

"Gender Diversity in Sport Leadership: An investigation of United States of America National
Governing Bodies of Sport"

ABSTRACT

This article examines gender diversity within the governance structures of the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) that fall under the remit of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee. This article employs Kanter's (1977) theory of Critical Mass to examine female representation within leadership positions held in NGBs. By categorising female representation into one of Kanter's four groups; *Uniformed*, *Skewed*, *Tilted* and *Balanced*, the article examines whether female inclusion in leadership has any impact on the NGB achieving gender membership benchmarks. Data were obtained from the USOPC's Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard. The results indicate that females are largely under-represented in leadership roles within NGBs. However, the data indicates a positive correlation between female representation in the leadership structure of NGBs, and the ability of the NGB to achieve female membership benchmarks. The study concludes that as well as supporting the ethical case for female representation, the findings highlight a clear business performance case for greater gender diversity.

Key Words:

Sport governance; Critical Mass; Gender Inclusion; Gender diversity on boards; National sport organisations

INTRODUCTION

The Olympic Movement has been successful in increasing the inclusion of women since they were first allowed to participate as athletes in the 1900 Paris Games (White & Kay 2006; Donnelly & Donnelly 2013; Burton 2015). More recently, Donnelly & Donnelly (2013) identified three gender milestones achieved at London 2012: 1) The London Games had the highest percentage of female athletes of any other Summer Olympic Games; 2) Every sport offered had female representation; 3) None of the participating countries denied women from participating in the games. Despite these recent achievements, advances in relation to female representation in management and leadership roles within sport has not followed (Burton, Grappendory & Henderson, 2011; Donnelly & Donnelly, 2013; Burton 2015; Women in the Olympic Movement, 2016; Adriaanse & Claringbould 2016; Adriaanse, 2017, Burton & Lieberman 2017). Furthermore, the pace with which organisations are moving to increase the inclusion of women in leadership positions, remains slow (Burton, Grappendory & Henderson, 2011; Burton & Lieberman, 2017).

Early attempts to achieve gender equality were pursued in 1994, at the time of the first international conference on Women and Sport held in Brighton, England (Hargreaves, 2000). Hosted and organised by what was then the British Sports Council, and supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the aim of the conference was to accelerate the process of change that would address the imbalances and issues women face in their participation and involvement in sport (International Working Group, 1998). The outcome of the conference, The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport (British Sports Council, 1994), focused on developing a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport. Specifically, the declaration outlined ten principles to be

followed by all organisations and individuals responsible for, or who influence, the development or promotion of sport for women (IWG, 2009). Pertinent to this paper is the sixth principle, which identified the under-representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions in sport, and called for the development of policies and programmes to increase the number of women in such positions. Subsequent IWG conferences followed (Windhoek, 1998; Montreal, 2002; Kumamoto, 2006; Sydney, 2010; Helsinki, 2014; Bostwana, 2018), each with their own specific theme (Soysa & Zipp, 2019). The under-representation of women in leadership positions was revisited at the fifth IWG conference in 2010 in Sydney. A key outcome of this event was the 'Sydney Scoreboard' which aimed to increase female representation in leadership positions through the development of an online tool that documents and monitors female representation on executive boards of National Sport Organisations (NSOs) and International Federations, using three key indicators to assess the representation of women in leadership roles: board directors; board chairs; and CEOs (IWG, 2017).

More recently, the 2012 Los Angeles Declaration, focused on developing a sporting culture that promotes gender equality and enables the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport (Women in the Olympic Movement, 2016). Unanimously approved, the 'Los Angeles Declaration' stated that there is a need "to bring more women into management leadership roles" (Women in the Olympic Movement, 2016). Similarly, the IOC has identified that gender equality is key when establishing effective and stable management (IOC, 2017) whilst also recognising that gender equality is critical for the recruitment of future female leaders within the Olympic Movement (Women in the Olympic Movement, 2016). This recognition of gender equality can be seen in Rule 2, Paragraph 7 of the Olympic Charter, which proposes:

71 “to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in
72 all structures, with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and
73 women” (Women in the Olympic Movement, 2016: 18).

