

**Mind the Gap:
The Layered Reconstruction of Gender
in Sport Related Organizations**

ISBN 978-90-5472-059-1

NUR 740

© 2008 Arko Sports Media, Nieuwegein

With kind permission of Springer and Business Media

With kind permission of Human Kinetics

Ontwerp en opmaak: Studio Nico Swanink, Haarlem

Drukwerk: DeltaHage, Den Haag

Fotografie: Pro Shots, Almere

Waar in deze uitgave hij of hem staat, kan vaak ook zij of haar gelezen worden. Om de leesbaarheid te bevorderen, is besloten niet telkens beide vormen te gebruiken.

Behoudens uitzondering door de wet gesteld mag, zonder schriftelijke toestemming van de rechthebbende(n) op het auteursrecht, c.q. de uitgever van deze uitgave door de rechthebbende(n) gemachtigd namens hem (hen) op te treden, niets uit deze uitgave worden verveelvoudigd en/of openbaar gemaakt door middel van druk, fotokopie, microfilm of anderszins, hetgeen ook van toepassing is op de gehele of gedeeltelijke bewerking.

De uitgever is met uitsluiting van ieder ander gerechtigd de door derden verschuldigde vergoedingen voor kopiëren, als bedoeld in art. 17 lid 2. Auteurswet 1912 en in het KB van 20 juni 1974 (Stb. 351) ex artikel 16b., te innen en/of daartoe in en buiten rechte op te treden.

Mind the Gap: The Layered Reconstruction of Gender in Sport Related Organizations

Mind the Gap:
de gelaagde reconstructie
van gender in sportgerelateerde organisaties
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit Utrecht
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. J.C. Stoof,
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties
in het openbaar te verdedigen op dinsdag 17 juni 2008
des ochtends te 10.30 uur

door

Inge Elinore Charlotte Claringbould

geboren op 16 maart 1960, te Apeldoorn

Promotores: Prof.dr. P. Verweel
Prof.dr. A.E. Knoppers

Contents

Chapter one	7
How to understand the gender gap?	
Chapter two	19
Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: Who can and wants to belong?	
Elling, A. & Claringbould, I. (2005). <i>Sociology of Sport Journal</i> , 22, 498-515.	
Chapter three	41
Exclusionary practices in sport journalism	
Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. & Elling, A. (2004). <i>Sex Roles</i> , 51, 709-718.	
Chapter four	57
Finding a 'normal' woman: Selection processes for board membership	
Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. (2007). <i>Sex Roles</i> , 56, 495-507.	
Chapter five	79
Doing and undoing gender in sport governance	
Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2008). <i>Sex Roles</i> , 57, 81-92.	
Chapter six	99
Gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity	
Chapter seven	113
Summary	
Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)	
Dankwoord (Acknowledgements in Dutch)	117
Curriculum Vitae	119

Chapter one

How to Understand the Gender Gap?

Introduction

Sport plays an increasingly important role in society (cf. Coakley, 2007; Verweel, 2007). Its images are visible daily on television screens and in the print media and millions of euros are spent to buy television rights for men's soccer matches. Every community has areas or gyms where children and adults can be physically active and participate in sport competitions. Sport participation is also seen as a way for citizens to become and/or stay healthy, a place where integration occurs and where participants can accrue social capital. Sport has become a big industry employing countless numbers of volunteers and paid personnel. It also is assumed to add to nationalism as residents of a country collectively praise or bemoan their country's team in European or world competitions. Sport talk and images from the world of sport permeate interactions between individuals (see Coakley, 2007 for a further discussion of this). In other words, sport plays an important role in society and the organization of sport is based on ideologies about the race, social class, gender, etc.

The major focus of this dissertation is on how the construction of gender in organizations whose primary activity is sport may result in the exclusion of many women and inclusion of many men from positions of leadership. These are positions where decisions are made that impact a broad spectrum of people ranging from those who watch sport on television to those who engage in sport at their local club. These are also positions in which men greatly outnumber women.

I explore how these positions are gendered and how the processes that gender these positions are reproduced and resisted. The research project is grounded in Acker's (2006) definition of gender as "... socially constructed differences between men and women and the beliefs and identities that support difference and inequality..." (p. 444). Connell (2002) argued "gender arrangements are, at the same time, sources of pleasure, recognition and identity, and sources of injustice and harm" (p. 6). Similarly, Acker (1990; 1992) contended that categorical definitions of men and of women and the related meanings given to masculinity and femininity are contextual and asymmetrical and thus may vary across time and place. These meanings shape how gender is enacted (and vice versa). West and Zimmerman (1987) referred to this enactment as 'doing gender', that is, individuals and organizations engage in discursive practices that produce and reproduce gender.

The research project is limited to the investigation of discursive practices that shape behavior and interactions in asymmetrical ways. Specifically, how do meanings given to gender in sport-related occupations shape and reconstruct who is deemed suitable for positions of leadership and how do women and men in these positions experience these gendered meanings?

In this chapter we argue the need for and the significance of the study and sketch the broad theoretical framework within which the various research projects that comprise the following chapters are situated.

Gender Distinction in Sport

Women's participation in sport has changed considerably during the past century both in numbers and in the meanings assigned to it. For example, in 1896 De Coubertin, founder of the Olympic Games, thought that women should not take part in the Games because this participation was impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and incorrect (Mossink & Nederland, 1993, p.69). Moreover, he was afraid the public would attend the Games for the sensation rather than for watching sport. In 1928 the Olympic games were held in Amsterdam. At that time, 9.6 per cent of the participating athletes in the Games were women. The media emphasized that women athletes rested on the ground exhausted after their 800-meter race. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was judged to be 'irresponsible' because it allowed women to take part in this event. As a result, the IOC eliminated all women's events that were longer than 400m from its program for the next 36 years (Guttman, 1991). Nowadays, however, it is unthinkable that women should not participate in races like the marathon. The discourse of equal opportunities for women and men now dominates sport. The comparison with more than a hundred years ago makes it clear that not only has the meaning of sport changed but also the norms and definitions of who may participate.

Although women's participation in sport has increased, systematic gender distinctions remain. In 2005 women and men participated in sport in similar numbers. Yet in the Netherlands the ratio of women to men working in sport is skewed, that is, not balanced (Claringbould & Elling, 2006)ⁱ. For example, 15% of Dutch men and 8% of Dutch women were active in leadership positions in sport in 2005. Most of these men and women held this position in a sport in which they themselves actively participate(d). This finding in combination with the differential participation patterns of women and men athletes may explain why women often volunteer in sports such as aerobics, badminton, gymnastics, handball, equestrian sports, volleyball and hiking. In sports such as golf, running, chess, shooting, table tennis, soccer, cycling and indoor football relatively more men than women hold positions of leadership. Similarly, as Table 1 indicates, significantly more men than women occupy an office on boards that govern sport organizationsⁱⁱ.

Table 1.
Type of position, number, level, time investment and duration
of those working in sport, according to sex, in percentages
(unweighted). (Claringbould & Elling 2006)

	Men (n=206)	Women (n= 143)	Sig	Total (n=349)
Type of position				
Holding office on a board	33.0	23.8	*	29.2
Escort/trainer/coach	43.3	41.5		42.6
Referee/jury member	23.2	20.7		22.2
Committee member	19.2	24.4		21.3
Other position	18.7	20.0		19.3

Differences between men and women in positions on sport governing boards have shifted somewhat during the past four years (Van Kalmthout & Janssens 2001, Van Kalmthout & Lucassen, 2005). In 2001, there were approximately three times as many men as women per board. In 2005, this difference decreased slightly. Conversely, the differences in gendering by type of position had barely changed: for every 8 men who were chairs and every five who were treasurer, there was one woman. Board membership of men and women also differed significantly by level of a board. Of the 29,2% of people fulfilling an office on boards, approximately 23% of the men and 11 percent of the women held positions on sport governing boards at the higher, national and regional, levels ($p < .05$).

This gender skewness is similar to that of national boards of sport governance of other countries and was reason for the International Olympic committee (IOC) to take action. In 1997 the IOC urged National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Federations (IFs) to take measures to increase the number of women on their committees and boards to at least 10 per cent in 2001 and at least 20 per cent in 2005. A survey by White and Henry, (2004) has shown that the number of women has indeed increased since the measure came into effect although the gender ratio is still skewed.

Comparisons with other positions

Similar skewness in the gender ratio can be found in memberships of governing boards and managerial positions outside the world of sport. Similar to sport, the gender skewness increases with the level of the positions. In 2002, 25 per cent of the managers in higher and academic professions in the Netherlands were female (Merens, Cuijpers & Boelens, 2004). In 2003 the percentage of women members of executive boards or supervisory boards of the 500 largest companies in the Netherlands was less than 4 per cent (Merens, Cuijpers & Boelens, 2004). Furthermore in other sport-related positions such as in sports journalism, the gender ratio continues to be skewed. Although more women than men graduated in journalism, 34 per cent of Dutch journalists were women in 1999 (CBS, 2002; Deuze, 2000), whereas only 7 per cent of sport journalists were women in 2003 (De Graaf, 2004).

Obviously then, although the number of women and men participating in sport is similar in the Netherlands, the gender ratios in positions of leadership are skewed and the skewness increases with the level of the position. The skewness described here is not unique to sport or to the Netherlands but is part of gendered societal processes. We know little about the extent to which processes that create, challenge and reinforce such skewness may be sport-specific (cf. Acker, 1990; 1992).

Gender Distinction

Various scholarly discourses try to explain the reasons for such gender inequalities. Causes for skewed gender ratios in occupations and positions of leadership are sought, for example, in differences in socialization: men and women are raised and socialized differently (Chodorow, 1978; Duindam, 1991) resulting in different choices. Explanations are also sought in cultural dimensions. For example, the values, norms, behavior and rituals of an organization are assumed to determine the way in which men and women are included or excluded from certain duties or positions (Fischer & Van Vianen, 1999; Hofstede, 1999). Yet other explanations are based on economic interests. For example, women seem to function as stand-by in times of economic

prosperity, while in times of adversity they are excluded from the labor market. Or the gendered structure of the labor market may result in the selection of women selected for so-called dead-end (staff) positions that offer few, if any career perspectives. Other explanations for skewed gender ratios focus on gendered differences in individual development and career choices.

Women have to compromise between pursuing a career and care giving for children, partner and parents more so than do men. Other explanations for the unequal distribution between men and women on the labor market focus on characteristics of an organization such as size, sector and structure (see also Claringbould & Van der Lippe, 2002).

Although these explanations contribute to our understanding of systemic gender inequalities, they tend to provide a static and one-sided picture of existing inequalities since the processes within which gender differences are (re)created and challenged remain underexposed.

Consequently, a research project is needed that can (at least partially) clarify how gender is institutionalized in positions of leadership in sports organizations. In other words, how to understand the gender gap in sport? Therefore, in the following section, I describe a sociological research perspective that provides insight into the construction and reconstruction of gender in organizations and that does justice to the dynamics that underlie the gendering of sport and its organizations. To this end, I first briefly describe how meanings are constructed at social and institutional levels. Subsequently, I address the construction of gender in organizations.

The Construction of (Gender) Meaning from a Sociological Research Perspective

The Construction of Society and Organizations Through Interaction

Simmel (1976), one of the founders of sociology as a discipline, described how societies (and changes in societies) emerge from invisible, self-evident patterns. He contended that social interaction links the structure and culture of societies to individual behavior. In other words, he assumed that social institutions such as the government, economy, class structures and the family are the result of social interaction. Interactions are not independent but woven into social institutions because they are the basis on which societies and cultures are created and structured. Conversely, the ways in which societies are organized and structured create conditions under which interactions take place. Similarly, Durkheim (1964) contended that an individual contributes to the collective awareness of a society, but is often powerless against its power. Durkheim too, assumed that interaction plays a large role in this collective awareness. He argued that meaning constructions serve as glue that holds society together. These constructions are expressed in ceremonies, rituals, laws, values and norms. When people come together they discuss feelings and thoughts about a topic and thus create and standardize systems of meaning. Durkheim assumed that meanings are subject to change, but that together they weave an invisible order into society. On the one hand, this leads to a kind of collective awareness consisting of meanings on the basis of which people have a feeling of belonging. On the other hand, it can result in the strengthening of ideas that begin to lead a life of their own. As a result people feel they are losing grip on their own lives.

A frequently heard criticism of this Durkheimian approach is that it is not clear to what extent people are able to keep direction over their own lives: the agency versus structure dilemma. According to Giddens (1987), this dilemma is less relevant than it seems because agencyⁱⁱⁱ and structure are indivisible. Social structures are both the context for people's actions as well as the

result of human action since individuals create their own possibilities and limitations on the basis of meanings that they attach to situations in which they find themselves. Social structures bring forth social action while, conversely, individuals create social structures. Giddens (1984) contended that structures as such are not directly observable, but are only visible in social action. He defined social structures in terms of social routines necessary for the continuous production and reproduction processes of a society. Society, however, can also change as a result of daily interactions between people. Giddens (1984) assumed that common knowledge about dominant meaning systems in a society is a precondition for social interaction. If individuals know the dominant meaning systems they know what is expected of them in specific situations and they can apply their knowledge of the rules in more or less comparable ways in new situations. Dominant meaning systems are never fixed, however, because people tend to adjust to existing values, norms and rules and to recreate them in social interaction. Those involved in a process of interaction have only partial insight into the effects of their actions nor can they exercise complete control over the situation. Since this process is largely unpredictable each social action can have various unintended and also undesired consequences. For example, individuals may want to act in a rational manner and think they are actually doing so. Giddens argued that although individuals can be reflexive, capable of learning social skills, of accountability and of effecting change, they are often incapable of acting rationally because they only have partial control over their own actions (see also March & Simon, 1958). Consequently social context must be included in a study of social interaction and therefore of gender. The inclusion of social context can lead to greater understandings of individual actions (Giddens, 1987).

The Construction of Meaning through Interaction

Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902), two founders of the symbolic interaction approach, have described how an individual constructs his or her own identity during social interaction. Individuals imagine the impression they make on others and the thoughts others may have about them and develop feelings and reactions based on their experiences with others. This means that self-concept is not only a reflection of the reactions of others, but is also an interpretation of these interactions. The way people see themselves is based on the interpretations and meanings they attach to the way they think others assess their behavior. This makes the subjective meanings that individuals attach to the reactions and judgments of others of essential importance for the development of self-concept and choices for behavior (see also Meltzer, Petras, Reynolds, 1980). An individual always tries to assess a situation and subsequently wonders which identity and/or behavior would be appropriate, that is, appreciated or rejected. The ideas and judgments an individual develops about this determine his or her possibilities for identifying with others and/or with the situation. This is called 'identity work'. Identity work requires an individual to look for ways of relating to her or his surroundings taking into account their personal characteristics, culture, meanings, limitations and room to negotiate. Yet people also expect others to treat them in an appropriate way (Goffman, 1983). Thus the self-concept is actively constructed in interaction with the surroundings/context. Institutional and discursive power impact the ways in which people succeed in influencing situations, in shaping them to their will, and in negotiating and influencing the (re)construction of meanings.^{iv} Such negotiations become visible in interactions between dominant status groups or authorities and subordinate or minority groups (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman, most people assume that meaning constructions are objective and independent while they are not. Such assumptions have consequences for the discursive practices within which these meaning constructions

originate. Moreover, social control often strengthens or reinforces dominant meaning constructions. For example, when people do not recognize or conform to dominant practices and the connected meanings (rules, symbols and rituals), they tend to be excluded and treated as if they were strange and unreliable. It is difficult for an individual to ascertain meaning constructions, (status) characteristics and their boundaries, because often they are implicit, layered and intertwined and are embedded in structures and culture.

