational efficiency. On the other hand, in a comprehensive study of boards of 240 Young Men's Christian Association organizations, Siciliano (1996) concluded that board member diversity had no effect on organizational efficiency, but it did have an effect on its social values by incorporating inclusive practices in programming and service delivery. Brown (2002) argued that although inclusive governance practices may not necessarily lead to heterogeneous boards, it influences the board's inclination to be more sensitive to diversity issues.

Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) identified a tension for nonprofit sport organizations: On the one hand, they need to accept that greater diversity in board composition may facilitate good governance; on the other hand, they need to ensure representation of traditional stakeholders, which may inhibit diversity within the board. They further emphasized that the composition of the board is critical in good governance: "The question of who should comprise the board and how they get elected, appointed, selected or invited to a position as a board member are central to the governance of nonprofit sport organisations" (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007, p. 74).

A similar perspective is suggested by Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald (2005), who presented an integrated model of sport governance research. Because of the transition of many sport organizations from predominantly volunteer-based to professional management, one of the key research themes in sport governance relates to the strategic role of the board. The role of the modern board has changed to a focus on providing strategic direction and counsel to management. Therefore board composition, particularly in relation to the need for capable people, has emerged as critical to good governance (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). This theme has barely been addressed by scholars in the nonprofit sector, including those in sport management. Accordingly, the current study makes a significant contribution to prevailing knowledge and understanding of the relationship between board diversity and governance in nonprofit organizations.

Quotas, Targets, and Gender Equality

The establishment of gender quotas and targets is the most common intervention to increase gender diversity on boards. Although both terms refer to the requirement of a minimum number/percentage of women or of either gender, a key difference is that quotas are mandatory, whereas targets are voluntary (Whelan & Wood, 2012). In their work, *Targets and Quotas for Women in Leadership: A Global Review of Policy, Practice, and Psychological Research*, Whelan and Wood (2012) developed a useful table that summarizes common arguments for and against quotas.

Although quotas may be effective in increasing the presence of women on boards, critics argue that quotas undermine the principle of merit, with many women believing they will be viewed as tokens when they are hired to fulfill a quota.

Central to the current study is the notion of gender equality. This concept is used in international public policy in reference to advancing equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men at all levels across a wide range of arenas (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2007). The preferred term in corporate governance policy is gender diversity. In the context of governance, it primarily refers to gender parity in the number of directors on the board. As a measure of gender parity, a minimum of 40% representation of each gender on the board is generally adopted. This approach is often described as the 40:40:20 target. This target has been recommended by the Australian Human Rights Commission in their 2010 Gender Equality Blueprint Report and internationally, for example, by the European Parliament as a nonbinding resolution to be achieved by 2020 (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Whelan & Wood, 2012). However, according to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2007), gender equality transcends numerical parity by including the effectiveness and impact of women's participation in shaping policies, developing programs, and allocating resources. For the purpose of this study, we define gender equality in governance as a form of organization characterized by a combination of gender parity in the number of directors and the equal *participation* of men and women in exercising influence and power in strategic decision making and the allocation of resources.

As previously mentioned, a significant limitation in the field of gender and sport governance is the dearth of research related to the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport boards. One notable exception is Norwegian research into sport governance (Hovden, 2006; Ottesen et al., 2010; Skirstad, 2009). Since the 1970s, women's representation on the board of the Norwegian Olympic Committee dramatically increased from 8% to 39% (Skirstad, 2009). A gender quota has been included as a clause in the constitution (or statute, as they call it) of the organization since 1990. This study provides evidence

that gender quotas can be effective in increasing gender diversity on sport boards.

Conceptual Framework: Organizational Management and Gender Dynamics in Organizations

In investigating the relationship between gender quotas and gender dynamics in sport boards, one of the most significant bodies of research best able to inform such a study, particularly in theoretical terms, is that related to gendered organizations and management.

More than 2 decades ago, Acker (1990) concluded that organizations are *not* gender-neutral and should be viewed as sites that are patterned in their very constitution by a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine, in relation to their basic components (i.e., structure, ideology, policy and practice, interaction and identity). Based on this theoretical approach, a body of research also emerged in the realm of sport. Some of the more notable findings involved men's privileged position in sport leadership roles (Fasting, 2000; Inglis, 1997; McKay, 1992; Pfister & Radtke, 2009; Sibson, 2010), the gendered structure of sport organizations (Hall et al., 1989; Hovden, 2010; Shaw & Slack, 2002; White & Brackenridge, 1985), and the gendering of the recruitment processes (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Hovden, 2000).