74 As such, the IOC has established benchmarks for those organisations who are part of the
75 Olympic Movement, requested that those bodies and organisations (National Olympic
76 Committees, International Federations, National Federations and National Governing Bodies
77 of sport) have a minimum of 20 percent of ‘decision-making positions’ designated for women
78 by 2005; though this benchmark has not yet been achieved (Women in the Olympic
79 Movement 2016).

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81 Evidence suggests that increasing female inclusion within the leadership structures of sport is
82 not a new initiative, with the extant literature examining a range of issues including:
83 representation, gender relations, gender dynamics; power relations; gender structures;
84 gender suppression and the impact of quota’s, and have been explored globally, Australia
85 (Adriaanse & Schofield 2014, 2013; Sibson, 2010; McKay, 1997, 1992), Canada (Shaw & Slack,
86 2002; Inglis, 1997; Hall *et al*, 1989), Germany (Pfister & Radtke, 2009; Doll-Tepper *et al* 2006),
87 Kenya (Mwishuka, Gitonga & Wanderi, 2017); Netherlands (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012,
88 2008, 2007); New Zealand (Shaw, 2006; Cameron, 1996), Norway (Hovdon, 2010, 2006, 2000;
89 Skirstad, 2009, 2002) Syria (Megheirkouni, 2014), United Kingdom (White & Kay, 2006; Shaw
90 & Hoeber, 2003; Shaw & Penny, 2003), and the United States of America (Schull *et al*, 2013;
91 Burton *et al* 2011; Henry & Robinson, 2010; Hewery *et al*, 2004). Despite a plethora of
92 research, female representation within sport leadership still remains low regardless of the
93 growing evidence that greater gender diversity at the leadership level in organisations makes
94 for success (Women in Sport, 2017).

Building on the work of Johanna Adriaanse, regarding gender equality in sport leadership, this article explored the inclusion of women in leadership roles within the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs, hereafter) that make up the Olympic Movement in the United States of America. Using the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee's (USOPC) self-published 'Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard' along with data of public record (e.g. NGB websites), the study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the representation of women on boards (board directors, board chair and chief executive) of NGBs that fall under the remit of the USOPC?; and (2) What impact does the representation of women on those boards have on NGBs achieving their membership benchmarks?

A note on terminology

It is important to highlight that different countries adopt different terminology when referring to governance procedures and structures. For clarity, this paper adopts the following definitions of NGB; Board; Director; Chair; and Chief Executive Officer: (1) NGBs are defined as private, self-appointed organisations, which are typically independent, that govern and oversee all related activities of their particular sport, through the common consent of that sport (Bell, 2009). In some countries, these may be referred to as National Sport Organisations (NSOs). (2) The 'Board' denotes a group of officials (i.e. directors) who are empowered through the organisation's constitution to provide oversight and govern the organisation. (3) 'Director' refers to a person who sits on the Board, either through election or appointment, depending on the organisation's articles of association. (4) The 'Chair' holds responsibility for leading the Board. (5) Organisations routinely appoint a paid 'Chief Executive Officer (CEO)', whose remit is the operation and performance of the organisation;

this individual, operating in accordance with the delegation of the Board, may be referred to as the general manager, managing director, or secretary general (Adriaanse, 2016).

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs): The United States context

Unlike other countries, the USA does not have a ministry for sport or a federal department that oversees participation in international competition. The role of overseeing the USA's participation in the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, Youth Olympic Games, Pan American Games, and Parapan American Games is performed by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC). Officially recognized in 1978 with the passage of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, the USOPC became the body and voice of the Olympic and Paralympic Movement within the United States. In addition to the management and promotion of the Olympic Movement, the USOPC serves as an oversight organization of the NGBs. While not responsible for the daily operation of each individual sport they do provide support, and can dissolve NGB leadership if the USOPC feels the NGB is being mismanaged. While NGBs function under the umbrella of the USOPC, there is no consistency in how they are structured or how they operate, though they all have a similar mission: the promotion of their sport; training of elite level athletes; and nomination of athletes to the U.S. Olympic, Paralympic, Youth Olympic, Pan American and Para-Pan American Teams (USOPC, 2015).