Although various social relations such as gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality structure society, the main focus of this study lies on gendered practices and constructions in (sport) organizations. The choice for gender is based on several related arguments related to Connell's conceptualization of the gender order. Connell (2005) has argued that gender relations play a major role in the structuring of many societies (cf. p. 72). He contended that a 'main axis of power in the contemporary European/American gender order' (p. 72) is the overall dominance of men and subordination of women. Also, gender as a major axis of power is visible in the formal structure of sport, that is, sport is an institution that is formally (institutional power) and informally (discursive power) structured by gender. I return to the intersection and complexity of various social group relations in the final chapter of this dissertation.

The Construction of Gender through Interaction

Differences in the societal valuation of the assumed responsibilities of men and women find expression, amongst others, in the way men and women in organizations relate and communicate with one another, how they present, or would like to present themselves, and how they behave and dress. They are also embedded in the definition and allocation of positions and functions in organizations and in the ways in which organizational structures and cultures are established. The invisibility or common sense nature of these processes often masks the (gendered) constructions on which they are based. Acker (1992) argued that this masking of the gendering of organizational processes and its substructures^v requires explicit attention.

Social interactions among individuals are places where meanings are negotiated. Such meanings are reflected in divisions of labor and authority, obligations and social status. Connell (2002, 2005) has shown how social group relations are created through the construction of meanings in which a dominant group defines another group as 'other'; this discursive practice creates a basis for inequality. This assignment is often based on what are seen as essentialized physical characteristics of the body such as race and gender.^{vi}

Meanings that emerge from social interaction therefore play an important role in constructions of differentiation between male and female (categorical gender). They become normative concepts of and about the expected behavior of men and women and part of identity formations. As a result every interaction between men and women is filtered through a 'gender' lens that challenges or reproduces these normative concepts. For example, if a selection committee for a leadership position in sport assumes that women know less about sport than men do, women may be considered less suitable for positions such as sports coaches, sports managers or sports journalists (cf. Hovden, 2000). Such meanings are linked with positions of power in organizations as well, because positions of a higher level are defined sooner on the basis of qualities ascribed to men than to qualities ascribed to women (Kanter, 1977; Marongiu and Ekehammar, 2000). Therefore, gender has consequences for the hierarchy and for the interpretation of status positions in organizations (Ridgeway, 1997). At higher organizational levels forms of inequality (according to gender, ethnicity and class) are often maintained due to fears of devaluation of a position or function. An increase in members of subordinated groups in

high-level positions is often accompanied by a decrease in the societal status of those occupations or positions. Therefore, as a rule, those in privileged positions (mostly white, heterosexual men) tend to represent their own collective interests and secure their own positions, than that they represent the interests of subordinate groups (Baron, Hannan, Hsu & Koçak, 2007). This makes gender distinction a non-neutral matter that is connected to the widely shared (cultural) conviction that men are naturally more competent and that they have more status than women. Furthermore, such meaning constructions raise the implicit expectation that performance and awards of men and women coincides with the expectations with respect to competence and status. Swan and Wyer (1997), found that members of a lower status group, who are of the opinion that they are (in principle) upwardly mobile, assign themselves characteristics that coincide with the higher status group. Women and men tended therefore to engage in valued male defined work behaviors. Men therefore identified with their own status group while women had to engage in 'extra' mental work, known as identity work' to fit in. These processes of meaning production about gender are not straightforward, but complex and layered, as I shall show in the following chapters of this dissertation. Meanings are (re)produced and challenged at individual, interactional and social or cultural levels (see for example, Acker, 1990; 1992). Risman (2004) wrote: "All structural theories must make assumptions about individuals and individualist theories must make presumptions about external social control. While we do gender in every social interaction, it seems naïve to ignore the gendered selves..." (p. 430). Therefore an assumption that underlies this dissertation is that gender is a socially constructed stratification system (cf. Acker, 1990; Martin, 2006; Risman, 2004) that is embedded in the layeredness and complexity of organizational processes that occur at individual, structural and symbolic levels.

The use of a multi-level perspective has had limited use in empirical sports research in the Netherlands (with the exception of Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001; 2003), In the following chapters I examine different ways gender is constructed in occupations in sport and how it may manifest itself in mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In the following chapter 'Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: who can and wants to belong?' (Elling & Claringbould, 2005) the consequences of dominant meaning constructions (such as gender, but also ethnicity, age, sexual preference, etc.) for processes of inclusion and exclusion are discussed. This chapter provides an overview of aspects that influence dynamics of inclusion and exclusion processes in sport. Three chapters follow that explore how the construction and reconstruction of gender occurs in various organizations. In the chapter 'Exclusionary practices in sport journalism' (Claringbould, Knoppers & Elling, 2004) the question how gender and ethnicity are constructed and reconstructed at individual and at institutional levels and how these hang together, takes central stage. This chapter brings into view the complexity and layering of gender in organizations. The chapter 'Finding a 'normal' woman: Selection processes for board membership' (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007) shows how gender is negotiated in interactions during recruitment and selection procedures for positions on sports committees or boards. Subsequently, the chapter 'Doing and undoing gender in sport governance' (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008) provides insight into the reproduction of gender in different contexts, showing how gender constructions are context dependent and how they can change. Finally, in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I use the findings in the previous chapters to discuss how the implicit and explicit construction and reconstruction of gender contributes to the maintenance of asymmetrical gender relations in hierarchical organizational structures. I also summarize how these discursive gender practices can be resisted, and change can be effected.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4, 139-158
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In: A.J. Mills & P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248-262). Sage Newbury Park, CA.
- Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class and race in organizations. *Gender & Society*, 20, 441-464.
- Baron, J.N., Hannan, M.T., Hsu, G. & Koçak, Ö. (2007). In the company of women: Gender inequality and the logic of bureaucracy in start-up firms. *Work and Occupations*, 34, 35-66.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, (2002). Data retrieved July 22, 2003 from <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/start.asp?lp=Search/Search>.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalyses and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Claringbould, I. & Van der Lippe, T. (2002) Vrouwen in leidinggevende posities. *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken*, 18, 257-267.
- Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. & Elling, A. (2004). Exclusionary practices in sport journalism. *Sex Roles*, 51, 709-718.
- Claringbould, I. & Elling, A. (2006) Mannen en vrouwen in sportvrijwilligerswerk. In: Claringbould, I., *Vrouwen in zicht* (pp. 25-38). Nieuwegein: Arko Sports Media.
- Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. (2007). Finding a 'normal' woman: Selection processes for board membership. *Sex Roles*, 56, 495-507.
- Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2008). Doing and undoing gender in sport governance. *Sex Roles*, 57.
- Coakley, J. (2007). *Sports in societies: Issues and controversies* (9th edition). London: McGraw-Hill.
- Connell, R.W. (2002). *Gender*. Malden, MA: Polity Press/Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cooley, C.H., (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Charles Scribners & Sons.

- De Graaf, S. (2004) *Vrouwen in de sportjournalistiek: De schrijvende pers*. Data retrieved January 22, 2008 from <http://www.vrouw-en-media.nl/2-nieuws/Vrouwen%20in%20de%20sportjournalistiek.doc>.
- Duindam, V. (1991). *Ouderschapsarrangement en geslachtsidentiteit. Geslachtsspecifieke socialisatie, geen onverdeeld succes bij een verdeeld subject?* Utrecht: Lemma.
- Deuze, M. (2000), Onderzoek journalistiek in Nederland [Research on journalism in the Netherlands]. Retrieved October 22, 2003 from <http://users.fmg.uva.nl/mdeuze/publ14.htm>.
- Durkheim, E. (1964). *The division of labor in society*. New York: Free Press.
- Elling, A. & Claringbould, I. (2005). Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: Who can and wants to belong? *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22, 498-515.
- Fischer, A.H. & Van Vianen, A. (1999). Vrouwen op weg naar de top: Op managementniveau moet je denken en werken als een man. [Women on their way to the top: at the managerial level you must think and work as a man] *Psychologie Magazine* 18, 28-31.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*: Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1987). *Social theory and modern sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1983). The interaction order. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 1, 1-17.
- Guttmann, A. (1991). *Women's sports: A history*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1999). *Allemaal andersdenkenden: Omgaan met cultuurverschillen*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact.
- Hovden, J. (2000). "Heavyweight" men and younger women? The gendering of selection processes in Norwegian sport organizations. *NORA, Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 8 (1), 17-32.
- Knoppers, A. & Anthonissen, A. (2001). Meanings given to performance in Dutch sport organizations: Gender and racial/ethnic subtexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18, 302 - 316.
- Knoppers, A. & Anthonissen, A. (2003). Women's soccer in the USA and the Netherlands: Differences and similarities in regimes of inequalities. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 20, 351-370.
- Kanter, R. M., (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

- Marongiu, S. & Ekehammar, B. (2000). A gender perspective on Person-Manager fit and managerial advancement. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 41, 175-180.
- March, J.G. & Simon, H.A. (1958). *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley.
- Martin, P.Y. (2006). Practicing gender at work: Further thoughts on reflexivity. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13, 254-276.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meltzer, B.N., Petras, J.W., Reynolds, L.T. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: Genesis, varieties and criticism*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merens, A., Cuijpers, M., Boelens, A. (2004). Politieke en maatschappelijke besluitvorming. In W. Portegijs, A. Boelens, & L. Olsthoorn, L. (Eds.), *Emancipatiemonitor*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Publicatie 2004-19.
- Messner, M. (2002). *Taking the field: Women, men and sports*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mossink, M. & Nederland, T. (1993). *Beeldvorming in beleid; Een analyse van vrouwelijkheid en mannelijkheid in beleidsstukken van de rijksoverheid*. Den Haag: VUGA.
- Ridgeway, C. (1997). Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 218-235.
- Risman, B.J. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & Society*, 18, 429-450.
- Simmel, G. (1976). *Een keuze uit het werk van Georg Simmel*. Uit de reeks Sociologische Monografieën. Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus.
- Swan, S. & Wyer, R.S. (1997). Gender stereotypes and social identity: How being in the minority affects judgements of self and others. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 1265-1276.
- Van Kalmthout, J. & Janssens, J. (2001). *Verenigingsmonitor 2001*. Arnhem: Diopter.
- Van Kalmthout, J. & Lucassen, J. (2005). *Verenigingsmonitor 2005, De stand van zaken in de sportvereniging*. 's-Hertogenbosch: W.J.H. Mulierinstituut.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1, (2) 125-151.
- White, A., & I. Henry, (2004) *Women, leadership and the Olympic movement*. International Olympic Committee and Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, Loughborough University. Data retrieved November 14, 2005 from http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sses/institutes/salp/IOC_lboro_report.pdf.

Notes

ⁱ Outside the world of sport, we find few numerical differences between men and women volunteers however. On average, about a third of Dutch men (33%) and women (30%) older than 18 years engage in volunteer work (De Hart & Dekker, 2003). While in sport, in 2005, only 11 per cent of the Dutch population held a volunteer or a paid position in sport (Claringbould & Elling, 2006).

ⁱⁱ Data are based on the National Sport Onderzoek (NSO), a survey held in 2005 by Mulier Instituut and Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP), among the Dutch population. There were 2262 respondents, of which 349 persons occupied a (voluntary) office in sport organizations. Because, some of those occupied more than one office, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

ⁱⁱⁱ Agency, according to Giddens consists of three levels; the discursive conscience refers to reasons and motivations people offer for behavior; the practical conscience refers to knowledge and convictions of people, with which they can orient themselves in situations; and, the unconscious, refers to memory, on the basis of which an individual always reacts in daily life, but which is not easily contained in words.

^{iv} Institutional power manifests itself “in the form of oppression of one group by another” (Connell, 2002, p.59). Discursive power operates “through the ways we talk, write and conceptualize. This diffuse but tenacious power operates close up, not at a distance. It impacts directly on people’s bodies as ‘discipline’ as well as on their identities and sense of their place in the world (Connell, 2002, p.59).

^v With gender substructures Acker understands the spatial and temporal labor constructions in which dominant meanings hold for functioning of individual co-workers and in which gender distinction plays a role (Acker, 1992, p. 253).

^{vi} It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address the question why this happens and why some physical characteristics such as skin color are used to define groups and not others such as eye color. In addition, not all social group relations are immediately visible such as social class and sexuality (see Connell, 2002).

Chapter two

Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion in the Dutch Sports Landscape: Who Can and Wants to Belong?

A. Elling & I. Claringbould (2005).
Sociology of Sport Journal, 22, 498-515.

Abstract

Inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms that influence sport participation and positions of leadership in sport form a complex constellation of interacting factors and dimensions. Who can, who is allowed, and who is willing to participate in sport is influenced by institutional selection mechanisms as much as by individual options and choices. Socialization, disposable income, accessibility of sporting facilities, normative and discriminating structures and cultures, and sporting abilities and talent are interacting in/exclusionary factors that influence sport participation options among people with different social status positions (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity). Changes in the facilitation and organization of sport can enhance an inclusive sport practice, which might also foster social inclusion in broader society. The focus of this article is on patterns of social inclusion and exclusion in (post)modern sport in Western countries such as the Netherlands. Using empirical data, we present and analyze the current status and development of central theories and governmental policies.

Studies about sport participation show that, although democratic changes have occurred, differences among social groups (e.g., with respect to gender, age, ethnicity, and education) still exist. Especially in traditional Dutch club sport (voluntary, organized member associations offering training and competition possibilities), there is a strong overrepresentation of socially dominant groups (the highly educated, Whites, heterosexuals, men; Janssen, et al., 2003; Van der Meulen, 2003). On the one hand, it can be argued that differences in sport participation shouldn't automatically be interpreted as effects of inclusionary and exclusionary social mechanisms (Coalter, 2000); they could also be a result of differences in taste. On the other hand, however, it can be argued that general participation similarities do not indicate that social exclusion in particular types of sports or organizational forms no longer exists and therefore no longer deserves policy attention.

Not everyone is and/or feels equally welcome everywhere. Whether and to what extent specific groups are excluded from specific sports, organizations, or positions of leadership is not always explicit and clear-cut, but depends on shared experiences, constructed meanings, and ideological positions. Apart from statistical differences in sport participation, several are qualitatively oriented studies have shown that possibilities and opportunities to participate in the production of sport, to define sport, and to write about sport are still structured by social power relations (Coakley & Donnelly, 2001; Knoppers & Elling, 2001; Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002).