Further, Kanter's (1977) original concept of "critical mass" continues to inform current research on gender diversity on boards. For example, recent studies in the corporate domain found that one or two women still run the risk of being regarded as tokens, whereas three or more women represent a critical mass and have a noticeable impact on content and dynamics in the boardroom (Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut, 2008), which makes it possible to enhance the level of firm innovation (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011).

One of the dominant threads in the theoretical discussion on the concept of gender in organizational management has been the idea that gender is indeed a social process, but it is one that brings the bodily reproductive distinction between men and women, male and female, into being in such a way that the differential relationship involved is not necessarily hierarchical and unequal (Connell, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 1999; Kvande, 2007; McNay, 2000; Moore, 1994). The following outlines a model developed by Connell (2006) for examining how gender relations work in organizational settings such as sport boards.

Connell's Four-Dimensional Model

According to Connell (1987, 2009), gender relations are established through social action or practice. From this perspective, gender is both a noun and a verb—something that individuals, groups and institutions *do*. How

they do it, however, is not random. Rather, the practices involved are patterned and enduring, so much so that they are identifiable as configurations or *structures* of practice. They shape the possibilities for and limitations on action related to the reproductive distinction among people, gendering social organization in the process. For Connell, there are four main gendered and gendering structures of social practice. These four dimensions of gender relations are production relations, power relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. The interaction and combination of these, and the pattern of gender relations produced by it, form what Connell has called a “gender regime” (Connell, 2009, p. 72).

The first dimension of Connell’s gender regime’s approach, *production relations*, involves the gendered division of labor. It relates to the way in which production or work is arranged on gender lines. In the realms of “work” and “home,” certain tasks are commonly performed by men and others are performed by women. In the context of sport governance, the gender division of labor relates to the roles and tasks—or work practices—allocated to men and women on the board.

The second dimension, *power relations*, involves the ways in which control, authority, and force are exercised on gender lines, both at individual and collective (groups of people or institutions) levels. One of the most common forms of power associated with gendered relations of control, authority, and force is patriarchy, a gender relation in which men dominate women, deriving advantage or a “dividend” by doing so. When applied to sport governance, this dimension usually refers to men’s dominance in decision making on the board and how they advance their interests in the process.

The third dimension of a gender regime is *emotional relations*: the way attachment and antagonism among and between people and groups are organized along gender lines. Gendered emotional relations feature along a continuum from love, affection, and support to antagonism, hostility, and hatred. The structures of practice associated with emotional attachment and hostility are often interwoven with other gendered structures of practice but are rarely addressed in organizational studies of gender and governance. Emotional relations in sport governance relate to the patterns of attachment and hostility that prevail within and between men and women on boards and involve, for example, the ways they support or oppose and undermine each other in their work.

The final dimension of a gender regime is *symbolic relations*. This structure of practice involves the ways in which gender is represented and understood, including prevailing beliefs, attitudes, and values about gender. It is the realm in which debates and discussions about what it means to be a man or a woman are played out, and it includes a wide range of practices, including constructions of gender in texts, in speech and conversation, and in the innumerable domains of culture, such as the visual arts, performing arts, sport, fashion, and so on. In reference to sport governance, symbolic relations are operationalized in directors’ understandings of gender

and gender equality, including beliefs about gender equality on boards and the use of quotas.

Although four structures of gender relations can be distinguished, this does not mean that they operate in separate ways. As mentioned above, they are interwoven and interact with each other. By applying the four-dimensional model of gender relations, we can analyze how gender works in an organization—identifying the kind of gender regime in operation—and analyze the prospects for gender equality in governance. Connell (2005) and Schofield and Goodwin (2005) have pioneered this approach to analyze the gender dynamics in several public sector institutions in Australia. They identified three distinct patterns of gender relations or gender regimes: (a) masculine hegemony, (b) feminist presence and masculine backlash, and (c) feminist gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, they found their approach an effective method to better understand gender relations in organizations. Their approach has recently been adopted to investigate the gender relations that characterize the composition and operation on boards of Australian NSOs and the extent to which they offer opportunities for or pose barriers to gender equality in governance (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013). The present study, part of the larger study on gender relations in Australian sport boards, examined the impact of gender quotas on the configuration of these gender board relations. Subsequently, this study investigated the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance.