In compliance with the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (ASA) (1978), the USOPC is required to submit a report to Congress every four years, detailing operations for the preceding four years. The report includes information in relation to the involvement of women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and military veterans for each NGB and for

the USOPC itself. Such involvement includes programmes and initiatives for participation, athletes, governance and management activities. By signing the Performance Partnership agreement each NGB is required to submit its inclusion and diversity data annually to the USOPC's Diversity and Inclusion department (USOPC, 2018). Each NGB is given inclusion benchmarks unique to their organisation, which are generated from existing data specific to the NGB such as financial and human resources, popularity of the sport, and additional data from the U.S. Census and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The benchmarks are designed to provide an assessment and comparison of NGBs whilst taking into consideration the uniqueness of each organisation. Data are collected in relation to the diversity of the Board of Directors; standing committees; staff; membership; national team coaches and athletes; and developmental team coaches and athletes (USOPC, 2018). From the data, each NGB is provided a distinctive scorecard highlighting their efforts in achieving their inclusion benchmarks. Whilst there is an appreciation that there are limitations to using benchmarks as a measure for achieving gender equality, they provide a framework by which to monitor organisational progress towards achieving inclusion (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand, 2017; Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Sweigart, 2012).

The USOPC and all NGBs are federally recognized as 501 (c) (3) non-profit organisations and therefore do not receive financial support from the US government (Yoo and Hong, 2017), except for some funding for specific military programmes in the Paralympic games. Responsibility for generating financial resources to fulfil the NGBs mission falls on the NGB itself. NGBs secure funding through five channels. Firstly, the USOPC provides direct grants, or 'programming', directly to athletes and NGBs. 'Programming' funding is based on performance or potential performance (Yoo and Hong, 2017), which can make the grant an

unpredictable or inconsistent avenue for cash flow. Individual and Corporate donors are the second and third channels of NGB revenue. Individuals and Corporations are able to make annual or 'one-off' donations in return for a taxation deduction. Fourth is any commercial activity the sport can leverage through merchandise sales, licensing agreements or broadcasting rights. The fifth and final revenue channel is individual membership. This provides access for individuals to: participate in officially sanctioned events; additional insurance coverage; and other incentives, which can include sport specific publications, seasonal gifts and discounts to sports related products. An increase in individual memberships provides a twofold benefit to the NGB. Firstly, annual membership is an indication of the level of participation and interest in the sport. This aligns to a core aim of any sports NGB: to cultivate participation and engagement with the sport. Secondly, increased membership leads to increased financial revenue, which is particularly significant given that annual membership fees make up a considerable source of an NGBs annual financial support. Failure to achieve female membership benchmarks means that the NGB is missing out on potentially significant resources.

Literature review and Theoretical Framework Whilst there are notable female leaders in the political, economic and business industries across the world, there is still a significant gender imbalance in these areas. For example, the percentage of women on boards (all companies) in the United States is between 11-12 percent and has barely increased in the last decade (Hersh, 2016). Perhaps, it is not surprising that this trend is also evident in sport leadership and governance.

An effective leadership team, the Board of Directors, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer, is crucial to any large organisation (Arzubiaga *et al*, 2018). It is the leadership team who has the strongest impact on decision-making, how the organisation runs, and its success (Erhardt *et al*, 2003). Studies suggest that organisations with mixed gender Board of Directors outperform organisations that have a Board of Directors made up of just one gender (Joecks *et al*, 2013; Torchia *et al*, 2011; Nielsen and Huse, 2010; Konrad *et al*, 2008; Branson, 2007; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Erhardt *et al*, 2003; Van der Walt and Ingley, 2003). When Fortune-500 companies, (a list of the USA's largest and most valuable businesses based on their total revenue for the respective fiscal year), are ranked by the number of women directors on their boards, those in the highest quartile in 2009 reported a 42 percent greater return on sales and a 53 percent higher return on equity than the rest (Hersh, 2016). In addition, over 55 percent of the companies that became inactive on the index had one or zero women on their boards (Hersh, 2016). In the UK, initiatives such as the '30% Club', campaign for greater representation of women on FTSE100 boards with a target of a minimum of 30 percent, with the premise that a better gender balance leads to better results (30percentclub, 2017). These studies suggest a strong 'business case' for gender diversity in organisational governance. Indeed, the USOPC's own operationalisation of diversity and inclusion specifically includes language regarding business performance: "The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Family embraces the spirit of differences for better athletic performance and business results." (USOC Diversity Working Group Recommendations, 2001). In 2016, women chaired just 7 percent of International Sports Federations, held 19 percent of chief executive positions and only 16 percent were board directors (Adriaanse, 2016). Whilst there was a slight increase from 2012 of women chief executives (8%) and women directors (12%) globally, there is still clearly a significant under-representation of women in leadership positions (Adriaanse, 2016).