Nonetheless, in many sociocritical studies, the focus is on only one power dimension, and it is mainly cultural aspects that are taken into account. Although absolute and complete exclusion of specific groups hardly seems to occur anymore, implicit and explicit stereotypical images and material and cultural social inequalities continue to exist. But which aspects and mechanisms actually dominate with respect to the different intersections of power relations, and how are they related to each other? We argue that not all phenomena of difference represent power inequalities, as seems to be too easily claimed sometimes in sociocritical studies, but also that similarities do not always represent social equality, as is often supposed by positivistic analyses. Inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms are dynamic, often paradoxical, and continuously challenged.

In this article we focus on changing and reproducing patterns of inclusionary and exclusionary aspects and mechanisms in sports with respect to different social power relations. We present an overview of and discuss central theories, governmental policies, and empirical data.¹ This article is the result of the first phase of a large research project, a state-of-the-art literature review including different empirical studies about inclusion/exclusion dynamics and experiences related to both participation in and organization of sport with respect to different social identities/inequalities.

Governmental Frames, Central Concepts, and Theories

In this section we discuss the general concepts of in/exclusion and social in/equality, some important social developments with respect to social power relations and social cohesion, functional and moral legitimization of in/exclusion, and possibilities for individual action.

What Are Social Inequality and Social Exclusion?

The concept of social exclusion refers to social inequality – the different possibilities and opportunities available to groups in society based on socioeconomic status (income/education),

age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and/or physical and mental abilities (Collins, 2002; Gowricharn, 2001; Hylton & Totten, 2001; Woodward & Kohli, 2001). Social exclusion is a process that undermines the accessibility to democratic involvement and/or participation in several social spheres of life as a result of an absolute or relative lack of sufficient financial and/or cultural resources. Possessing sufficient opportunities to gain relevant capital-economic, social, and cultural- fosters mechanisms of social inclusion. In many countries employment has acquired a crucial role in the linking of and coherence among different social practices. Although several authors distinguish between material and cultural factors, others argue that these dimensions are strongly connected (Acker, 1992; Anthias, 2001). When people cannot participate because they lack financial resources or there is no fitting supply, this is not completely independent of cultural norms about specific groups of people. The fact that men have more opportunities to play professional sports is related to the cultural norms and codes about sport and gender. “Ranking below” is not similar to (Coalter, 2000) “being subordinated”, but they are often related (Gowricharn, 2001). In addition, the process of self-exclusion – not willing to belong – is related to subordination because feelings of misunderstanding and having no prospects can lead to the internalization of dominant normative images of being inferior (hooks, 1995). This means that because equally qualified ethnic minorities or women have fewer chances of occupying positions of leadership, many might give up their ambitions.

Social Changes in Participation and Identification: Intersections and Hybridity

Processes of exclusion are oppositionally related to concepts like bonding, cohesion, and integration (Bauman, 2001; Komter, Burgers, & Engbersen, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Excluded groups, such as ethnic minorities, have fewer opportunities to participate in relevant social sectors and can therefore be regarded as insufficiently integrated into society. Moreover, this lack of ethnic integration might be perceived as a danger to general societal cohesion. Sociocultural developments like globalization, secularization, individualization, and commercialization have influenced forms and mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion in sports as well. As in other social sectors, lines of in/exclusion in sports clubs formerly existed alongside discrimination based on gender, socioeconomic status, neighborhood, and religious affiliation (Duke & Renson, 2003; Van Bottenburg, 1994). Nowadays some of these traditional bonding factors have given way to other categories such as specific lifestyles and consumer cultures (Featherstone, 1987). Authors such as Putnam in *Bowling Alone* stress the importance of and the current decline in social capital through traditional bonding rituals, such as participating in club sports. In the Netherlands and several other northern European countries, members of voluntary organized sport associations often not only participate in training and competitions with other clubs, but are also involved in the production of sport (as board or commission members, coaches, or referees), as well as in accompanying social activities. These traditional sport associations are therefore often regarded as important forces for social integration. The decline of sports club membership is believed to mirror a general decline of social capital, which is seen as a serious threat to a stable democratic society. With respect to sport participation and social in/exclusion, however, one can also regard the decline of competitive club sports and the simultaneous increase in commercialized and informal sport participation as potential developments toward greater diversity and a more democratic and socially inclusive sport practice (Breedveld, 2003; Coalter, 2000; Eichberg, 1998; Hylton & Totten, 2001).ⁱⁱ

In several Western countries, sport stimulation projects are increasingly legitimized by national and local governments in terms of the integrative potential of sport. Sport is believed to foster a value exchange between and the mutual acceptance of social groups, as well as to strengthen mixed social capital. Positive empirical relations found between social trust and organized club sport participation seem to support this idea (Breedveld, 2003; cf. Putnam, 2000). One can, however, also interpret the data in terms of self-selection: people with lots of social trust – and who belong to hegemonic groups – participate in club sport (SCP, 2002). The generated bonding and thick trust that is associated with participating in focal practices in associations, such as team sports in clubs, is often related to homosocial bonding and exclusionary social mechanisms (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Therefore, Arai and Pedlar argue for more openness and the generation of abstract trust through “the creation of space that provides alternatives to the structures (e.g., class, sexuality, race) that have traditionally confined and marginalized people” (Arai & Pedlar, p. 194). In theory and, to a lesser extent, in empirical sport studies and governmental policies, former socially excluded groups, including women and ethnic minorities, are increasingly regarded in the context of interaction and no longer as separate categories of analysis. All people are not only gendered (e.g., identified as man, woman, or transgender), but they are simultaneously ethnicized (e.g., identified as the common majority or as a member of a minority group), and regarded in relation to educational level, socioeconomic status, sexual preference, and other stratification variables. Anthias (2001) argues that the symbolic and material status position of people, their possibilities, and identifications are dynamic, context specific, and are partly dependent on the meanings assigned by the people themselves and others.

This means that mechanisms of exclusion cannot always be identified clearly. Some people might feel excluded, whereas others might argue that there are no objective grounds for feeling excluded. Because people have multiple social identities, they might often simultaneously experience inclusion and exclusion according to specific social power relations. The extent to which a Surinam coach of a women’s basketball team feels in/excluded might be dependent on the appraisal of women or women’s basketball by the club and by referees and the social diversity (gender, ethnicity, and education) of the team and the other coaches, managers, and/or board members. Theory, practice, and policy are confronted with intersections, as well as often hybrid forms of traditional hierarchical and binary social categories (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001). “Class, gender and ethnicity/race cannot be seen as constructing permanent fixed groups, but involve shifting constellations of social actors, depending on the way the boundaries of a denoted category are constructed” (Anthias, 2001, p. 378, emphasis in original).

Will future generations of ethnic minorities (e.g., Surinam-Dutch) lose their minority status and become merely Dutch citizens? Where do transsexuals fit in the rigid binary gender categories of competitive sport? The diffusion of traditional social identity relations has resulted in more attention for general diversity politics and mainstreaming, which in practice are not always incorporated properly and have often effectively led to cutting down or dissolution of budgets for, for example, gender issues in sport (Hoyden, 2003). The continuing interactions between hegemonic and marginal categories, the changes in existing categories and social identities, and the development of new social identities and in/exclusion mechanisms make one-dimensional interpretations nearly impossible. The question of who can, who is allowed, and who is willing to participate is influenced by both institutional selection mechanisms and by individual options and choices.

Organizational Legitimizations

Organizations differ in legitimizing more social inclusion or diversity on the one hand and maintaining the status quo of exclusion on the other (Engbersen & Gabriel's, 1995; Fraser, 2001).

Utilitarian or functional legitimation refers to economic and quality analyses from profit perspectives such as market discipline and efficiency. With respect to the enlistment and retention of new members and volunteers in sports clubs, it is important to include all potentially interested and talented people, regardless of gender or ethnicity. In policies targeting specific groups (e.g., directed toward women, the elderly, ethnic minorities, the physically challenged), functional arguments are often used for getting more members and/or volunteers, improving quality, and creating support (Elling, Knoppers, & De Knop, 2001; Schaap, 2002).

When the inclusion of specific minority groups requires extra structural accommodations—for example, for accessibility for physically challenged People – a functional cost – benefit analysis will not necessarily show positive outcomes for specific groups. People with a severe handicap are potential customers for sport organizations, but they might require more financial, structural, and cultural investments compared with ethnic minorities or gays and lesbians. The best outcome might not be realized if inclusion policies and diversity management are based only on functional legitimation.

Although national governments often communicate their inclusion and diversity policies through the strategic use of functional arguments, these policies can also be formulated using moral legitimation. Moral legitimations are formulated and judicially anchored in terms of: equal rights (to work, education, and health); equal distribution (of resources); equal valuation (of qualities and practices); and equal treatment (without discrimination). Supplementary to the rights of every individual, the specific rights for minority groups can be secured based on, for example, health, safety, or privacy (Fraser, 2001). Examples include separate changing rooms for men and women or a minimum age for participation in specific competitive sports. The issue then becomes one of public recognition of social and status differences (e.g., in relation to age, physical abilities, or gender), which legitimizes specific rights or measurements based on equity and/or redistribution. Fraser's theory combines redistribution issues with aspects of recognition. She doesn't depart from the recognition of social identities, however, but advocates the use of a social status model, which is based on an analysis of the effects of institutional patterns and dominant cultural values on social actors. She argues for subjecting recognition and redistribution claims to the "justificatory standard of participatory parity" (Fraser, p. 38). The allocation of separate swimming hours for Muslim women can be based on moral reasoning that recognizes Muslim women as a marginalized group with unequal opportunities with respect to sport participation in combination with a policy calling for strategies to increase their sport participation.

Nevertheless, morally based inclusion policies have their own risks and do not guarantee the desired results. Dutch social-security policies and subsidy measures have shown that pampering marginalized groups can result in dependency of these groups and increasing stigmatization. Higher status groups often oppose the allocation of special rights to other groups because they experience it as unjust (Benschop, 1996). In addition, many members of marginalized groups that benefit from special rights such as affirmative action do not favor this special treatment. They fear they won't be accepted because they will be judged solely as token members of a specific social category and not on their individual capabilities.

Possibilities for Individual Action

A different way to study in/exclusionary mechanisms is to analyze which different action possibilities are available to individuals and groups and are used in which circumstances. Hirschman (1974) argued that people who feel unacknowledged or excluded can formulate their point of view (voice) or leave (exit) and possibly join another group or organization. The extent of social bonding and solidarity (loyalty) structures the choice of exit or voice. People who are closely attached to a specific type of sport, organization, or group are less inclined to choose the exit option, even when they do not feel totally at home. For example, a gay football player can decide to continue playing out of love for the game or the club even though he experiences a homophobic atmosphere. To what extent loyalty is based on sport-, club-, and/or group-specific forms of bonding, and whether social networks, knowledge, or experience turn the scale, and which social power relations dominate is context specific (Anthias, 2001; Verweel, 2000). In imitation of Bourdieu (1978) and others, specific forms of sport participation can be seen as frames of identification, as well as a means of distinction. For example, there have been people who have experienced social mobility but continue participating in sport with old friends with lower socioeconomic status, or Black citizens who choose typical White sports. Which (unreflective) choices do individuals make and what are key aspects in in/exclusionary processes?

Not only do sports organizations often use combinations of functional and moral arguments to include or exclude specific groups of people, individuals also choose to join and be loyal or not to join based on rational cost/profit analyses, as well as on the basis of affective feeling.

What Is Known About Inclusion and Exclusion?

Although there is no clear relation between participation/nonparticipation and in/exclusion, participation is an important indicator that is best measured empirically. Less is known about the specific underlying mechanisms – and the mutual hierarchy – of why people decide to participate, although several aspects can be distinguished. The empirical data presented are mainly from Dutch longitudinal sport participation research, but the trends found have also occurred in other western countries.

Who Does and Does not Participate?

The Social Cultural Plan office (SCP) has assembled sport participation data with respect to several sociodemographic dimensions over a period of 20 years (1979–1999; see De Haan & Breedveld, 2000; Van der Meulen, 2003). These data show that differences in general sport participation with respect to age, gender, education, and income have decreased. Moreover, on the basis of multivariate analyses, it is argued that the explanatory power of the social dimensions distinguished has decreased significantly, meaning that sport participation can be predicted less than before by traditional explanatory variables like gender, age, and education. Significant increases in sport participation have especially taken place among the former strongly underrepresented categories of women and the elderly. Significantly better opportunities to participate, however, seem responsible for the greater inclusiveness of the sport sector: the new categories of sport participants are mainly involved with governmentally funded community projects, commercial sport organization, or informal settings. The largest differences among groups with different status positions can still be found in the traditional organizational setting of sport clubs.

Table 1.

Participation ratios in types of sports/physical activities, based on odds ratios with respect to age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and physical abilities, 1999, population > 6 years

age (%young / %old) ^a		gender (%male / %female) ^b		education (%high / %low) ^c	
basketball	11,2	futsal	8,9	fieldhockey	6,7
martial arts	6,1	football	6,8	golf	4,2
soft-/baseball	5,2	car-/motorracing	4,5	squash	3,5
gymnastics	5,2	squash	4,6	watersports	3,4
tabletennis	5,0	tabletennis	2,2	basketball	3,4
skating	4,8	basketball	2,2	tennis	2,5
football	4,8	martial arts	2,2	ice-skating	2,3
korfball	4,5	jogging/running	2,0	tabletennis	2,3
field-hockey	4,2	track & field	1,8	jogging/running	2,2
equestrian	4,2	golf	1,9	skating	2,1
handball	4,0	watersports	1,7	volleyball	1,9
badminton	3,0	soft-/baseball	1,5	track & field	1,9
track & field	2,8	tennis	1,4	fitness/aerobics	1,8
ice-skating	2,6	tour-/speedcycling	1,3	walking	1,8
futsal	2,4	field-hockey	1,2	martial arts	1,7
swimming	2,1	volleyball	1,2	tour-/speedcycling	1,6
watersports	1,5	ice-skating	1,1	badminton	1,6
general	1,4	badminton	1,0	swimming	1,5
volleyball	1,4	general	1,0	soft-/baseball	1,5
other sports	1,3	walking	0,9	general	1,4
tennis	1,3	other sports	0,9	handball	1,4
jogging/running	0,6	swimming	0,8	korfball	1,4
tour-/speedcycling	0,5	skating	0,8	car-/motorracing	1,3
walking	0,5	korfball	0,7	futsal	1,3
squash	0,5	handball	0,6	equestrian	1,2
fitness/aerobics	0,4	fitness/aerobics	0,6	football	1,2
golf	0,4	gymnastics	0,3	other sports	1,2
car-/motorracing	0,3	equestrian	0,3	gymnastics	0,7

^a n(youth: 6-17)=2301; n(adults: 18-55 jaar)=11.189.

^b n(men)=6670 ; n(women)=6820

^c education only for people > 21 years. 'high' is higher professional or university degree. n(low)=8195; n(high)=2155.

^d 'high income' is the highest income tertile. n(high)=4800; n(low-middle)=7427.

^e ethnic minorities: only non-western minorities. n(minorities)= 362; n(majority)=12502.