Method

Research Design and Sampling

The research design comprised a comparative case study of five NSOs, and the study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved an audit of gender distribution on NSO boards. The audit gathered data from 56 NSOs that received public funding from the Australian Federal Government (Australian Sports Commission, 2008). It measured the ratio of men and women directors and identified the gender of the chair/president and CEO of each organization. The main purpose of this stage was to use the data to sample NSOs for the second stage of the study.

Five NSOs were selected to participate in the second stage as case studies. We used a multicase study design because it allows for comparison and contrast, which is often considered a more robust method than a single case study (Yin, 2009). We selected NSOs with governing boards in which both genders were represented because the aim of the study was to investigate interactions between and within men and women. In this second stage we collected data using semistructured interviews because they permit participants to respond fully in their own words and to elaborate on what they mean in response to research questions. Purposive sampling was used with the following criteria. We invited directors and CEOs of the five NSOs to participate in the study

who had served on their respective board for a minimum of 6 months, during which time they would have attended several board meetings to familiarize themselves with board processes and operations. We conducted interviews with four or five directors and the CEO of each of the five NSOs; in total, 9 women and 17 men. In the course of the last few interviews, we felt that additional interviews would not produce any new themes or theoretical insights; in other words, sample size was determined by data saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the participants for each sport organization.

Interview Schedule and Procedure

We used a semistructured interview schedule based on the four-dimensional model of gender relations as described above in the conceptual framework section. Interview topics included role and tasks of the directors, status of the role, influence and authority on the board, contributions and qualities of directors, conflicts or challenging situations along gender lines, and understanding of gender and gender equality. The issue of gender quotas and their adoption was explicitly raised in all interviews. The interview schedule was also informed by the questionnaires and checklists used in four other studies, one with public sector institutions in Australia (Schofield & Goodwin, 2005) and three in the context of sport governance (Doll-Tepper, Pfister, & Radtke, 2006; Henry et al., 2004; McKay, 1992).

We conducted all interviews face-to-face in the office of the sport organization or at another location mutually agreed on by the researcher and participant. Interviews were between 20 and 90 min long with an average of 52 min, and they were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was sent to the respective participant for checking and to confirm that it was an accurate reflection of their thoughts and feelings about the topic at that time (Amis, 2005). During and after the interview, we collected documents of the sport organizations in relation to gender equality initiatives, including the specification of gender quotas in constitutions, annual reports, and strategic plans.

Data Analysis

The main strategy we adopted to analyze the data was informed by our conceptual framework, which is the

most preferred strategy in case study research (Yin, 2009). Each transcript was read to recognize and code any comments or responses that related to a particular dimension of Connell's model of gender relations. This form of coding, called concept-driven coding, uses codes that have been created by the researchers before data analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, the four dimensions of Connell's model were transformed into questions to work as a data analysis tool. The first dimension, production relations, was operationalized by becoming the question, "What are the roles and tasks on the board in terms of men and women (or who does what by gender)?" The second dimension, power relations, was applied to the data through the question, "Who wields influence and controls the board?" The third dimension, emotional relations, was addressed through the question, "Whom do board members admire and like to work with, and whom do they dislike and oppose?" The fourth dimension, symbolic relations, was applied to the data analysis as the question, "How do participants view and understand gender and gender equality?"

In addition to this deductive approach, we also used an inductive one to analyze the data. After data were coded into the four dimensions, we considered all data under a particular dimension and identified any subthemes within that particular dimension. Amis (2005) has argued that using both a deductive approach (theory inspired) as well as an inductive approach (data inspired) can be fruitful because it allows for gaining a creative insight from the data without reinventing concepts that have gained currency and legitimacy in a particular field. Subsequently, structured on the basis of the four categories of gender relations, case studies were drafted with the analysis of the results for each NSO—five case studies in total. We identified three gender regimes and then conducted a cross-case synthesis.