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214 Women bring unique skills, knowledge and experience, which can positively affect
215 organisational performance (Terjesen *et al*, 2009). Research suggests that organisations with
216 higher levels of gender diversity display higher levels of innovation and greater attention to
217 the concept of corporate and social responsibility (Joecks *et al*, 2013; Torchia *et al*, 2011;
218 Terjesen *et al*, 2009; and Konrad *et al*, 2008). Moreover, research by Konrad *et al* (2008)
219 identified that women bring a collaborative leadership style that benefits boardroom
220 dynamics by increased listening, social support and win-win problem solving. Research also
221 indicates that boards with higher female representation have better financial management
222 and engage in less risky financial and management decisions (Ward and Forker, 2017; Hassan,
223 Marimutthu and Johl, 2015; and Post and Harper, 2005). Furthermore, Terjesen *et al* (2009)
224 found that women were significantly more active in promoting non-financial performance
225 measures such as customer and employee satisfaction. The notion that women are more
226 sensitive to other perspectives particularly resonates with the governance of NGBs, which are
227 not-for-profit organisations. If research indicates the benefits of greater gender inclusivity in
228 the corporate world, there is no reason to suppose these cannot be equally applicable to sport
229 governing bodies.

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231 As evidenced, research across the world has examined the representation of women in
232 governance, both in sport (Mwishuka, Gitonga and Wanderi, 2017; Adriaanse, 2017;
233 Adriaanse and Claringboould, 2016; Adriaanse and Schofield, 2014; Schull *et al*, 2013) and
234 non-sporting contexts (Jose, Zehra, and Faizan, 2018, Haque, Faizan, Cockrill, 2017; Joecks *et*
235 *al*, 2013). However, to our knowledge, no other study has specifically examined the

representation of women in leadership positions in sport, and the impact of this on women's participation (membership) of sport, which the present study aims to do.

Critical Mass Theory

According to Critical Mass Theory, a certain threshold or "Critical Mass" of group size is needed to be able to influence and affect change (Joecks *et al*, 2013). The roots of Critical Mass Theory, can be found in the works Thomas Schelling (1978) and Mark Granovetter (1978) who applied threshold models to understand collective behaviour. Kanter (1977) contributed to the development of Critical Mass Theory when applying threshold models to study the politics of gender and collective political action within corporate leadership structures. Over the last twenty years, 'Critical Mass' has gained wide currency among international organisations as a justification to bring more women into leadership positions (Schwartz-Ziv, 2017; Ben-Amar, *et al* 2017; Adriaanese and Schofield 2013; Joecks, *et al* 2013; Torchia *et al* 2011; Grey, 2006; Kanter 1977). Critical Mass has been used as a theoretical lens to examine the political voice of women (Scheurer, 2014; Childs, & Krook, 2009; Childs, & Krook, 2008; Chaney, 2006; Childs, & Krook, 2006; Studlar, & McAllister, 2002) and the promotion of women in the sciences (Deemer, 2015; Carrigan, *et al* 2011; Blickenstaff, 2005).

Adriaanese and Schofield (2013) and Adriaanese (2016), have used Critical Mass to examine the role of women in sport leadership. As this investigation builds upon the work of Adriaanese, Critical Mass Theory will also be adopted as a theoretical framework. Kanter (1977) argues that once critical mass occurs within the leadership structure, women can affect policy and create change as fully engaged participants, and not just as token representatives of diversity.