^f n(constraints)=2435.; n(healthy)=10.721

Source: SCP (AVO data), with special thanks to Koen Breedveld for extra data analyses.

income (%high / %middle-low) ^d		ethnicity (%majority / %minorities) ^e		physical abilities (%healthy / %constraints) ^f	
golf	5,2	golf	– ^d	track & field	3,9
field-hockey	2,8	car-/motorracing	–	handball	3,7
tennis	2,6	ice-skating	8,1	futsal	3,5
squash	2,4	tour-/speedcycling	5,9	korfball	3,3
watersports	2,1	walking	4,6	squash	3,1
soft-/baseball	2,1	handball	3,6	field-hockey	2,8
jogging/running	1,9	equestrian	3,2	football	2,8
track & field	1,9	watersports	3,1	ice-skating	2,8
car-/motorracing	1,8	track & field	2,9	skating	2,6
equestrian	1,7	tabletennis	2,6	equestrian	2,6
ice-skating	1,7	tennis	2,4	tennis	2,5
volleyball	1,6	squash	2,4	martial arts	2,4
fitness/aerobics	1,6	other sports	2,3	jogging/running	2,2
badminton	1,4	skating	2,1	car-/motorracing	2,1
skating	1,4	volleyball	1,9	volleyball	2,0
futsal	1,4	korfball	1,7	basketball	2,0
walking	1,4	badminton	1,7	badminton	1,9
korfball	1,3	swimming	1,7	watersports	1,8
tour-/speedcycling	1,3	gymnastics	1,6	golf	1,8
general	1,3	general	1,6	honk-/baseball	1,7
tabletennis	1,3	jogging/running	1,5	tabletennis	1,7
swimming	1,3	field-hockey	1,3	fitness/aerobics	1,5
basketball	1,3	fitness/aerobics	1,0	general	1,4
martial arts	1,3	futsal	0,9	gymnastics	1,3
football	1,2	football	0,7	swimming	1,3
handball	1,1	basketball	0,6	tour-/speedcycling	1,2
other sports	1,0	martial arts	0,6	walking	1,1
gymnastics	1,0	soft-/baseball	0,5	other sports	1,1

Men, people with higher educational levels and income, ethnic majority groups, heterosexuals, and people without physical and/or mental impairments are overrepresented in sport clubs that mainly offer competitive sports (De Haan & Breedveld, 2000; Diepens & Okkema, 2002; Janssens, Elling, & Van Kalmthout, 2003).ⁱⁱⁱ

Furthermore, continuing differences in sport participation with respect to social power relations become more visible when the focus is on specific types of sport. There are differences in the profiles of participants of team sports versus individual and semi-individual sport, as well as among specific sports. Martial arts and tennis participants differ with respect to income, education, age, and ethnicity. Basketball, handball, hockey, and football players also differ with respect to several social dimensions (see Table 1; see also Kew, 1997; Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, & Renson, 2001). These data indicate that although the sport sector in general might have become more inclusive, the choice to participate in club sport or in football might not be equally free for everybody because of in/exclusionary mechanisms. Changes in the social characteristics of sports participants sometimes can be explained by an increase in the number of participants of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender leveling in football and age leveling in tennis). With respect to other sports, formerly overrepresented groups dropping out might be the main explanatory factor (e.g., age leveling in korfbal – a mixed-gender form of basketball) or a combination of factors (e.g., education and age leveling in handball). The hard data do not offer any insight into the extent to which these developments are the result of changing in/exclusionary mechanisms and experiences of structural or cultural impediments. The relatively strong increase over the last few years in the number of girls and women participating in the traditional masculine sport of football might be seen either as a cause or as a result of a more positive image of women's football. Skewed sport participation figures are often mirrored even more strongly in the representation of different status groups in the production and management of sport. Before mentioning specific in/exclusionary factors and mechanisms, we will therefore address social inequality with respect to leadership positions in organized club sport.

Who Decides and Who Does not?

Data from annual representative research among Dutch sports clubs (Van Kalmthout & Janssens, 2002) show that the representation of men and women on boards is skewed (3:1) and even more so than the participation ratio of men and women in sport clubs (2:1). Nearly one third of the clubs do not have any female board members, although these are mainly clubs for activities in which few women participate, such as boxing or billiards. But when the focus is on the executive board (president, treasurer, secretary, and common members), the number of clubs without women on their board increases to 42%. With respect to ethnicity, empirical data are less clear, but it is expected that the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities is even higher. Apart from a general underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities (and especially ethnic minority women) in leadership positions in sport, processes of horizontal and vertical segregation also occur. Horizontal segregation refers to a gendering and ethnicizing of different positions. Female board members, for example, are most likely to occupy the position of secretary, whereas being the president is least likely (Van Kalmthout & Janssens, 2002). Female coaches mainly train youth and/or women (Knoppers, 2001), and ethnic minorities are more likely to occupy a position as a coach than as a board member (Roques & Janssens, 2003).

Vertical segregation refers to the decrease in representation in the hierarchy of leadership positions: the higher the level, the lower the percentage of female and ethnic minority board members. Gender differences in board representation in national federations are larger than on the club level: men comprise 88% of the board members of Olympic level national sport federations (Claringbould, Knoppers, & Elling, 2005). Half of the 30 Olympic sport federation boards comprise only male members; some of these boards represent sports considered feminine such as equestrian and gymnastics. Although it is less well documented in the Netherlands, ethnic minorities are still less visible in leadership positions on the national level than on the club level, even in sports with relatively high numbers of ethnic minority participants such as boxing and football.

Structural and Cultural Stimuli and Impediments

An analysis of the national and international literature elicited the following in/exclusionary factors and mechanisms that will be briefly elucidated in this section: socialization, discrimination, rules and interaction forms and norms, physical abilities, supply and information, spare time and finances, transport, and safety (e.g., Coakley & Donnelly, 2001; Collins, 2002; Elling et al., 2001; Hylton & Totten, 2001; Kew, 1997; Shogan, 2002). Not all of the “basic ingredients” – such as parental encouragement during childhood, encouragement by friends, cultural inclusiveness, enough spare time, money, sport facilities, and physical potential/abilities – are necessary to the same extent for all forms of sport participation nor for all participants. Nonetheless, a deficit of adequate resources – which are often interdependent – is a strong explanatory factor of nonparticipation. Contrary to sport participation research, sport socialization research is often qualitative in nature and is mainly directed toward one social power dimension (e.g., gender). Moreover, in international scholarly sport sociology journals, there is a strong overrepresentation of similar critical qualitative research focusing on gender and ethnicity. Nonetheless, other power dimensions (e.g., physical impairments, age, social class, and sexual orientation) are slowly receiving more attention, as does research focusing on intersections of specific power relations and the respective in/exclusionary factors and mechanisms.

Sport socialization

An early positive socialization in sport increases the chance of life-long sport participation (Vanreusel, 1993). Primary socializing actors such as school, parents, and friends play important roles, as do, increasingly, the media.

Several authors have argued that this early sport and physical activity socialization is not socially neutral, but structured by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and physical impairments (Buisman, 2002; Coakley, 1998; Elling, 2002; Kew, 1997). Girls and boys with different sporting abilities and from different socioeconomic strata and ethnic descent are not offered similar physical activities and sports in school and are often differentially encouraged by parents, teachers, coaches, and peers in the training and staging of strength, speed, and aesthetic movements. Among lower-class males, including a relatively high percentage of ethnic minorities, for example, physical strength, competition, and comradeship are important (Messner, 1990; Terpstra, 1997). Children with physical or mental impairments receive less encouragement from significant others, including medical practitioners, to participate in sports when compared with other children (Diepens & Okkema, 2002; Sport England, 2001).

Coakley and Donnelly (2001) show that physical activity and sport socialization issues are not only limited to youth and the introductory phase; socialization is actually a life-long process. Personal changes in performative and competitive abilities related to age and training, in socioeconomic position, and/or in cultural lifestyle can have in/exclusionary results with respect to specific types of sport participation and involvement. The blurring of several social boundaries has made traditional in/exclusionary mechanisms less absolute, as well as more complex and ambiguous. People who experience upward social and economic mobility often choose other, more exclusive sports rather than those in which they were socialized as a child. The preferences and concrete behaviors of upward movers, however, often only partly coincide with individuals with a longer tradition of “high culture” and “old money” (Jacobs, 2002).

Formal and informal exclusion and discrimination

Discrimination and the resulting exclusion of specific groups in sport participation and organizations are generally strongly condemned by local governments and sports federations, as well as addressed by specific policies and projects (e.g., target group policies, positive action plans, antidiscrimination codes). Although some strategies might have shown positive results, exclusionary mechanisms such as discrimination often persist, although they are becoming less explicit and formal. Moreover, discriminatory mechanisms are often institutionalized in the same organizations that are responsible for combating discrimination and exclusion. Marginalized groups are supposed to assimilate to hegemonic (i.e., sanctioned by majority and higher status groups) traditions, regulations, standards, and norms that are often viewed as neutral and objective by the dominant group (Coakley, 1998; Elling et al., 2003; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001). Club regulations or expectations, such as paying annual dues all at once and scheduling parents to drive their children to competitions, might not be a problem for many members, but can be a big impediment for people who live on the social minimum and do not possess a car. Among these are relatively many ethnic minority citizens, who, furthermore, are often poorly socialized in regular club sport practices. In addition, when telling implicitly sexist, racist, or homophobic jokes is common practice within a club, team, or sport group (and might even enhance the social status of the teller), this is exclusionary not only for women, ethnic minorities, and/or gays and lesbians but also for many others. At the same time, it would be inclusionary for a specific group of people, mainly heterosexual, ethnic majority men. Arguing that these practices are not really discriminatory and do not exclude people because they are “just jokes,” and that individuals belonging to the marginalized status groups might actually be complicit, affirms the hierarchical status quo. Thus, dominant organizational structures and cultures influence the extent to which different groups can, may, and are willing to belong.

Physical abilities and sporting talent

Irrespective of social background, people who are talented as regards sporting abilities are more included than those who are not. Is selection then truly based on sporting abilities and therefore not related to social inequality issues, as is often argued with respect to ethnic and socioeconomic differences (“sport integrates people with different social backgrounds”)? With the growing development of recreational physical and sporting activities in the context of “sport for all” policies, there is less focus on speed and strength, physical abilities which are prerequisites in most competitive sports. Therefore, the sports world in general has become more inclusive of people who are biologically less equipped with speed and strength and who are also less socialized in the development and staging of these competitive sporting abilities (e.g.,

women, the elderly, the physically challenged). Nevertheless, and also within competitive sporting categories, being “good” can still work as an in/exclusionary mechanism in relation to social inequality. For example, especially talented ethnic minority athletes will probably be welcome in a mainstream high-ambition sports club, whereas the club might be less enthusiastic if a group of moderately talented ethnic minority men want to become members. Especially talented and ambitious ethnic minority members (or gays and lesbians) are prepared to accommodate the existing rules and interaction forms and norms as long as they can act at the highest possible level. People with less talent and/or ambition who do not fit in easily might feel less welcome and possibly look for a group in which it is easier for them to “be who they are” (cf., Elling et al., 2003; Shogan, 2002). Although competitive and recreational are not inherently antithetical terms, this is often experienced as an aspect of tension within sports clubs, causing members who perform at lower levels to feel excluded (Anthonissen and Boessenkool, 1998).

Availability and accessibility of sporting facilities

Another important aspect of sport participation in general, and of individual choices in particular, is the availability and accessibility of sport facilities for specific sports. The growth of differentiated sport accommodations, organizations, and clubs in any locality or neighborhood promotes an inclusive sports sector (Van der Poel, 2000).

Although it might be seen as a citizen’s basic right to have general sports facilities in the neighborhood, not all people have equal opportunities. Some accommodations or sport forms are so scarce or expensive that these cannot be offered everywhere, and not everybody will be able to make use of them. For individuals who are dependent on specific facilities (e.g., many physically challenged people and Muslim women^{iv}), there is often not much choice, providing there are any facilities at all.

The popularity of fitness centers among people and groups who are not or are no longer active in club sports might partly be a result of fitness centers being more often located in urban areas, and they are easily reached on foot, a bike, or public transport. As a result of prioritizing central urban spaces for living and business in urban planning, club sport areas and accommodations are often located at the edges of urban areas, which can be difficult to reach without a car. When people are dependent on public transport or on others (for carpooling) to reach sport locations (e.g., lower income groups including many elderly people and ethnic minorities), the additional time and organization required can be an impediment to sport participation. Physically challenged people, especially, often lack access to sport facilities and experience transport problems as a significant impediment to participation because traveling to sport locations is often timeconsuming and expensive (Diepens and Okkema, 2002). Safety is an additional in/exclusive mechanism, particularly for women and children, with respect to transport and the location of sport facilities, as well as with respect to sexual harassment from other athletes or coaches.^v Therefore not all public sport facilities and running, cycling, or skating areas are equally accessible to all groups. The spatial or aesthetic set-up of sporting facilities can also be gendered and in/exclusive to specific groups, as Spielvogel (2002) and Klein and Deitersen-Wieber (2003) have argued in relation to fitness centers.

Apart from inequalities in the objective availability and accessibility of specific sports facilities for specific groups, information provision also works as an in/exclusionary mechanism. Different groups use different sources for spreading and gathering information, varying from word-of-mouth advertising to leaflets to local newspapers and the Internet. When local governments provide information about specific facilities (e.g., for the physically challenged)

via general information services and translate it into different languages, information is more inclusive of nonhegemonic groups. Form and content of information services have in/exclusionary effects when people come to a specific organization for the first time. How are different groups welcomed and guided in clubs and fitness centers or at community sports activities?

Spare time and money

Lack of spare time is one of the dominant arguments raised by nonparticipants and drop-outs (Rijpma & Leijns, 1998), but, paradoxically, relatively busy people are the most active in sports (de Haan & Breedveld, 2000). Whimbush and Talbot (1988) have argued that spare time is always relative and gendered: caring responsibilities are especially difficult to split into time units. Therefore, opening times and hours of operation of sports facilities should be related to the amount and allocation of spare time available to those who want to participate.

Fitness centers, as compared with competitive sport clubs in general, are also more accessible as regards the time factor because they are open at various times. Club sport facilities are often open only at specific hours in the evening for training sessions and on weekends for competitions; this places children and adults who work in the daytime and who have no care responsibilities in the best position for using these facilities. Among this group are many young, healthy, ethnic majority men (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001). Although fitness centers are often accessible from early morning until late in the evening seven days a week and therefore a better fit for the low-participation groups with additional time commitments (housewives, the elderly, low-income households, ethnic minorities), these commercial clubs are more expensive compared with subsidized sport clubs. Time and money interact (as do aspects such as facilities and culture) and are never absolute in/excluding factors.

People with busy, well-paid jobs often have very little spare time, but they have rather more control over their time schedule and can easily pay more for specific (commercial) sport facilities. Or they can “buy” time by outsourcing tasks.

To combat impeding factors such as the availability of cheap and accessible local sporting facilities, many local governments in the Netherlands have created specific community sport activities especially for lower-income and ethnic-minority youth and elderly participants over the last few decades. Like location and time, the cost aspect can hardly be regarded as a major single impediment for general participation in sport. Specific sport activities, clubs, and/or facilities, however, can be inclusive or exclusive on an affordability basis.