Furthermore, the question arises as to the extent the results can be generalized beyond the immediate context of the three case studies (sport Boards D, C, and E)—an issue of external validity. Case study research does not rely on statistical generalization to a wider population but is instead concerned with analytical generalization. This means that the researcher is "striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory" (Yin, 2009, p. 43), which in the current study is the area of gender and sport governance. Using multiple case studies rather than one single case strengthens the external

Table 1 Number of Participants ($n = 26$) Per Sport Organization by Position and Gender

	Board members	President/chair	CEO	Total
Sport A	1 woman, 2 men	1 man	1 man	1 woman, 4 men
Sport C	1 woman, 3 men	1 woman	1 man	2 women, 4 men
Sport D	1 woman, 2 men	1 woman (vice president)	1 man	2 women, 3 men
Sport E	2 women, 1 man	1 man	1 man	2 women, 3 men
Sport H	2 women, 2 men	—	1 man	2 women, 3 men
Total	7 women, 10 men	2 women, 2 men	5 men	9 women, 17 men

validity because of repetition logic, which indicates that the theory is “tested” several times (Yin, 2009).

Results

Sport Boards D, C, and E all used a gender quota that shaped the composition of their respective boards. Gender quotas were specified by their constitutions. The other two sport boards did not do so, so we have excluded them. First, we briefly describe each sport organization and its governing board. This is followed by an analysis of the pattern of gender relations that characterized each board’s composition and operations using Connell’s (2005, 2009) four-dimensional model. We then turn to examining participants’ responses regarding the adoption of gender quotas in structuring their boards.

Case Study D

Board D is the governing body of an NSO representing a popular non-Olympic individual and team sport in Australia. At the time of the study, total membership was approximately 230,000, and the ratio of men to women was 67%/33% (Annual Report). The board comprised nine directors, seven men and two women. Six directors were elected and three were appointed as independent directors. The constitution of the organization contained a clause that, with respect to the president and four elected board directors, “at least one must be male and at least one must be female.” When the men’s and women’s associations amalgamated in 2002, there was another gender clause in the constitution stating that when the president is male, the vice-president must be female and vice versa, but this clause was deleted. The results are based on interviews with the female vice-president and three directors, two of whom were men and one of whom was a woman. In addition, we included the male CEO who was not part of the board but usually attended board meetings.

Applying Connell’s four-dimensional model, in terms of production relations, a gender division existed because men assumed the majority of board roles. Further, men prevailed over women in power relations, occupying the most influential positions of both president and CEO, and obtaining support and approval for their decisions by the board’s directors. In terms of emotional relations, board members engaged with each other cooperatively and respectfully, disclosing no overt affection or hostility toward each other. In reference to symbolic gender relations, directors reported various understandings of gender equality. For most, it meant equal opportunity for all, but for one participant, it referred to the relationship between gender representation and operational matters such as programming competitions. Given the configuration of gender relations, the gender regime of Board D can best be described as one of *masculine hegemony*, a characterization further explained in the discussion section.

In regards to the constitutional clause specifying a gender quota, several directors—all men—expressed

resistance. Although one male director supported more women on the board, he opposed the use of quotas to achieve this outcome as his comment below suggests:

There should be more [women] . . . [but] it shouldn’t be mandated . . . I am not interested in “you must have that and you must have [this] . . .” I can live with it for the beginning of a new structure [after amalgamation] where it is important to have. . . opportunities for both genders . . . I can live with that. . . provided there is a sunset clause . . . that says after this period it is the best person for the job. (D5)

The resistance to gender quotas was further evident from the fact that over time, the constitutional clause requiring gender equality in the leadership of the board had been weakened, as the female vice-president said:

Originally when we first came in [after amalgamation], if the president was a male, had to be a female vice-president, and vice versa. Now that has been changed so it is the best person for the job, but we still state that they have to have at least one female on the board. (D1)

The only respondent who strongly supported gender quotas was the male CEO. He favored a more gender-balanced board and intended to strengthen the gender clause in the new constitution to reflect the gender ratio among its participants in the sport. He explained:

Under the new constitution we are looking to . . . stipulate . . . at least three of the one gender . . . One of the weaknesses of our current board is that we don’t have a better mix of gender . . . I think equality [means] . . . that there is representation on the board based on membership, so that there is two thirds representation of men and one third women. (D3)

Not all directors agreed that strengthening the gender clause would increase the presence of women directors. Several directors felt that the problem lay with women themselves. Women did not nominate for leadership positions, as one of the male directors commented:

I think just the reluctance from women to put their hand up is what I see . . . Apathy . . . Yeah there is that. (D5)

Furthermore, as one of the two women directors commented, women lacked governance skills and experience:

I think sometimes it is . . . the women’s fault for not speaking up, having more to say sometimes. Sometimes they are doing the best they can but they haven’t got the skills to contribute the same way as some of the men. (D2)

Despite the directors’ view that they would like to increase the presence of women on the board, they did not espouse a commitment to actively achieving it. The only exception was the male CEO. The prospects for

gender equality in this regime were very limited because the male dominance that characterized board membership and executive positions was normalized and accepted. The women directors expressed no opposition to the status quo, agreeing with their male counterpart that the problem of women's underrepresentation was attributable to women themselves.