Kanter (1977) established four classifications to determine the Critical Mass needed to cause influential change within the leadership structure: '*Uniformed; Skewed; Tilted; and Balanced.*

- **Uniformed Groups** are groups in which all members share the same (visible) characteristics. That is, with respect to gender, all members of the group are either male or female. Of course, *uniformed* groups develop their own differentiations but with reference to salient, external, master statuses, like gender, its members are similar (Kanter, 1977 p. 208). Uniformed groups are comprised of 100 percent of the same gender.
- **Skewed Groups** are groups in which one dominant type (e.g., males) controls a few (e.g., females), and therefore controls the group and its culture. The few are called "tokens". Tokens are not treated as individuals but as representatives for their category (Kanter 1977 p 208). So while there might be the appearance of diversity as a result of having women in group there is a lack of opportunity for women to fully participate equally. Kanter (1977) and Joecks (2012) suggest that male-dominated, *skewed* groups comprise up to 20 percent women.
- **Tilted Groups** are groups with less extreme distribution. Unlike the *skewed* groups, minority members can ally and influence the culture of the groups. They do not stand for all their kind; instead they represent a subgroup whose members are to be differentiated from each other in their skills and abilities (Kanter, 1977 p. 208). Kanter (1977) and Joecks (2012) suggest that male dominated *tilted* groups are comprised up to 20-40 percent women.
- **Balanced Groups** are groups when the majority and minority turn into potential subgroups where gender based differences becomes less and less important. The

focus turns to the different abilities and skills of men and women (Kanter, 1977 p. 208). Kanter (1977) and Joecks (2012) suggests that *balanced* groups comprise up to 40-60 percent women.

Joecks *et al* (2012) and Torchia *et al* (2011) identified that it was not until a *tilted* classification is achieved that a minority group could influence the direction of an organisation. Joecks *et al* (2012) and Torchia (2001) identified 30 percent representation as the tipping point or the 'magic number' (Joecks *et al* 2012, p68) for Critical Mass to occur. Similarly, Konrad *et al* (2008) identified that whilst one or two women on a board can make a substantial contribution, increasing the number to three or more enhances the likelihood that women's voices are heard and boardroom dynamics change.

Scholars support Kanter's framework and contend that establishing Critical Mass has a positive impact on the performance and operation of an organisation (Adriaanese and Schofield, 2013; Mahadeo *et al*, 2012; Carrigan, *et al*, 2011, Torchia *et al*, 2011), Luckerath-Rovers, 2011; Carter *et al*, 2003, Erhardt *et al*, 2003). Sweigart (2012) identified that Critical Mass has developed a level of validity, evidenced by countries such as Norway, which compel publicly held companies to ensure that women make up at least 40 percent of their boards of directors. Similarly, in the UK, a mandatory code for sport governance denotes that NGBs have a 30 percent gender diversity requirement (Women in Sport, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

This study firstly draws on secondary data regarding gender distribution on board of directors of 45 NGBs collected via the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard. Gender distribution on

boards of 45 NGBs was collected through the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard. The rationale for examining NGBs was that their status represents the highest echelons of sports performance globally, with a responsibility for hundreds of thousands of people who compete or are physically active across the performance spectrum (Adriaanse, 2016). The NGBs voluntarily provide their diversity data to the USOPC's Diversity and Inclusion department annually, for the production of the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard.

Data used in this article were accessed in December 2016 via two sources. Firstly, the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard, which is self-published by the USOPC (latest published data at time of research). Secondly, data from public records, was accessed for verification purposes.

USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard

NGBs in the USA are required to produce regular reports detailing their operations and demographic makeup, including the participation of women, people with disabilities, racial/ethnic minorities, and military veterans. The Scorecard measures the diversity and inclusion of the Board of Directors, standing committees, staff, membership, national team coaches and athletes, and developmental team coaches and athletes. Data regarding the percentage of female representation on the Board of Directors as well as the percentage of current female membership are taken directly from the Scorecard.

Data of public record

Data of public record included NGB websites and individuals' social media accounts (i.e. LinkedIn). In order to clarify the gender of the Board Chair and Executive Director/CEO, data

of public record were examined. Although we acknowledge that gender is a socially constructed concept, and that it is possible that the gender of individuals is not correctly represented through the review of profile biographies, the study is partly based on use of public records interpreted in this way.

Data Analysis

The data from the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard, along with the gender of the Chief Executive Director Officer and Board Chair, was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analysed using t-tests to establish any existing and significant correlations. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine the difference between the chair of the Board of Directors' gender and percentage of female membership. A further independent sample t-test was conducted to explore significant differences between the gender of the CEO and the percentage of female membership. Finally, a correlation was conducted to see if there were any linear relationships between the percentage of females on the Board and the percentage of female membership. The magnitudes of correlations were 0-0.3 (low), 0.31-0.5 (moderate) and greater than 0.5 (high) (Dancey & Reidy, 2004). The mean and standard deviation of the percentage of female memberships when the Chairperson and CEO are male or female, was calculated to investigate for any correlation.