Included and excluded groups

When looking at combinations and intersections of different in/excluding mechanisms, it can be argued that young, physically able, heterosexual, ethnic majority men find themselves in the most favorable subject position. It can also be argued that the physically challenged and the elderly in rural environments, as well as women belonging to ethnic minorities (especially Islamic groups), are probably most excluded from sport participation through both material and cultural means. People who experience impediments, however, are not always unhappy; they often make their hopes and expectations conform to existing norms and available opportunities (Coakley & Donnelly, 2001; Hall, 1998).

Conclusions

It can be concluded that differences in wishes, opportunities, and possibilities to participate in sport and, especially, to participate in specific organizations or types of sports, are still related to unequal access to different economic, social, and cultural resources and the influence of normative images. We have argued that many changes have occurred within and outside of mainstream sport policy that have resulted in a striving toward greater social inclusiveness in sport in general.

We have also pointed out, however, that traditional practices and ideologies often persist in the mainstream sport sector. Exclusionary mechanisms are becoming more implicit and complex and are, therefore, more difficult to analyze, deconstruct, and transform.

In/exclusionary mechanisms with respect to sport participation and positions of leadership form a constellation of factors and dimensions that interact in a complex and often paradoxical manner and place individuals and social groups in different subject positions. Organizations use different functional and moral arguments and individuals use diverse strategies to combat or legitimize specific forms of in/exclusion. Changes in social attitudes and in the facilitation and organization of sport can result in a more inclusive sport practice. An important prerequisite for greater accessibility of sport activities and facilities is the inclusion of people of diverse social status positions in democratic decision-making bodies and in the production of sport. We argue that not all groups of people should be represented equally in all sports, but that participatory parity (Fraser, 2001) should be the norm. It is necessary to remain critical of policy statements that regard inclusiveness and diversity policies as no longer valid given that general sport participation figures for formerly marginalized groups are similar to hegemonic social status groups. This is because general participation similarities do not indicate that social exclusion in particular types of sports or organizational forms has ceased to exist. If changes have mainly taken place outside the “hard-core” sports, which are still the most highly valued and given the most media attention and financial support, social inequality still exists and deserves sophisticated research and policy attention.

These theoretical and empirical notions form the framework for our current research projects, in which we explore the choices, experiences, and meaning constructions of people of different social status with respect to different forms of sport involvement. By analyzing sporting biographies of people with respect to their status positions and their self-identifications concerning different power relations, we will try to provide more insight into the complex network of rational and emotional decisions, the chances and impediments they experience, and to what extent these are related to social inequality. We will explore sport-specific bonding aspects and in/exclusionary mechanisms of athletes, coaches, and board members using different methods (interviews, surveys, participatory observations). Using the outcomes of our empirical studies, we hope to further develop explanations, theoretical understandings, and suggest possible future developments relative to social inequalities in sport involvement.

References

- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In A.J. Mills and P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248-262). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Anthias, F. (2001). The material and the symbolic in theorizing social stratification: Issues of gender, ethnicity and class. *British Journal of Sociology*, 52 (3), 367-390.
- Anthonissen, A., & Boessenkool, J. (1998). *Betekeningen van besturen* [Meanings of governance]. Utrecht: ISOR.
- Arai, S., & Pedlar, A. (2003). Moving beyond individualism in leisure theory: A critical analysis of concepts of community and social engagement. *Leisure Studies*, 22, 185-202.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community. Seeking safety in an insecure world*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beal, B. (2001). Disqualifying the official: An exploration of social resistance through the subculture of skateboarding. In A. Yiannakis and M.J. Melnick (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in sociology of sport* (pp. 47-58). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Benschop, Y. (1996). *De mantel der gelijkheid: Gender en organisaties*. [The cloak of equality: Gender and organizations] Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and social class. *Social Science Information*, 17(6), 819-840.
- Breedveld, K. (2003). Sport en cohesie: De relatie tussen sportdeelname en sociaal kapitaal [Sport and social cohesion: The relation between sport participation and social capital]. In K. Breedveld Ed.), *Rapportage Sport 2003* [Sport report 2003] (pp. 247-283). The Hague: SCP.
- Buisman, A. (2002). *Jeugdsport en fair play in het Nederlandse sportbeleid van de jaren negentig* [Youth sport and fair play in Dutch sport policy of the nineties]. Amsterdam: SWP.
- Claringbould, I. Knoppers, A., & Elling, A. (2005) Finding a woman who fits. In G. Doll-Tepper, G. Pfister, D. Scoretz, & Ch. Bilan (Eds.), *Sport, women & leadership* (pp. 153-167). Congress Proceedings Berlin 2004. Cologne: Sport und Buch Strauss.
- Coakley, J.J. (1998). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (6th ed.). St. Louis: Mosby.
- Coakley, J., & Donnelly, P. (Eds.). (2001). *Inside sports*. London: Routledge.
- Coalter, F. (2000). Public and commercial leisure provision: Active citizens and passive consumers? *Leisure Studies*, 19, 163-181.
- Collins, M.F. (2002). *Sport and social exclusion*. London: Routledge.

- De Haan, J., & Breedveld, K. (2000). *Trends en determinanten in de sport. Eerste resultaten uit het AVO 1999* [Trends and determinants in sport. First results of AVO 1999]. The Hague: SCP.
- De Knop, P., Theebom, M., Wittock, H., & De Martelaer, K. (1996). Implications of Islam on Muslim girls' sport participation in Western Europe. Literature review and policy recommendations for sport promotion. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1(2): 147-164.
- Diepens & Okkema. (2002). *Sporten met een handicap. Het vervoer: een sport op zich?* [Playing sports with a handicap. Transport: a sport in itself?]. Delft: Diepens en Okkema.
- Duke, V., & Renson, R. (2003). From factions to fusions: The rise and fall of two-club rivalries in Belgian football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(1), 61-77.
- Eichberg, H. (1998). A revolution of body culture? Traditional games on the way from modernisation to "postmodernity." In J. Bale and Ch. Philo (Eds.), *Body cultures. Essays on sport, space and identity* (pp. 128-148). London: Routledge.
- Elling, A. (2002). 'Ze zijn er (niet) voor gebouwd'. *In- en uitsluiting in de sport naar sekse en etniciteit* ["They (don't) have the right build." Inclusionary and exclusionary practices in sport by gender and ethnicity]. Nieuwegein, The Netherlands: Arko Sports Media.
- Elling, A., De Knop, P., & Knoppers, A. (2003) Gay/lesbian sport clubs and events: Places of homo-social bonding and cultural resistance? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(4), 441-456.
- Elling, A., Knoppers, A., & De Knop, P. (2001) The social integrating meaning of sport: A critical and comparative analysis of policy and practice in the Netherlands. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18(4), 414-434.
- Engbersen, G., & Gabriëls, R. (1995). Voorbij segregatie en assimilatie [Beyond segregation and assimilation]. In G. Engbersen and R. Gabriëls, *Sferen van Integratie. Naar een gedifferentieerd allochtonenbeleid* [Spheres of integration. Towards a differentiated immigrant policy] (pp.15-47). Amsterdam: Boom.
- Featherstone, M. (1987). Lifestyle and consumerculture. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 4(1): 55-70.
- Fraser, N. (2001). Recognition without Ethics? *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(2-3): 21-42.
- Gowricharn, R. (2001) *In- en uitsluiting in Nederland. Een overzicht van empirische bevindingen* [Inclusion and exclusion in the Netherlands. An overview of empirical findings]. The Hague: WRR.
- Hall, A.E. (1998). Perceived barriers to and benefits of physical activity among Black and White women. *Women, Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 7(2), 19-32.

Hirschman, A.O. (1974). Exit, voice and loyalty: Further reflections and a survey of recent contributions. *Social Science Information*, 13(1), 7-26.

hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage. Ending racism*. London: Penguin.

Hovden, J. (2003, June). *From equality and justice - to difference and profitability? Gender political discourses in market-oriented sport bodies*. Paper presented at "Sport and Social Order - Challenges for Theory and Practice," the 2nd World Congress of Sociology of Sport, Cologne, F.R.G.

Hylton, K., & Totten, M. (2001). Developing "sport for all?" Addressing inequality in sport. In K. Hylton, P. Bramham, D. Jackson, & M. Nesti (Eds.), *Sports development: Policy, process and practice* (pp. 37-56). London: Routledge.

Jacobs, E. (2002). *Hulpbronnen, maatschappelijke oriëntaties en leefstijlen* [Resources, social orientations and lifestyles]. Amsterdam: Thela Thesis.

Janssens, J., Elling, A., & Van Kalmthout, J. (2003). "*Het gaat om de sport*": Een onderzoek naar de sportdeelname van homoseksuele mannen en lesbische vrouwen ["It's the sport that matters": A study about sport participation by gays and lesbians]. Nieuwegein, The Netherlands: Arko Sports Media.

Kenen, R.H. (1986). The women's exercise class comes of age: Physical fitness as a social enterprise. *Arena Review*, 10(1), 14-27.

Kew, F. (1997). *Sport. Social problems and issues*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Klein, M-L., & Deitersen-Weiber, A. (2003, June). *The social construction of gender in fitness centre marketing*. Paper presented at the 2nd World Congress of Sociology of Sport, Cologne, F.R.G.

Knoppers, A. (2001). "I was a man among men": Meanings coaches give to gender. In J. Steenbergen, P. De Knop, & A.H.F. Elling (Eds.), *Values and norms in sport. Critical reflections on the position and meanings of sport in society* (pp. 265-279). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.

Knoppers, A., & Anthonissen, A. (2001). Meanings given to performance in Dutch sport organizations: Gender and racial/ethnic subtexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18, 302-316.

Knoppers, A., & Elling, A. (2001). Organizing masculinities and femininities: The gendered sporting body. In J. Steenbergen, P. De Knop, & A.H.F. Elling (Eds.), *Values and norms in sport. Critical reflections on the position and meanings of sport in society* (pp. 171-194). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.

Komter, A., Burgers, J., & Engbersen, G. (1999). *Het cement van de samenleving. Een verkennende studie naar solidariteit en sociale cohesie* [The cement of society. An explorative study into solidarity and social cohesion]. Utrecht/Rotterdam: AWSB.

Messner, M.A. (1990). Masculinities and athletic careers: Bonding and status differences. In M.A. Messner & D.F. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, men and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives* (pp. 97-108). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2001). Hybridity, so what? The anti-hybridity backlash and the riddles of recognition. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(2-3), 219-245.

Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rijpma, S., & Leijts, H. (1998). *Midlife sporters. Waarom stoppen zij?* [Midlife sportsmen. Why do they stop?]. Rotterdam: COS.

Roques, C., & Janssens, J. (2003). *Tweemeting Vrijwilligers in de sport* [Two measures of voluntarism in sport]. Arnhem, The Netherlands: NOC*NSF.

Schaap, G. (2002, Aug./Sept.). Hoe krijg je meer vrouwen in je bestuur? [How to get more women on your board?]. *Sport, & Management* [Governance], 18-19.

Scheerder, J., Vanreusel, B., Taks, M., & Renson, R. (2001). Is de actieve sportbeoefening in Vlaanderen gedemocratiseerd? Over de sociale gelaagdheid van de sportdeelname gedurende de periode 1969- 1999 [Has active sport participation in Flanders been democratized? Concerning the social stratification of sport participation during the period 1969–1999]. *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* [Illustrated Journal of Sociology], 4, 383-417.

Shogan, D. (2002). Characterizing constraints of leisure: A Foucaultian analysis of leisure constraints. *Leisure Studies*, 21, 27-38.

Social Cultural Plan Office (2002). *Zekere banden. Sociale cohesie, leefbaarheid en veiligheid* [Safe ties. Social cohesion, livability and safety]. The Hague: Author.

Spielvogel, L. (2002). The discipline of space in a Japanese fitness club. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19, 189-205.

Sport England. (2001). *Young people with a disability and sport*. London: Sport England.

Steenbergen, J. (2004). *Grenzen aan de sport. Een theoretische analyse van het sportbegrip*. [Boundaries of sport. A theoretical analysis of the concept of sport]. Maarssen, The Netherlands: Elsevier.

Sugden, J., & Tomlinson, A. (2002). *Power games. A critical sociology of sport*. London: Routledge.

Terpstra, J. (1997). Jeugdsubcultuur en de reproductie van maatschappelijke achterstand [Youth subcultures and the reproduction of arrear positions in society]. *Sociologische Gids* [Sociological Guide], 44(3), 205-229.

Van Bottenburg, M. (1994). *Verborgene competitie. Over de uiteenlopende populariteit van sporten* [Hidden competition. About the divergent popularity of sports]. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.

Van der Meulen, R. (2003). Beoefening [Participation]. In K. Breedveld (Ed.), *Rapportage Sport 2003* [Sport report 2003] (pp. 71-97). The Hague: SCP.

Van der Poel, H. (2000). *Bewegingsruimte. Verkenning van de relatie sport en ruimte* [Movement space. Exploration of the relationship of sport and space]. Tilburg, The Netherlands: Katholieke Universiteit Brabant.

Van Kalmthout, J., & Janssens, J. (2002.) *Verenigingsmonitor 2002* [Club Monitor 2002]. Arnhem, The Netherlands: NOC*NSF.

Vanreusel, B. (1993). Adherence to sport from youth to adult hood: A longitudinal study on socialization. In W. Duquet, P. De Knop, & L. Bollaert (Eds.), *Youth sport: A social approach*. (pp. 99-109). Brussels: VUB.

Verweel, P. (2000). Sense making in sportorganizations. In A. Knoppers (Ed.), *The construction of meaning in sports organizations. Management of diversity* (pp. 11-24). Utrecht: USG.

Weathon, B. (2000). "Just do it": Consumption, commitment, and identity in the windsurfing subculture. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 17, 254-274.

Whimbush, E., & Talbot, M. (Eds.). (1988). *Relative freedoms. Women & leisure*. Philadelphia: Milton Keynes.

Woodward, A., & Kohli, M. (2001) European societies: Inclusions/exclusions? In A. Woodward and M. Kohli (Eds.), *Inclusions and exclusions in European societies* (pp. 1-18). London: Routledge.

Zaman, H. (1997). Islam, well-being and physical activity: Perceptions of Muslim young women. In G. Clarke & B. Humberstone (Eds.), *Researching women and sport* (pp. 50-67). Houndmills, UK: MacMillan.

Notes

ⁱ Although we define sport in a broad sense (e.g., including mind sports such as chess and bridge, dance sports, and physical activities such as fitness; Steenbergen, 2004), examples will most often be given from traditional club sports (football, tennis).

ⁱⁱ This doesn't mean, however, that traditional power relations are not incorporated in informal and/or alternative and commercial sport practices. For traditional low-sport groups such as women and the elderly, for example, fitness can be both liberating and empowering on the one hand and problematically conservative and oppressive on the other (Kenen, 1986). This depends

both on the way it is organized (environment, instruction) and on the way it is consumed. The same ambiguity in socially inclusive significance holds true for the “alternative” skateboarding and windsurfing subcultures (Beal, 2001; Wheaton, 2000).