Case Study C

Board C is the governing body of a national organization representing a popular Olympic individual sport in Australia. The organization had approximately 440,000 affiliated members with a ratio of men to women of 78.8%/21.2% (Annual Report), so women accounted for approximately one fifth of sport participants. At the time of the study, the board of this sport organization had six directors, two women and four men, so one third of directors were women. The constitution included a clause that the board required a minimum of two directors of either gender. The male CEO was not part of the board but usually attended board meetings as a nonvoting member. The following is based on interviews with the chair, the CEO, and four directors. Two of the interviewees were women and four were men.

In terms of the four-dimensional gender model, production relations on this board were male dominated because the majority of roles and tasks were taken by the four male directors. Given the fact that the board had four male and two female directors, men also dominated in terms of power relations. The configuration of gender relations, however, distinguished itself from the previous board in relation to the dynamics associated with the board's leadership. In terms of production and power relations, the board was chaired by a woman who was supported by an alliance of two directors and a male CEO. Together they counteracted masculine influence and control. The role of the woman chair was paradoxical. On the one hand, she "managed like a man," but on the other hand, she promoted gender equality in her sport. She was strongly resisted by one male director, which is evident from his comment on the chair's performance:

We have had three or four major issues [about] which she has been tough. Lawyers have come in and it has cost us a fortune. I would have preferred much more to have gone out and tried to negotiate with these people . . . [In addition], when it comes to leading, getting on television, being upfront, meeting all of the players . . . she doesn't do that. And that is the wrong position for a chairperson . . . not a great leader. Not a great leader at all . . . I am fed up with [the female chair] now, I am fed up with [another male director who always supports her] . . . I am very close to saying goodbye. (C5)

This quote shows that in terms of emotional relations, a conflict existed that caused a gender division among board members. In terms of symbolic relations, gender

equality was mainly understood as a situation in which those involved in the sport had equal opportunity to excel in it, to develop as a player or official or to become a board member. Overall, the data show that complex gender dynamics were involved in the governance of this sport organization. The gender regime can best be described as *masculine hegemony in transition*, which will be discussed further in the next section.

Similar to the previous case study of Board D, the gender quota specified in the constitution of this sport organization was developed in response to the imperatives of public policy and funding. The Australian government required amalgamation of the men and women's sport associations; noncompliance would have resulted in a loss of public funding. When the two bodies amalgamated, they agreed to have a minimum of two directors of either gender and to write this requirement into their new constitution. One male director described it as follows:

We are forced by law, well not by law, by the government to have [a minimum of] two women and two men at any one time. So we have got four men and two women. (C5)

It is evident from this response and confirmed by other directors that the gender quota was not instituted by the sport organization itself but was established to comply with government regulation. It is also clear that there was some ambivalence toward the gender clause, exemplified in the following response by another male director:

I know you need these sort of things to establish the situation but you know, maybe I'm different, but I just believe you get the best people, whoever the best people are, that's what you need for the organization but . . . I believe we need to keep the [gender] balance. (C2)

There was broad agreement among the respondents that getting the "best" people on the board had priority over a gender-balanced board. One woman director stated:

I believe you need to get the best people on the board irrespective of gender and I always thought that . . . and that's why I believed I should have been on the board initially at my first . . . club, because I was . . . a better skilled person than the other people that I was standing against. (C3)

On the other hand, several members stressed the importance of a gender-balanced board. The male CEO in particular supported such an approach as the following comment indicates:

I think you avoid the extremes, and I think you have a more rounded view of what your direction ahead is. I think you are better able to represent your sport. I think also men and women bring different perspectives and personality traits onto boards, and reasoning abilities, not always, but often. We have different

skill sets and we are able to make a better connection with a range of, you know, the whole sport. So I think, and in terms of balance, oh, I just think you are able to better navigate your way forward through the pitfalls and the traps that sports face . . . I think you make better decisions as a balanced board, and you can see the arguments to both sides and work through that way. I think sometimes when you get a group of people who are really similar, they tend to see things one particular way, their views and opinions don't get challenged by a counterpoint, and I think that is probably the value of balance. I think balanced boards make better decisions on the whole. (C6)

These responses indicate that there was confusion between recruiting people with certain skills and achieving an appropriate gender balance on the board, in other words, a tension between a preference for a merit-based board over a gender-balanced board. In sum, the prospects for gender equality on this board were more positive than the previous largely because a leadership coalition composed of both men and women, one of whom was the chairperson, explicitly supported the advancement of gender equality and a gender quota specifying board membership. Nevertheless, this gender regime was limited by some significant constraints, such as the presence of a masculine ethic in leadership, some overt gendered emotional division, and support for meritocratic principles over gender equality in the appointment of board members.