Limitations

Whilst benchmarks have been used as a framework by which to monitor organisational progress towards achieving inclusion, in this case gender equality, there are limitations to the USOPC D&I scorecards (Sisjord, Fasting & Sand, 2017; Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Sweigart, 2012). A benchmark by definition should be a comparison with a "standard" rather than

partial progress towards that standard. The current benchmarks are based on previous female inclusion data (e.g. athletes and employees) in each individual sport, rather than the population of women as a whole and therefore have the potential to continue past underrepresentation (Women Sports Foundation, 2018). A further limitation is that the data captured represents national team and national team development programmes rather than total number of females participating in non-NGB affiliated sport. However, unlike other countries the US does not collect national participation data.

RESULTS

Data indicated there was a total of 767 board members across all of the NGBs that are affiliated to the USOPC and 215 (28.03%) of those board members were female. Table 1 shows female representation on boards of directors for the 45 NGBs. Data suggests that all 45 NGBs had female representation on their Board of Directors, and therefore none of the NGBs were characterised as '*uniformed*' in their board structure. However, female representation on boards ranged from 10 to 75 percent with a mean of 29.6 percent. A total of 7 (15.56%) NGBs indicated female representation that exceeds 40% (i.e. a *balanced* board). Some of these NGB's achieved as high as 58.33 percent female representation). In addition, 25 (55.56%) of NGBs showed between 20-40 percent female representation and are therefore categorised as *tilted* in their structure. The data indicate that two of the NGB's consist of female dominated *tilted* groups, showing between 20-40 percent male representation. Moreover, 13 of the 45 NGBs (28.9%) indicted less than 20 percent female representation thus falling within a *skewed* classification. Furthermore, overall, 26 of the 45 NGBs (57.8%) fall below 30 percent.

Only two (4.44%;) of the 45 NGBs had female CEOs, with one providing no data. Eight (18.18%) of the 45 NGB boards had a female chair, with USA weightlifting providing no data.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE:

Table 1: Representation of women in leadership positions and percentage of female membership by NGB

Female representation in leadership roles and effect on membership

A positive, moderate and significant relationship between percentage of females on the Board of Directors and the percentage of female members was found ($r = .42, p < .05$). This suggests a higher percentage of females on the Board of Directors may result in a higher percentage of female members within the sport.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE:

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of percentage of female memberships when the Board Chair and CEO are male or female.

Table two shows the percentage of female membership when the Board Chair and CEO are male and female. There was no significant difference found between male and female board of director chair and the percentage of female membership ($t(37), -1.92, p > .05$). However, the means revealed that when a board chair was female there was a higher percentage of female members ($M = 57.14, SD = 30.02$) in comparison to male board chairs ($M = 40.91, SD = 20.34$).

When investigating the gender of the CEO, the data indicate that no significant difference was found between the gender of CEO and percentage of female members ($t(37), -1.23, p > .05$). However, the means did reveal that in organisations that have a female CEO the percentage of female members ($M = 65.12, SD = 46.84$) was higher than if there was a male CEO ($M = 43.90, SD = 22.68$). The high standard deviation indicates a wide spread of results but this may be symptomatic of the relatively small sample sizes.

DISCUSSION

Representation of women in leadership positions of NGBs

Board members

Data suggests that all 45 NGBs had women on their Board of Directors therefore none of the NGBs were categorised as '*uniformed*'. However, the representation of women on boards ranged from 10 percent (USA Archery; USA Baseball; USA Judo) to 75 percent (USA Field Hockey) with a mean of 29.6 percent. Data from the Sydney Scoreboard, collected between 2010 and 2012 indicated that the percentage of women on the Board of Directors for the USA was 24.3 percent (Adriaanse, 2015). In addition, the data indicted a global mean of 19.7 percent of women board directors (*ibid*). The findings therefore suggest that there has been an increase in the percentage of women board directors in the USA since 2012, and this has continued to be above the global mean. In 2012, the newly appointed Director of Inclusion and Diversity at the USOPC was brought in to directly impact the 53 NGB's. The inception of the Scorecard meant that organisations were, for the first time, having to publish data relating to their overall performance in a public platform. By publishing the Scorecard the USOPC are demonstrating their commitment to diversity and a full level of transparency. The introduction of the Scorecard, could itself have significantly impacted upon how NGBs plan

inclusion and diversity initiatives, including those related to the involvement and participation of women. For example, USA Shooting have created a women's coaching council to develop a pipeline plan to retain and advance women in their sport, which could explain why they are one of the NGBs identified here as having a *balanced* board.