ⁱⁱⁱ Age occupies a special position because people with the highest status positions based on age (35–50 years) do not have the highest participation rates in sports clubs, which are more the domain of younger people.

^{iv} According to Islam traditions, Muslim women are not allowed to participate in sport when men are present, not even as spectators (De Knop, Theebom, Wittock, & De Martelaer, 1996; Zaman, 1997).

^v From a gender-equity perspective, one can also question the enormous public space and financial investments in sport accommodations (e.g., football fields and stadia), which are mainly used and visited by boys and men.

Chapter three

Exclusionary Practices in Sport Journalism

I. Claringbould, A. Knoppers & A. Elling (2004).
Sex Roles, 51, 709-718.

Abstract

The relatively low percentage of women and minority sport journalists suggests dynamics of exclusion. We used J. Acker's (1990, 1992) theory about gender and organizations to examine several interrelated processes in the construction of gender and ethnicity in sport journalism. Acker named 4 processes that inform these constructions: division of labor, images and discourses, interactions, and identity work. We held semistructured interviews with 15 experienced journalists/editors who worked in the sport departments of either national newspapers, commercial television, or public television. The results indicate that, although the journalists asserted that the meanings given to their ways of doing journalism are ideologically neutral, these 4 processes do construct gender and ethnicity in overlapping and interrelated ways. In the discussion, we place these results in their context and focus on this contradiction between desirable and actual neutrality.

Keywords: gender; exclusionary practices; journalism; organization; sport.

In 1916, a young woman wrote to *The New York Sun* to ask where she could go to learn how to be a woman reporter. In reply to the aspiring newswoman, a journalist identified only as Miss Gilbert informed the young woman that “The School of Journalism, Columbia University and at New York University, is open to women as well as to men.” Miss Gilbert saw journalism as a calling that demanded a special type of person. “You can never ‘learn’ to be a woman reporter as you could learn dressmaking or stenography, because reporting is a type of work requiring exceptional abilities,” she wrote. What Miss Gilbert did not tell the young seeker of career counseling was that the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism limited its enrollment of women to 10% of the class, a quota that stayed in place until the late 1960s (Lafky, 1993, p. 93).

Journalism as an occupation is a skewed profession, that is, most journalists are White men. Approximately one third of the journalists in the USA and Europe are women (Deuze, 2000). Lafky (1993) has documented the status of women and ethnic minorities in the journalistic workforce between 1962 and 1992 and the barriers they experience. The percentage of journalists who are women increased from 20 to 34% between 1971 and 1982 and changed little between 1982 and 1992; in the latter time period, the percentage of journalists who are ethnic minorities increased from 4 to 8% (Lafky, 1993). Currently, 34% of the journalists in the Netherlands are women and 8% are ethnic minorities (Deuze, 2000). Female graduates currently outnumber male graduates at the Dutch academy of journalism (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2002), and the percentage of women among journalists with less than 4 years experience is relatively high (45%).ⁱ In other words, increasingly more women are entering the field of journalism. It is surprising, therefore, that the percentage of women and ethnic minorities who work in the sport media tends to be much smaller than in other types of journalism. In the Netherlands, for example, women and ethnic minorities make up 7 and 1.6%, respectively, of the sport journalists.ⁱⁱ The percentage of ethnic minorities active in sport journalism is not representative of the percentage (10%) of ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands (CBS, 2002).ⁱⁱⁱ

The percentage of women in the Dutch sport media does not reflect the percentage of women in the paid workforce, as a little more than one half of Dutch women work more than 12 hour per week (Portegijs, Boelens, & Keuzenkamp, 2002). In other words, the profession of sport journalism is skewed for reasons that may have more to do with the job itself than with the diversification of the workforce. The purpose of the present study was to explore explanations used by sport journalists to explain this skewness. Such explanations indicate how they construct gender and ethnicity and how together these processes work to include some and exclude others. We first review the literature about gender and ethnicity in sport journalism and explain the theoretical perspectives we used in our study, followed by a brief account of the methodology. Subsequently we present and discuss our results.

The social skewness in the journalist profession has been explained in several ways. Lafky (1993) attributed the skewness to exclusion from professional networks. She found that women journalists have less access to professional networking organizations than their male colleagues. As these networks tend to consist of Whitemen, it is conceivable that ethnic minorities also have relatively little access to them (Deuze, 2000). These networks serve as important sources for career enhancement and news. This means that those who are excluded from them may therefore also be excluded from making professional connections that are necessary to do the required work. Exclusion of women and ethnic minorities from networks is not the only reason for this skewness in (sport) journalism; however, family responsibilities may also play a role.

As is the practice in many organizations, the work of newspaper and television journalists has been designed for those who have few, if any, childrearing responsibilities (Lowes, 1999). It is not surprising then that most male journalists have a female partner who carries the larger share of the household and child-rearing responsibilities. Women journalists are more likely than men journalists to be single, and they are less likely than men to have children (Lafky, 1993). Women journalists who do have children and/or who have a partner who does not share equally in child rearing and household responsibilities may, therefore, have difficulty in working in this profession. Other explanations for the ethnic and gender skewness in (sport) media departments include sexual and ethnic harassment by colleagues, by supervisors, and by news sources. Together these explanations suggest that various social forces may influence hiring and promotion practices in the field and the choices that women and ethnic minorities make to enter or leave sport journalism as a profession.

Concerns about skewness in a profession often focus more on employment statistics than on the broader effects of the exclusion of women and ethnic minorities. In contrast, Gist (1993) conducted research to explore effects of social skewness in media organizations. She focused on the impact of journalistic practices at three television stations, a radio station, and a metropolitan daily newspaper on society at large and on those members of society for whom power and access are traditionally marginalized. The results indicate that women and minorities are underrepresented as quoted sources in news stories and that coverage of issues considered important to them is minimal. In addition, the impact that a “neutral” event, such as earthquakes, has on White people tends to dominate stories. Minorities tend to be visible in the news primarily in negative stories or in stereotypically positive ones, but not in the many kinds of neutral or positive stories in which Whites are typically featured. Gist not only concluded that media coverage tends to be biased, but she also linked this bias to the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the newsrooms.

Journalists do not always see themselves as biased, however. Sport journalists, for example, tend to see their coverage as unbiased and objective. Knoppers and Elling (2004) found that Dutch sport journalists attribute the underrepresentation of women athletes and their sports to the professional use of criteria of objectivity and human interest. They insisted that the skewness in coverage has little to do with the gender and ethnicity of the journalists themselves. In other words, according to them, skewness in coverage is not related to skewness in the profession. This causal relationship has not been fully explored, but there is indirect evidence that their perceptions are inaccurate.

Sport plays an increasingly significant role in the cultural history of Western nations, and it is receiving increasingly more media attention (Coakley, 2004). The number of sport broadcasting hours on Dutch television, for example, has more than doubled, from 1,020 in the year 1990 to 2,673 in 1996 (Index, 1998). Sixty-five percent of the adult Dutch population watches sports programs on television or listens to sports programs on the radio at least once a month (Haan de & Breedveld, 2000). It is not surprising, then, that the media are a commonly used avenue through which people experience (professional) sport. However, consumers of the sportmedia receive journalists’ interpretation of sporting events. A considerable amount of research has shown that most of the sport coverage is of White male athletes and their events (see for example, Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2001; Rowe, 1999). Although women and ethnic minorities, like all tax paying citizens, contribute to the financing of Dutch public service television, Whitemale journalists are usually the reporters,

presenters, interviewers, and editors (Deuze, 2000; Knoppers & Elling, 2001, 2004). They decide what the audience sees or reads, what to portray as “normal” or as common sense, which sports and athletes are seen as newsworthy, and which societal stereotypes are reinforced and challenged. As such, the interests of women and ethnic minorities are often not represented, and coverage is stereotypically gendered and ethnicized/racialized. Gist (1993), who explored connections between social group representation at all levels in an organization to the acceptance of meanings, argued that no medium is likely to achieve objectivity in its product without broad representation among its staff and its decision makers. Thus, skewness in the gender and ethnic ratios among sport journalists may have a broad impact. Research that explores the dynamics of exclusionary employment practices in the sport media is, therefore, increasingly important.

We used a social constructionist approach to examine the ways in which sport journalists challenge and justify this disproportional representation or skewness in their profession. We assume that their experiences with and reactions to skewness are informed by how they give meaning to activities, to people, and to their own context. Acker (1990, 1992) has shown how organizations and their members give meaning to gender and ethnicity in four ways: through the division of labor; through the creation of images, through symbols and metaphors; through interactions; and through identity work. These processes occur simultaneously and overlap. We briefly explain each of these below.

Division of Labor

Division of labor is an embedded organizational practice in which positions or jobs tend to be associated with a specific group(s) of people. The selection and hiring of individuals are based on gendered and ethnic criteria that those doing the hiring associate with those positions. Consequently, the same type of person tends to be hired (inclusionary practices) for specific positions, and others are not considered (exclusionary practices). In most organizations, including those in (sport) journalism, White men tend to be found disproportionately in the top positions, whereas women and ethnic minorities tend to be found in positions lower on the organizational ladder (Claringbould & Van der Lippe, 2002). The perceptions and ideas about sport, gender, and ethnicity of those in higher positions often will carry more weight and tend to shape hiring and firing policies and organizational culture more than those lower on the ladder.

Images and Discourses

Because divisions of labor can reinforce or challenge dominant stereotypes, it impacts meanings given to gender and ethnicity, and vice versa. For example, if sport is primarily associated with men, then women may be seen as having inadequate knowledge about it to be sport announcers (Staurowsky & DiManno, 2002). Decision-making positions in the sport media are then likely to continue to be dominated by men who tend to use metaphors, images, and symbols that are closely allied with their gender (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001; Knoppers & Elling, 2004). Similarly, if the image of the head of a sport department for a newspaper is White and male, then a Black woman may have a difficult time convincing prospective employers that she is qualified for the job. These images pertain not only to positions or jobs but also to those associated with an organization. News organizations that pride themselves on their hard hitting and competitive journalism are likely to hire primarily from the gender and ethnic group whose stereotypes fit that image. Obviously, then, meanings given to gender and ethnicity are reproduced through

images, symbols, and metaphors which are created by practices such as the division of labor, and vice versa (Acker, 1992). These images, metaphors, and symbols are not static, however, but are created, reinforced, and challenged by journalists through their interactions.

Interactions

Organizations themselves are constructions of meanings, which are reflected and negotiated in interactions among organizational members (Acker, 1992; Verweel, 2000). Meanings are produced by people who share experiences (being there when things happen). Organizational members create and revise their meanings by talking with each other about these experiences. Although they share these experiences, they may not, however, agree on the interpretations or meanings given to them. Some meanings are considered to be more accurate, or to fit better, than others. These meanings become dominant and common sense, and, subsequently, are embedded in the structure and culture of organizations. The interactions of organizational members involve perceptions and interpretations of behavior and experiences in the context of implicit meanings given to gender and race/ethnicity. In addition, interactions among organizational members bear imprints of relations of power and of dominant cultural meanings. This interactive work requires individuals to create and maintain gender and ethnic identities that fit their organization (Acker, 1992).

Identity Work

The fourth process that Acker (1992) described pertains to the internal work that organizational members do on their own gender and ethnic identities. This identity work is never ending and is embedded in organizational practices and discourses. Their own social category (their gender, ethnicity, or age) determines in part how much work organizational members must do to try to comply with organizational norms. Yet, as we have shown earlier, these norms are not gender or ethnically neutral, but tend to be connected to images and discourses about gender, ethnicity, and other social relations that, in turn, are related to the division of labor. Women and ethnic minorities are not the only ones engaged in identity work; however, White men do it as well, although on the whole there tends to be a better fit between their identity as White men and their jobs, as positions in general (and specifically in sport journalism) are usually constructed according to prevailing images about White men. When identity work becomes too demanding or when organizational members refuse to fit in, they may leave or be marginalized. Thus the division of labor, and the images and interactions that create and reinforce it, remain relatively unchanged. Little is known, however, about how these processes actually work in sport departments of the media. In the present study, we, therefore, explored how the four processes described by Acker may contribute to ethnic and gender skewness in sport journalism as a profession.

Method

This study is part of a 4-year (1996–1999) study of sport media in which we looked at gender and race/ethnic subtexts of the content of the sport media (phase I), the production process (phase II), and audience interpretation (phase III). In the current study (part of phase II), we explored the reasons sport journalists give for the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minority journalists. We held semistructured interviews with 15 experienced journalists/editors

who worked in the sports departments of either national newspapers, commercial television, or public television. Eight were reporters (three of whom worked for newspapers and five of whom worked for television), three were editors (two of whom worked for newspaper and one for television), and four were editors-in-chief of the sport department (two for television and two for newspapers). Ten of the 15 are men. All but one are White. We obtained our journalists by first interviewing several heads of sport departments in the sport media and asking for their recommendations. We also used the snowball technique to find other journalists willing to be interviewed. These journalists were asked to describe the nature of their job and qualifications for it, to give an account of diversity of personnel within their own department and in their profession in general, and to explain why women and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in sport journalism (see also Knoppers & Elling, 2004, for a more in-depth description of methods used). We analyzed the interviews using an inductive approach to identify major themes and, subsequently, to search for corroborating evidence for each theme. We then assigned each theme to one of Acker's four processes. As these processes overlap, we found that, technically, most themes could fit in more than one process; we therefore assigned it to the process it best illustrated.

There were almost no differences in viewpoints between journalists in newspapers and television and those working in commercial and public broadcasting. In addition, there were few gender differences among men and women journalists. We indicate such gender differences in our analyses only where they existed. Because the journalists as a whole had similar ideas and because they were senior journalists and, therefore, easily identifiable, we do not identify the speakers. In addition, our data reflect the fact that the interviewed journalists have much more to say about the lack of women journalists than about the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities.

Results

Division of Labor

What meanings do these sport journalists ascribe to the division of labor as it concerns gender and ethnic background, and why they do so? The journalists recognized that gender and ethnic ratios are relatively skewed in sport journalism, and they acknowledged differences in this area between the Netherlands and other European countries. A few journalists asserted that women's authority in sport journalism is more accepted outside of the Netherlands than within.

A journalist said:

We have several hostesses, a few female reporters, a few visual editors and producers. All excellent women, but no one has any power. That is the situation in the Netherlands at the moment, and if you place it in a wider perspective, you can see that this is ridiculous. Even in Germany, France, Spain, and Italy, it is no big deal [for a sport journalist] to wear a skirt and look like a woman. Here, this is a liberal and progressive society. But it's only disguised liberalism, and it has nothing to do with progressive policy.

The journalists mentioned different reasons for this skewness. They argued that there are few qualified women and ethnic minorities who wish to be sport journalists. They would be

welcome, but they do not exist. Our interviewees were against taking gender and ethnicity into account when hiring. A journalist argued:

I will never accept a woman in any job, because she is a woman. If she is better than other candidates, perfect...(I: and if the candidates are equally qualified?). There are never two people with equal qualities, that is nonsense; there are always differences.