Case Study E

Board E is the governing body of a national organization representing a prominent Olympic team sport in Australia with approximately 120,000 members at the time of the study. Sex-disaggregated data indicate that, in terms of participation, the majority (52%) of players were women, but the sport is also popular among men (Annual Report). The board of this sport organization had nine directors, three women and six men. The constitution contained a clause stating that "No one gender is to constitute less than three of the board's membership and at least two of each gender must be elected members." Like the other two sport organizations, the male CEO was not part of the board but usually attended board meetings as a nonvoting member. The following is based on interviews with the male president, the male CEO, and three directors, two of whom were women.

Applying the four-dimensional gender model, despite a male-dominated division in production and power relations (six men and three women), the minority of three women exercised influence through their occupation of specific board positions. They had responsibility for the most significant subcommittees or portfolios, namely finance, promotion of elite performance, and business relationships. They were overtly supported by influential men, namely, the president and CEO. A marked difference

with the two boards described previously was found in terms of the emotional relations among directors. These were cohesive, supportive, and solidaristic. In addition, in reference to symbolic relations, directors understood gender equality to mean more than numerical parity of men and women on the board. There was a pervasive recognition of the importance of equal participation by men and women across the full range of activities involved in this sport and its governance. The regime identified in this board was one of *gender mainstreaming in progress*, a characterization that will be analyzed further in the discussion.

In respect to the gender clause in the constitution, none of the interviewed directors or the CEO expressed resistance to the gender quota. On the contrary, both the male CEO and male president were overtly supportive of gender equality on the board. The CEO said:

The organization . . . very much embraces the ethos of equality across a whole range of areas, and that is true for the board as well. (E5)

The president commented:

I think what we will see in the next 2 years, one of the things that I have got to do is actually get more skilled females onto the board, probably another one or two. (E1)

One woman board member emphasized the importance of the gender clause in the constitution to ensure adequate women's representation on the board. She mentioned that she would not have stood for the board without the clause because she would not have liked to be part of an election, a competitive process. She said:

I think the thing that I would emphasize is having that ratio on a board designated specifically for whatever the minority is that a group is trying to address, so whether it be gender or . . . whatever it is, I think that allows a space for people to feel confident to have a go . . . There is a reason that we have, you know, minority representation in a number of areas and I think that is the space that allows for people to feel confident and therefore contribute on more of a level plane. So I think that is extremely important. (E2)

The gender clause in the constitution was instrumental not only in providing space for women directors and actively recruiting them but also in maintaining at least 33% female representation. Overall, gender equality had not yet been achieved because men still occupied the most influential positions of president and CEO, and women's representation had not yet achieved 40%. Nevertheless, by comparison with the two other gender regimes identified in this study, the regime of gender mainstreaming in progress had the best prospects for gender equality in governance. A summary of the results of the three boards can be viewed in Table 2, which will be further discussed in the next section.

Table 2 Summary of Boards and Gender Characteristics

Board	Directors quota— minimum number of either gender	Women's representation	Gender regime	Prospects for gender equal governance
D	1	2 of 9 (22%)	Masculine hegemony	Very limited
C	2	2 of 6 (33%)	Masculine hegemony in transition	Limited
E	3	3 of 9 (33%)	Gender mainstreaming in progress	Positive

Discussion

As mentioned previously, our analysis of gender dynamics in the sport boards we investigated was informed by Connell's (2009) theory of gender as a social process that is constituted by four key dimensions or social relations between and among men and women, production relations, power relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. We integrated Connell's theoretical framework into the study by operationalizing the core theoretical categories—the four dimensions of gender relations—as tools of data collection and analysis.