25 (55.56%) of NGBs demonstrated between 20 and 40 percent female representation and are categorised as *tilted* in their structure. Interestingly, the data indicates that two of the NGB's (USA Equestrian; USA Field Hockey) consist of female-dominated, *tilted* groups, showing between 20-40 percent male representation on the Board of Directors. Similarly, to male-dominated boards, female-dominated, *tilted* boards have high female membership and low male membership, which provides further evidence supporting the validity of Critical Mass, and the importance of creating gender-diverse boards to create gender-balanced membership.

13 of the 45 NGBs (28.9%) indicated less than 20 percent representation, falling within a *skewed* classification. This suggests that nearly a third of NGBs are still operating with a Board of Directors that are dominated by men, with few "token" females, who are merely there as representatives of their gender, rather than being viewed as individuals who are afforded the opportunity to fully participate and contribute (Kanter, 1977). Furthermore, 26 of the 45 NGBs (57.8%) fall below 30 percent and therefore below the 'tipping point' whereby an organisation can benefit from gender diversity (Joecks *et al*, 2013, Torchia, 2011, and Konrad *et al*, 2008).

Board chairs and CEO's

The data from the USOPC Scorecard indicates that eight (18.18%) of the 44 NGB boards had a woman chair, with USA weightlifting providing no data. Data from the Sydney Scoreboard (2012) indicated that the mean for the USA for women who held board chair position was 11.1 percent (Adriaanse, 2015). Moreover, the global mean in 2012 was 10.8 percent. Similar to the representation of women on the Board of Directors, the percentage of women chairs has increased, from 11.1 to 18.18 percent. Furthermore, the data from the USOPC Scorecard highlights that only two of the 45 NGBs (4.44%); USA Fencing and USA Synchro Swimming) had women CEOs, with one (USA Roller Sport) providing no data. Although this indicates a slight increase from the data from the Sydney scoreboard, whereby there were only 2.9 percent women CEO's, this still falls well below the global mean of 16.3 percent (Adriaanse, 2015). While there has been some progress achieved, women are still under-represented in leadership roles, particularly in CEO and Board Chair positions.

Women in leadership positions and the impact on NGB membership and Funding:

Results show that there is a positive correlation between the representation of women on the Board of Directors and the level of membership of women within an NGB. When NGBs that report having 30 percent or more gender diversity on their BODs are isolated, 70 percent of these groups meet or exceed their benchmark for female membership. The data suggests that the higher the percentage of diversity, the greater the likelihood of achieving the benchmark. When compared to the NGBs below 30 percent gender diversity, just over half of these organisations successfully achieve their requested benchmark. Of the NGBs which are classified as *Skewed* only 46 percent achieve benchmark. These findings further the argument that achieving a gender-diverse BOD is advantageous for the performance of an organisation, which provides additional support to previous research findings that females bring unique,

skills, knowledge and experience (Joecks *et al*, 2013; Torchia *et al*, 2011; Nielsen and Huse, 2010; Konrad *et al*, 2008); Branson, 2007; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Van der Walt and Ingley, 2003; Erhardt *et al*, 2003). In addition, there is evidence that greater gender diversity helps represent the potential and actual customer base (i.e. NGB membership) (Hersh, 2016; Glass, Cook and Ingersoll 2015; Dezso and Ross 2012; Herring 2009). It is important to note that achieving a gender-diverse BOD is more effective than appointing a woman to a token position of Chairperson or CEO.