Criteria for the selection of journalists are assumed to be based on years of education and experience, and are thus seen as gender and ethnically neutral. Ethnicity and gender of applicants, therefore, are assumed to play a negligible role in the hiring process. Journalists argued that more ethnic minorities are not hired because their writing ability is inadequate. A journalist summed it up this way: “Language is the biggest barrier, and because journalism consists of writing stories, that writing lack of competence must be eliminated first.” These journalists admitted, however, that the hiring criteria are not totally neutral. They suggested that women and ethnic minorities need to have something extra, that is, they not only have to be able to cover men’s sports and to write well, but they must also have access where White men might not. In other words, they must have an added value. A journalist for example, suggested that the hiring of a sport journalist with a Surinam background might give the newspaper greater access to Surinam–Dutch soccer players than would a journalist without this background. Similarly, three other journalists described how women journalists could be asked to use their gender/looks to obtain information from male athletes.

Affirmative action programs are often implemented to reduce the division of labor in organizations, but the interviewed journalists described the usefulness of affirmative action programs in contradictory terms. A journalist acknowledged: “Ethnic minorities are strongly underrepresented in sport journalism. That is a universal problem. We have had some of them as interns and occasionally one who works here, but there is no policy that focuses on this.” These journalists attributed the skewness in sport journalism in part to the absence of affirmative action programs. Yet they also argued that change should not be forced by policy. Some journalists were against affirmative action programs because they saw them as compromising professionalism. Hiring and selection criteria were seen as neutral, objective, and fair. They said things like:

But to say that we need journalists of an ethnic minority because they are present in and receive attention in sport... No, that’s not the way it works. It is essential to me that someone is qualified for the job. In that there should be no difference between men and women. For example a soccer commentator must know what he [sic] is talking about. A woman can do that also.

In our interviewees opinion, change should occur naturally and not through specific recruitment campaigns or policies such as affirmative action. A journalist summed up the reasoning used by the interviewees as follows: “You should not explicitly recruit women and ethnic minorities. An increase in their participation will occur anyhow. People find it normal [that they are sport journalists] and do not think it is strange anymore.” In other words, the interviewed journalists see sport journalism as an occupation where everyone has an equal opportunity to be hired and to succeed as long as they meet the hiring and promotion criteria, which are assumed to be neutral.

The structure of journalism work was also seen as contributing to the division of labor. Journalism was described as a job that requires flexibility with respect to time and number of working hours. The job often demands (immediate) availability in the evening or on Sundays. A journalist explained: “If you work in sport journalism, it is obvious that you work every weekend and many evenings. If you do not want that, you have to look for another job.” This structure of irregular hours tends to conflict with demands of journalists in their home life. All together six journalists used this structure to explain the underrepresentation of women journalists. One of them said, while describing a woman’s career prospects:

I have never met a woman with kids who can cover the Tour the France for 3 weeks. Being gone that long from your kids is not yet accepted in our society. Women still have to look after the kids.

The interviewed women were very aware of the pressures on women with children. A woman journalist said about staying in this profession: “It depends if I want kids, it is such an irregular job that it is almost impossible to combine.” It is interesting that several of the interviewed men also wanted to have more time for their families. A male journalist argued:

It becomes a different story if you have kids. I notice that since I have a child who is one and a half years old. I have been a flexible employee for 20 years, but I can’t be like that anymore. Before [the birth of my child], they could always call and ask me to come and work.

The desire of men journalists to spend more time with their families is, however, seen as a consequence of their hard work and is rarely ascribed to their gender. Consequently, the structure of the work of journalists is seen as incompatible with women’s (but not men’s) parental work and responsibilities.

Images and Discourses of Sport Journalists About Women and Ethnic Minorities

What are the image and discourse of sport journalists about (the absence of) women and ethnic minorities in sport journalism? The data show that the images these journalists have of sport journalists and journalism are not congruent with images they have of women and ethnic minorities. Their ideas about sport journalism and coverage are characterized by what they called professionalism and objectivity, which they saw as gender and ethnically neutral (see Knoppers & Elling, 2001, for details about selection procedures for sports coverage). Therefore, they think there are, and there should be, no differences between the ways a man, a women, a Black, or a White journalist covers sports. The majority of the male interviewees claim that an increase in the number of women and ethnic minority journalists, therefore, would have no impact on the profession and on the manner and content of sport coverage. Thus, an increase is not needed. A journalist argued:

I think that male journalists write about women’s sports with as much dedication as women journalists. We should not distinguish between the sexes just as we should not do that among ethnic groups. A journalist who makes such distinctions does not belong here. As journalists your job is to write about people in sport, and then it does not make any difference if that athlete is male or female.

At the same time, these journalists showed that their images of women and ethnic minorities are connected with their image of how the job should be done. They said that a journalist has to be able and willing to elbow to the front of the line. They think that women who behave as “women” are too “nice” to do that. A journalist explained why a woman changed from reporting to directing cameras:

She finally became an excellent director, but she was so modest and shy, such a sweet girl. She will never be able to fight and elbow to the front in a group of journalists. Imagine the kind of chaos in a cycle race. There she stood shivering along the road with her notebook. It is her character, I know women who can do the job... certainly.

The women and men journalists we interviewed differed in perspective on this point. As indicated in a previous section, men professed to see everyone in a gender and ethnic-neutral way. Women journalists did not see these images as gender neutral. Women sport journalists who were interviewed would like to see a less male-dominated and more neutral image of journalists; the majority of the women journalists were convinced that their presence can change images people have of sport and athletes. In addition, they assumed that a decrease in occupational skewness would be accompanied by a softening of the macho culture that prevails in sport journalism. This wish for change is, however, ambiguous. A woman journalist notice how the prevailing images and discourses influence the way women adapt to sport journalism. One of the female journalists described this as follows: “I notice that these few women that work in sport journalism hesitate to raise women’s subjects. They are very critical toward their own products. You would have to be a Jeanne d’Arc.”

Women feel pressure to adapt the way the male majority writes and they realize that a struggle (to be a Jeanne d’Arc) is needed to change the existing gendered image of professionalism and objectivity. Yet, although these women journalists assume that an increase in their number will influence the content of the coverage, most of them want to prove their professionalism by writing like the male majority. This wish or pressure to prove themselves can mean that the existing image of sport journalism will change only slightly with an increase in women and ethnic minorities.

Interactions Among Sport Journalists About Gender and Ethnicity

How are meanings given to gender and ethnicity created in interactions? The answer to this question again shows the contradictions between discourse and daily practice. On the one hand, these journalists argued that gender and ethnicity do not play a role in the ways journalists interact. A journalist said: “Of course men used to sit together and talk a lot about things that did not have anything to do with their job in the past. Now that happens no more than it happens in other parts of society.”

Yet, although they argued that patterns of interactions have changed, they also gave explicit examples of how gender and ethnicity structure daily interactions. A woman journalist recounted how some male journalists are so impressed when they interview a beautiful athlete, such as Kourmikova, that it shapes how they interact with her: “They just let her talk and were very polite. I think a woman would have asked more pointed questions. Those men let her get away with it because she is a beautiful woman.”

Similarly, the interviewed journalists, especially the women, described gender- and ethnic-related behavioural norms. They described sport journalism as a profession built on macho behavior which is reinforced by traditions of misogynist and racist jokes. Yet they also argued that the number of sexist jokes has decreased because women have become part of the department. Some said it is mostly older journalists who “misbehave.”

Women journalists think their male colleagues have a one-sided image of them. They think men’s reactions are based on their being women rather than journalists. One of them said: “They think you get the quotes because you are a beautiful woman, or they ask me what to cook tonight.” To the women it seemed that their male colleagues prefer them to be different, instead of working side by side with them. Yet their male colleagues argued that they do not see gender but treat everyone as an individual.

Identity Work

What are some of the consequences of division of labor, interactions, and images on identity work on the interviewed journalists? Most of the identity work done by the White male journalists seems to consist of showing that they are “neutral” journalists, whose gender and ethnicity do not affect how they behave and work or how they construct hiring and firing criteria. In this sense they see themselves as not having gender or ethnicity but as acting “normally.”

A journalist argued: “What really matters are the kind of articles and interviews you make, you are only judged by your performance.” They do, however, see their women colleagues as using and being influenced by gender. A male journalist said:

The English broadsheets will hire a photography model to talk to international [male] athletes if they think they can get a story that way. In Italy, they will hire women journalists to attract the male athletes. We stand outside the locker room waiting for quotes. When the male athletes come out, they often go to the female journalists. That irritates us.

It is interesting that these journalists assigned the responsibility for this gendered practice to women journalists and not to (male) employers who assign such tasks to women or to the male athletes who respond to women journalists in this manner. At the same time, this journalist also suggested that this tactic diminishes the professionalism of the work. If more women (models) enter the job, this may mean a devaluation of the work and thus of his sense of a professional identity. In addition, although some White male journalists accused women journalists of using their femininity to obtain information, the possibility that at times they themselves might be able to obtain information because they are men (and men are associated with sport) does not seem to occur to them. They do not see the privileges they have as White men.

Women journalists saw themselves as having adapted to sport journalism and said that they accept unfriendly behavior toward their gender or ethnic background by putting sexual and racial jokes into perspective. They act as if such behavior does not bother them although they get tired of it. This seems to be an effective way for them to achieve acceptance, although the same dominant macho culture still prevails. Thus, they must work to adapt and to be accepted. Overall, the acceptance of these women journalists seems to be based on the extent to which they adapt to dominant values.

A journalist summarized it as follows:

My impression is that female sport journalists do not focus more on women's sport [than men journalists do] because they are very eager to prove themselves. If you have a confident attitude, they accept you, but you will be tested.

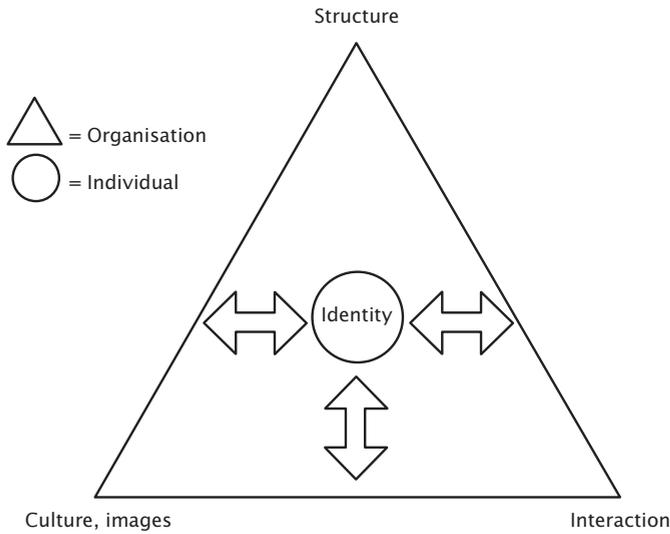
Professionalism is a quality to which the identity of the journalist is subordinated. So women and ethnic minorities have to do extra identity work to prove that their identity as women and/or ethnic minority does not influence the way they do the job. Therefore, they work to conform to the way White male journalists do their work. Yet, at the same time, they have to behave according to dominant notions of (White) femininity. A female journalist explained how she feels about it: "It is better not to show strange behavior as a woman, such as being drunk. Drunkenness by males is easily accepted among male journalists." Women journalists believe that they must be circumspect in their behavior. If they show their own identity and interests, they are seen as not fitting in.

Discussion

The data indicate that exclusionary practices in sport journalism are complex. Acker's model shows how these exclusionary practices are layered and are not related in a linear or hierarchical manner but are conflated with each other. Fig. 1 indicates how these processes may work from the perspective of the individual journalist. In this figure, the individual journalist is situated in the middle of organizational processes. Interactions with others in the sport department give journalists information about images and values and about the type of person who is considered to be competent for a specific job in the hierarchy. As we indicated earlier, these interactions are informed by dominant meanings created in organizational and professional contexts. These interactions are guided by rules about who may speak, interrupt, and listen, whose questions and interpretations are perceived to be legitimate, and so forth (Verweel, 2000). Because the percentage of ethnic minorities and women in organizations, especially in the higher positions in news organizations, is much lower than that of White men, White men tend to have a greater say in what is considered to be organizational common sense. This exchange of information informs the images individual journalists create about what is expected from them and about what they can do in the organization. In this way, they form perceptions about their opportunities and "fit" in the organization. This feeling of fit has an important influence on whether one stays in the organization or profession or begins to look for another job.

Obviously, changing the gender and ethnic skewness in sport journalism is not a matter of simply adding more women and ethnic minorities. Instead, as the application of Acker's model to the interview data suggests, exclusionary practices are complex; change requires reconstruction of the meanings given to gender and ethnicity. Each of the four processes has consequences for the others. Each process could be the center of the triangle as sketched in Fig. 1. Through collegial interactions, journalists reinforce the idea that the current division of labor is natural and that change should also occur naturally. As a result, women and ethnic minorities continue to be marginalized and either try to minimize their differences from the White male majority or decide to work in another area.

Our use of Acker's model has focused primarily on the role journalists play in these processes that result in inclusionary and exclusionary practices.

Fig. 1. Adaptation of Acker's model of organizational processes

Yet practices of inclusion and exclusion are not entities by themselves but are embedded in organizational discourses. As the results indicate, these processes are informed by an ideology of equality that translates into a strategy of equal opportunity (Acker, 1990, 1992; Benschop, 1996; Benschop, Halsema & Scheurs, 2001; Knoppers & Elling, 2004).

The journalists we interviewed assumed that everyone is treated the same way and, therefore, has similar opportunities for success. They saw themselves as being inclusionary, and they held women and ethnic minorities responsible for their own exclusion. The gender and White ethnicity of male sport journalists are assumed not to have any impact on the nature of their collegial interactions or on how they make decisions and do their work. We argue that this ideology of equality shapes the meanings journalists give to the division of labor, the images they have of ethnic majority and minority women and men, the way they talk about (and with) them and their jobs, and the ways in which the journalists do identity work. This ideology of neutrality and its concomitant belief in equal opportunity dominate not only the sport world (see, for example, Coakley, 2004; Knoppers & Bouman, 1996, McKay, 1997), but also serve as a frequent explanation for the gender and ethnic skewness in other White male dominated occupations. Benschop (1996), who has used Acker's model to study gender and occupations in the banking world, has drawn similar conclusions. The dominant belief of the employees she interviewed was similar to that of the journalists who participated in the current study. Both groups believe that occupations should not be and, therefore, are not gendered or ethnicized. This desirability is then "seen" as current reality.

We contend that this ideology may be especially dominant in sport and in sport journalism. Sport performances are assumed to be objectively measured and socially neutral. This assumption strengthens the perception of equal chances and opportunities for participants

(Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001). In addition, objectivity is seen as the primary criterion that ensures quality (sport) journalism (Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999; Rowe, 1999; Tuchman, 1971; Van Zoonen, 1998). Thus, a discourse of objectivity informs both sport and journalistic discourses. As sport journalists are involved with both sport and journalism, it is not surprising that they see themselves working and interacting with others in a gender and ethnically neutral manner. Martin (2003), in her discussion of talking and practicing gender in the workplace, called this neutral self perception “liminal awareness.” It is men doing gender without being conscious of doing so.