As our results indicate, based on the configuration of the four gender dimensions we found through our analysis of the data, several patterns of gender relations emerged. These patterns or gender regimes were masculine hegemony (Board D), masculine hegemony in transition (Board C), and gender mainstreaming in progress (Board E). The regime of masculine hegemony was characterized by male dominance in production and power relations, neutralized emotional relations and a common understanding (symbolic relations) that women's underrepresentation was mainly attributable to women themselves and outside the control and responsibility of the organization. As now widely understood within sociological analyses of power and certainly in Connell's work on gender relations (1995, 2009), hegemonic power is distinguished from coercive power primarily by wide-ranging *consent* to hierarchy, division, and the rule of a dominant group. To describe a gendered configuration of governance as one of masculine hegemony is therefore to characterize it as one in which the dominance of men and male rule is accepted entirely and without question, as if it were a naturalized phenomenon and beyond the enactment of any political intent or action by those who are dominant.

The second regime, masculine hegemony in transition, was similar to the first but disclosed a significant challenge to the relations of gender inequality through the occupation of the chair's position by a woman whose performance of the tasks involved was generally admired and respected because of the rigor, reliability, and success with which she performed them. The woman chair was a major disruption to the "natural order" of governance that had historically prevailed within the organization, which provoked vociferous opposition by an indignant minority of the men who dominated the board in every other

respect. A settled pattern of male dominance and rule was severely ruffled by the woman chair but not sufficiently to usher in any major relinquishment by men of their power and active endorsement by them of women to participate alongside them equally in the board's governance.

The third regime, gender mainstreaming in progress, exhibited male dominance in production and power relations, but in contrast to the previous regimes, women exercised influence through their important board positions. Furthermore, in terms of emotional relations, directors demonstrated cohesion and support and shared a common understanding (symbolic relations) to include a gender perspective across all aspects of sport. Their attitude reflects an approach of gender mainstreaming that, according to Rees (1998), is one "to transform organisations and create a culture of diversity in which people of a much broader range of characteristics and backgrounds may contribute and flourish" (p. 27). The regime was one in progress because men still occupied the most influential positions of president and CEO, and women's representation on the board (33%) had not reached gender parity yet.

The prospects for gender equality in governance in the first two regimes were limited. They were virtually impossible in the first case and, although indicative of some significant challenge to male dominance and rule in the second, were nevertheless tenuous in the absence of robust support for this challenge from other regime dimensions critical to buttressing gender equality. Furthermore, where gender equality in governance was identified as emergent or established, quotas were critical. Boards C and E, with women making up a third of their respective membership, disclosed discernible orientations toward gender equality that were absent in Board D, where less than a third of board members were women. The advancement of gender equality, however, was even more pronounced in Board E than in Board C. The following explains the reasons for these differences, using Connell's (2009) four-dimensional model of gender relations as the framework to guide the discussion.

In relation to the first research question, quotas influence gender relations in terms of both production (division of labor) and power (positions of influence and authority). For example, if women are absent from the board, all roles and tasks are assumed by men and the most powerful board role—such as president—is necessarily occupied by a man. Therefore, adopting a

quota to ensure presence of both genders is an essential requirement for advancing gender equality in the division of labor and power.

In terms of quota specifications, the findings of our study indicate that although a third of the membership of both Boards C and E were women, the constitutions governing these boards differed in terms of the number of women they specified for membership. Board C specified a quota of a minimum of two of either gender, whereas Board E prescribed a minimum of three. As a result, there was a greater number of women on Board E than Board C. As mentioned previously, recent research suggests that the appointment of three or more women—not simply a proportion of board membership—constitutes a critical mass required to change boardroom dynamics (see Konrad et al. 2008; Torchia et al. 2011). Accordingly, when it comes to boards and governance, a critical mass cannot be specified and operationalized if it is determined simply in terms of a percentage of board membership, because this does not ensure the requisite minimum number. Our analysis of the gender dynamics of each of the boards showed that the institution of a quota specifying a minimum of three women board members (on Board E) was central to establishing the advancement of gender equal presence and a critical mass.

In relation to the second research question, the findings show that although a quota was a first condition, it was not sufficient for the advancement of gender equality in governance. There were other gender dimensions operating in conjunction with numerical “presence.” Board E—which we characterized as gender mainstreaming in progress—disclosed several significant gender dynamics that combined with its quota of three women members to advance gender equality in governance. The first, in reference to the dimension of symbolic gender relations, involved board members’ understandings of gender equality as a desirable outcome in all activities of the organization and the identification of gender quotas on the board as a means for achieving it. Directors supported the quota, perceiving it as part of the organization’s commitment to an ethos of gender equality across all aspects of the sport. They acknowledged that organizational culture and governance dynamics were critical for advancing gender equality in governance and that they and their organization were responsible for taking active measures to facilitate it.