This discovery could have an impact on the organisation's financial performance. As aforementioned, NGBs in the USA do not receive direct funding from the federal government. All resources come from donations and membership. This means NGBs rely more heavily on membership fees as a source of financial revenue. The findings in this article, along with the work of: Glass, Cook and Ingersoll (2015); Dezso and Ross (2012); and Herring (2009), suggest that greater levels of female representation in leadership positions helps to 'reach out' to females to participate in that particular sport. The greater the level of participation, the greater the number of memberships purchased, which means more financial resources for the NGBs operations. For example, by simply taking the stated annual membership fee of a NGB multiplied by the number of female members gained by achieve the benchmark, USA Judo (\$70 annual membership) would generate \$78,470 in new membership revenue by achieving their female membership benchmark. USA Fencing (\$75.00 annual membership) would create \$257,475 annually, while USA Boxing (\$65.00 annual membership) would generate \$684,320. These three examples illustrate the significant amount of funding that could be generated by achieving the female membership benchmarks set by the USOPC. This

research, along with literature presented in this article, clearly shows that achievement of these benchmarks will be more easily attained through more gender-diverse BOD.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the theory of Critical Mass in relation to women in leadership positions held by the 45 NGBs that are under the remit of the USOPC, in order to discover both the level of female representation and its impact on membership levels. The research reaffirms the litany of research establishing that there is still a lack of women in leadership roles in sport and that gender diverse leadership advances organisational performance. The results suggests that “*titled* roles” such as ‘CEO’ or ‘Chairperson’ are less important than having a Critical Mass of women on the Board of Directors, in relation to the participation of women. While these title roles may be more visible, the results suggest that having a Critical Mass of women within the Board of Directors has a greater positive impact on NGBs successfully achieving their benchmarks for female participation.

This is an important finding for two reasons. Firstly, the Board of Directors of NGBs need to ‘look into a mirror’ to see if the gender balance of the board accurately reflects that of the current membership (or the membership they are trying to achieve). If there is a true desire to increase the participation of women in sport, then, as the data suggest, it is important that the leadership structure incorporates women within the leadership landscape of that sport.

Secondly, the finding directly relates to the financial advantages of greater membership. The data suggest that NGBs that have greater levels of Critical Mass, by achieving a higher level of

gender diversity within the Board of Directors, are being more successful in achieving higher levels of female participation. As previously identified, NGBs in the United States are self-funded so the importance of increasing membership participation, as means of improving financial solvency, cannot be ignored.

The potential impact on membership rates and financial performance correlates with the priority of the USOPC Diversity and Inclusion vision of the US Olympic and Paralympic family 'embracing differences for better athletic performance and business results' (www.teamusa.org).

This article is a review of 2016 USOPC Gender and Diversity Scorecard data, so future work needs to establish longitudinal understandings of the key issues addressed in the paper. For example, gender diversity within the leadership structure within the NGBs under the remit of the USOPC. Further research will help establish any correlation between changes in rates of membership and fluctuations in gender diversity on boards of directors. Finally, it will help monitor the movement of women in roles of leadership in sport.

Recommendations:

The ethical case for female representation in the governance structures of sport is undisputed. However, this research suggests that, rather than establishing a case of gender equality on moral or ethical purposes alone, the case for gender diversification should be viewed in terms of enhancing business performance. By altering the female inclusion framework from a discussion based solely on 'equality' to one that includes 'performance' may create a shift in the inclusion of women in sports governance.

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547 Along with a shift in the discussion, structural changes could be made. While quotas in the
548 United States are not all that popular, they are not uncommon. In fact, the Ted Stevens Act
549 specifically requires that 20 percent of the Board of Directors of NGBs under the USOPC are
550 comprised of athletes who have represented that sport internationally, in order to ensure
551 athletes' perspectives in management decisions. The USOPC could simply extend this
552 approach, and model themselves on Norway and the UK, and require a Critical Mass of
553 women on all decision-making bodies.

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555 Finally, NGBs and the USOPC need to continue to develop and execute programmes that
556 foster and promote women into leadership roles. More research is required to examine
557 strategies to increase female inclusion in leadership roles within NGBs including, recruitment
558 and selection policies, succession planning, gender dynamics, gender relations, cultural
559 differences and longitudinal global comparative studies. It appears that until there are
560 structural changes, or a change in the framework of how gender equality is discussed, the
561 inclusion of women in leadership roles within sports management will continue to grow at a
562 sluggish pace.

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