By contrast, directors from Boards D and C, including some women, expressed resistance to the use of quotas. This kind of opposition, of course, has already been identified in reference to the adoption of targets and quotas in the corporate sector (Whelan & Wood, 2012). Members of Boards D and C perceived a conflict between gender quotas and the recruitment of the “best people.” The notion of a preference for the “best” people on the board refers to a widely espoused understanding that a merit-based board and a gender-balanced board are somehow mutually exclusive. This understanding, according to Burton’s (1987) research, stems from the “mobilisation of masculine bias” (p. 424) in institutions

and their governance, especially in relation to employment selection processes. Burton argued that the opportunity to accrue merit and the attribution of merit are structured along gender lines in men’s favor. Although Burton’s research was mostly conducted with a range of large public sector agencies, similar findings have also been recorded in corporate sector organizations (Branson, 2007) and the sport sector (Hovden, 2000; McKay, 1992; Radtke, 2006; Shaw, 2006).

Second, in reference to the dimension of power relations, the women on Board E wielded significant power and authority through their leadership of the board’s subcommittees responsible for its strategic direction and allocation of resources. Women held no such comparable positions in the other boards.

Third, in reference to the dimension of emotional relations, and also diverging significantly from Boards D and C, the three women directors on Board E were actively supported and endorsed by influential male directors. The gendered emotional climate of the board was solidaristic. Relations of cooperation and collaboration between men and women contrasted markedly with those on the other boards, especially in relation to the gendered hostility exhibited toward the female chair on Board C.

Conclusion

The contribution to knowledge of the current study, located within the broader critical research area of board composition of nonprofit organizations, relates to the impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance. This research was theoretically underpinned by Connell’s (2009) concept of a gender regime. The study has demonstrated how Connell’s gender-regimes framework (2009) can be used as an effective analytical tool to identify how gender works in sport governance. This approach provided a systematic and transparent method for analyzing qualitative data to disclose the underlying gender dimensions in terms of production, power, emotional, and symbolic relations on boards and, specifically, the way in which gender quotas influence the composition and operation of the board in terms of gender equality in governance.

Despite unspectacular progress in advancing gender equality in sport governance internationally, there remains entrenched resistance to the introduction of quotas to bring women’s representation on sport boards to parity with men’s. Debate persists about the adverse effects of such a strategy; opponents warn of increased regulation and decreased efficiency, tokenism, and a decline in the quality of governance as the “best people” are seen as being passed over in favor of installing more women directors. Meanwhile, the evidence is mounting that such a position is untenable and that, in fact, boards with greater gender balance are “better boards.”

This study examined the adoption of gender quotas among three NSO boards in Australia as part of a larger project to understand how gender works in sport board

governance. We found that none of the boards' quotas specified absolute parity of men's and women's membership but, rather, a minimum of either gender. Where this amounted to three or more women who made up a third or more of the board's membership, it served as a first condition to advance gender equality in governance. The quota was essential in establishing a numerical presence of women critical for advancing gender equal participation in governance, but it needed to operate in conjunction with other gender dimensions to move toward equal participation by men and women in board decision making, particularly in relation to strategic direction and resource allocation.

These other dimensions were revealed through a gender-regimes analysis. The most significant were: board members' understanding and valuing of gender equality as a goal for the full range of the organization's activities and the introduction of active measures, including quotas, to achieve it; the appointment of women to key arenas of decision making on the board; and solidaristic emotional relations between men and women board members expressed in active support by influential men of women's exercise of power and authority in the board's decision making processes. The combination of these dimensions, identified in only one of the boards (Board E) in the larger project on which this study was based, rendered the board's prospects for advancing gender equality in governance the most robust. Although its quota, enshrined in its constitution, was foundational to its goal of gender equality, it was animated as such only through the enactment of ways of thinking and feeling that valued the advancement of men's and women's participation alongside each other as equals across the full range of the organization's activities.

In view of the findings of the study, the implications for policy and practice are that the adoption of a gender quota is effective for gender equality in governance only if it is used in conjunction with other measures. They include directors' adoption of gender equality as an organizational value (symbolic relations), the allocation of women directors to influential board roles (production and power relations), and the promotion of a cohesive team environment on the board (emotional relations).

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