Liminal awareness allows men (and women, in other circumstances) to act as they please without being concerned about the effects of their behaviour on others... That is, if they believe their practices are not gendered, they can honestly deny acting in a gendered way, even if others experience them as doing so (Martin, 2003, p. 356). By seeing gender and ethnicity as pertaining only to women and ethnic minorities, journalists (both men and women) can continue to perpetuate practices that favor men and exclude women and ethnic minorities. Our data also show how women and ethnic minorities do their best to fit in and work like their (male) colleagues, therefore, bringing in more women and ethnic minorities may, by itself, do little to change gendered and ethnic organizational processes.

Our results, however, are not straightforward, but show that these processes contain contradictions. Journalists argued on the one hand, that they see themselves and their colleagues as individuals without gender and ethnicity (liminal awareness) and, at the same time, they made distinctions on the basis of gender and ethnicity of those individuals. For example, men do not see how they as men may have easier access to male athletes and may be taken more seriously as sport journalists than women may be, whereas they are angry when they perceive that some women sport journalists get interviews because of the way they look. Benschop et al. (2001), who found similar contradictions in their study of the banking world and the police force, argued that such contradictions can best be seen as ideological dilemmas. They argued that, instead of trying to solve the contradictory positions, researchers should explain the dilemmas as being ideological. Presenting it as a dilemma instead of trying to harmonize the results with each other can give insight into the ways that organizational members struggle to explain social inequalities. Theories and strategies for changing occupational skewness should, therefore, incorporate the contradictory positions of the dilemma and take into account the influence of processes such as division of labor, interactions, identity work, and dominant images and discourses that inform who is selected and promoted.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society*, 4, 139–158.
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In A. J. Mills & P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248–262). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Benschop, Y. (1996). *De mantel der gelijkheid: Gender in organisaties* [The cloak of equality: Gender in organizations]. Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum.

Benschop, Y. W. M., Halsema, L., & Schreurs, P. (2001). The division of labour and inequalities between the sexes: An ideological dilemma. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 8(1), 1–18.

Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. (2002). Retrieved July 22, 2003 from <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/start.asp?lp=Search/Search>.

Claringbould, I. E. C., & Van der Lippe, T. (2002). Vrouwen in leidinggevende posities [Women in executive positions]. *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken*, 3, 257–268.

Coakley, J. (2004). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (8th ed.). London: McGraw-Hill.

Deuze, M. (2000). Onderzoek journalistiek in Nederland [Research journalism in the Netherlands]. Retrieved October 22, 2003 from <http://users.fmg.uva.nl/mdeuze/publ14.htm>.

Duncan, M., & Messner, M. (1998). Media images of gender and sport. In L. Wenner (Ed.), *MediaSport* (pp. 170–185). London: Routledge.

Gist, M. E. (1993). Through the looking glass. In P. J. Creedon (Ed.), *Women in mass communication* (pp. 104–117). London: Sage.

Haan de, J., & Breedveld, K. (2000). Trends en determinanten in de sport, eerste resultaten uit het AVO [Trends and determinants in sports, first result from the AVO]. *Werkdocument 68*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Uitgave SCP.

Index. (1998). *Een potje kijksporten* [Watching sport]. 10. The Hague, The Netherlands: Uitgave CBS.

Kinkema, K. & Harris, J. (1998). MediaSport studies: Key research and emerging issues. In L. Wenner (Ed.), *MediaSport* (pp. 27–54). London: Routledge.

Knoppers, A., & Anthonissen, A. (2001). Meanings given to performance in Dutch sport organizations: Gender and ethnic subtexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18, 303–317.

Knoppers, A., & Bouman Y. (1996). *Trainers/coaches: een kwestie van kwaliteit?* [Trainers/coaches: a matter of quality?]. Arnhem, The Netherlands: NOC*NSF.

Knoppers, A., & Elling A. (2001). *Gender, etniciteit en de sportmedia: productieprocessen en publieksinterpretaties*, [Gender, ethnicity and the sport media: Processes of production and interpretation]. Arnhem, The Netherlands: NOC*NSF.

Knoppers, A., & Elling, A. (2004). “We do not engage in promotional journalism”: Discursive strategies used by sport journalists to describe the selection process. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, 39, 55–71.

- Lafky, S. A. (1993). The progress of women and People of Color in the U.S. journalistic workforce: A long, slow journey. In P. J. Creedon (Ed.), *Women in mass communication* (pp. 87–101). London: Sage.
- Lowes, M. D. (1999). *Inside the sports pages: Work routines, professional ideologies, and the manufacture of sport news*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Martin, P. Y. (2003) “Said and done” versus “saying and doing”: Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender & Society*, 17, 342–366.
- McKay, J. (1997). *Managing gender*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Rowe, D. (1999). *Sport, culture and the media: The unruly trinity*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Staurowsky, E. J., & DiManno J. (2002). Young women talking sports and careers. *Women's Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 11, 128–159.
- Tuchman, G. (1971). Objectivity as strategic ritual: An examination of newsman's notions of objectivity. *American Journal of Sociology*, 77, 4, 660–679.
- Van Zoonen, L. (1998). A professional, unreliable, heroic marionette (M?F): Structure, agency, and subjectivity in contemporary journalisms. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1, 123–143.
- Verweel, P. (2000). Sense making in sport organizations. In A. Knoppers, (Ed.), *The construction of meaning in sport organizations: Management of diversity* (pp. 11–23). Maastricht: Shaker Publishing BV.

Notes

ⁱ Currently no data are available on the number of ethnic minorities entering and graduating from schools of journalism.

ⁱⁱ This percentage is comparable to that in other European countries.

ⁱⁱⁱ The term “ethnic minorities” refers to male and female nonindigenous populations; it does not include refugee groups.

Chapter four

Finding a 'Normal' Woman: Selection Processes for Board Membership

I. Claringbould & A. Knoppers (2007).
Sex Roles, 56, 495-507.

Abstract

The higher the organization level, the lower the percentage of women in governance. The purpose of the present study was to explore how men and women negotiate women's 'fit' as candidates for boards of national sport organizations. We based our analysis on in- depth interviews with male chairs and female board members. The results provide evidence that men can control boards by affirming and negating affirmative action policies and by framing the process of recruitment and selection in such a way as to reproduce the male-dominated culture in the board. Women, in their turn, tend to negotiate their entry by distancing themselves from their gender and proving their 'fit.'

Keywords: gender; governance; sport; recruitment and selection

Although a considerable amount of research has explored the under-representation of women in senior management (see for example, Martin, 2001; Power & Butterfield, 2003; Rutherford, 2001; Wacjman, 1998), relatively less research has focused on the gendering of boards of directors. This is puzzling because the board of directors of an organization formally constitutes the pinnacle of organizational power, oversight, and decision making (Acker, 1990; Hoye, 2002; Sarra, 2005; Sheridan & Milgate, 2003). Boards of directors are a fertile site for the study of gender relations because these are places of organizational power, and, in essence, they determine the goals of senior management.

Boards of directors provide the general framework for organizational policies and conditions under which an organization operates and functions. As the higher a position in the organizational hierarchy, the fewer the number of women in those positions, it is not surprising that the percentage of women who are members of national boards of directors is lower than the percentage of women who are senior managers (CDWI, 2004). Yet there is growing recognition that women are stakeholders in all types of organizations from corporate to volunteer and that they must be part of governing processes as well.

Corporations have been aware of the need for diversity in the rank and file and in the client base, but have only recently begun to address the shortage of women in governance. Daily and Dalton (2003) have argued that boards of directors need women members because they add unique strengths to the board that men do not have, because their presence signals a commitment of the board to gender equity in the entire organization, and because their presence enhances organizational productivity.

Yet women directors are scarce (CDWI, 2004). Although 73.5% of the 200 largest companies in the world have at least one woman director, only 10.4% of all board members in the Fortune top 200 are women. The American companies that belong to the Fortune Global 200 have more women directors (17.5%) than European companies, who typically have less than one-half of that number. Women for example, comprise 6.3% of the corporate board members in The Netherlands. Such gender skewness has stimulated research on gender and governance (see for example, Burke & Mattis, 2000). Sheridan and Milgate (2003) contended that, as most directors were previously senior managers, the lack of women in corporate boards can be attributed directly to the relatively few women senior managers.

Most of this research has focused on corporate boards of directors, however little attention has been paid to the gendering of boards of nonprofit organizations. Yet membership of such boards, although perhaps not as prestigious as corporate governance, still carries with it prestige and decision making power, especially at the national level and in sport. National (sport) governing boards constitute the major decisionmaking bodies and impact the ability to deliver services related to the primary activity of the organization (Hoye, 2002). In addition, such boards are increasingly (although not totally) similar to corporate boards, as nonprofit organizations are also moving toward professional management practices as they cope with a multiplicity and complexity of demands (Inglis, 1997; Kikulis, 2000). The change toward such professionalism may vary by sector and by the primary activity of an organization. Hoye (2002) has noted that nonprofit boards are usually socially diverse because they serve a diverse constituency. Boards of sport organizations seem to be in a unique situation however. For example, although the percentage of men and women participating in Dutch voluntary organizations is similar and although women are underrepresented (26%) on most boards of nonprofit organizations, their representation on sport boards is the lowest (11%) in the voluntary sector (Merens, Cuijpers, & Boelens, 2004; Nuijten, Lucassen, & Van Kalmthout, 2004).ⁱ These statistics may be related to

the nature of sport as a primary activity of an organization. Kikulis (2000) found that the shift to professional governance of national sport organizations was hindered by values that are deeply rooted in its traditions. Gender is one dynamic that is deeply embedded in the structure of and meanings assigned to sport. Not only does sport have a bifurcated structure (men's sport and women's sport), but, as the data indicate, its governance is strongly gender skewed, especially at national and international levels. The Netherlands is not an exception.

This visible lack of gender equity in sport governance worldwide led the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to create policies in 1996 that set specific quotas for the percentage of women board members to stimulate international and national sport federations to appoint women to its boards. The absence of women board members is, therefore, no longer deemed acceptable in sport governance. These recommended quotas legitimized women's presence and candidacy, and thus seem to have contributed to an increase in the number of women board members in high-level sport governance (White & Henry, 2004).ⁱⁱ

Although these practices of inclusion and exclusion of women board members in sport governance have been the target of policies, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the social dynamics that contribute to the under-representation of women in sport governance. Such attention is necessary, however, to ensure that the factors that influence the gendering of boards are made visible and can be targeted for change. In addition, a focus on the gendering of sport governance can also contribute to theory building about the ways in which women are excluded from strategic positions in nonprofit organizations and the ways that such exclusions may be linked to the gendering of the primary activity of the organizations (Acker, 1990). The legal structure of sport organizations and many of the changes that occur in these organizations, such as downsizing, mergers, individualization, professionalization, specialization, and increasing demands on productivity, are similar to those that occur in nonsport organizations (Verweel, 2006).

The focus of the present study was on the gendering of governing boards of national sport associations in The Netherlands. This country is especially suitable for study because its sport system is based on sport clubs and is not conflated with educational institutions, as is the case in the United States. Dutch amateur sport is organized in a voluntary club (local) and association (national) structure. The relevant national sport association provides the competitive structure.

Theoretical Approach

The results of practices of exclusion in organizations, occupations, and activities often become visible in structures when they result in skewed (gender) ratios (Kanter, 1977). Social groups are, however, rarely totally excluded. Inclusion and exclusion are part of a dynamic process of interactions created by organizational members through which organizational members receive information about who belongs at which position and about images and values incorporated in organizational structures. In addition, individuals learn to engage in identity work as they understand where they belong and which behavior is expected (see for example, Acker, 1990, 1992; Gamson, 1997). Such processes are shaped by power relations between social groups marked for example by gender, race/ethnicity, age, and often designated in terms of a dominant group and a subordinate group. Although members of minority or subordinate social groups are formally included in organizational membership, they can still be marginalized through patterns of interactions and the creation of meanings or 'common sense' (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2005). For example, a woman board member can be marginalized in interactions when men

perform a certain form of masculinity, such as discussing cars during meetings, engaging in paternalistic behavior, or telling sexist jokes (Martin, 2001, 2003).

Members of social groups who dominate positions of leadership may create practices of exclusion, dominance, and marginalization through unintentional and strategic behaviors (Itzin, 1995; Rutherford, 2001). As such, they 'police' and control the boundaries of access to the highest positions within an organization. This boundary policing influences the different ways in which dominant and marginalized social groups experience organizations. For example, male managers and board members tend to associate the low number of women in leadership positions with women's lack of experience and/or commitment, whereas a majority of female managers and board members attribute this skewness to discrimination and resistance to women occupying such positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2005; Sheridan & Milgate, 2003). In addition, men rarely see their own gender as a source of privilege, whereas women see that men as a group have access to certain resources that they themselves do not (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2001). Such differences in perception between dominant and subordinate groups impact the behavior of the two groups, especially if the latter want access to positions controlled by the former. Although most research in the area of gender and governance has explored how women experience being members of boards of directors (see for example, Burke & Mattis, 2000), relatively little research has focused on the ways in which women negotiate access to these positions of leadership in general and specifically in the nonprofit sector. How do members of a dominant group police access to positions of power in such a way that a select few members of a subordinate group are admitted, and how do members of subordinate group negotiate their entry? The lack of women in positions of power has often been attributed to organizational culture, although the ways in which entry is negotiated may play a significant role as well. A study of ways in which women as a subordinate group attain positions of leadership is essential to understanding mechanisms of exclusion from positions of power and decision making. In the current study we used the perspectives of men (dominant group on sport boards) and women (subordinate group) to explore the process by which women become members of boards of directors of national sport associations. This process of inclusion requires members of both the dominant and the subordinate group to negotiate recruitment and selection criteria.

Negotiating Gender and Fit

Witz (1990, 1992) argued that inclusion (fit) and exclusion (lack of fit) are the result of processes of negotiation between dominant and subordinate groups. She linked fit/lack-of-fit to material and ideological privileges that accrue to individuals based on intersections of social relations such as gender, ethnicity, and/or sexual preference. Processes of negotiation are gendered in two ways because both people themselves and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion are gendered. Dominant meanings and images assigned to qualities that are associated with gender result in perceived congruence of men and women with specific activities and jobs and strengthen assumptions that one group is a better fit for positions than the other is. A lack of fit is said to occur when the gender of a group of individuals does not correspond with gendered images associated with a position or job. Managerial positions, for example, are associated with objectivity, rationality, logic, and competence that are traditionally linked to forms of White middle to upper class masculinity and tend to explain why more men than women hold high and powerful positions of leadership (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Managers, who associate women with unpaid or lower paid work, with families and domesticity, with emotions and subjectivity and/or, with a decrease in the status of a profession or occupation, may, therefore, marginalize or

exclude women from specific positions of leadership because they do not 'fit' the profile of a manager (Acker, 1990, 1992). Such perceptions of lack of fit, therefore, sustain a gendered structure of the labor market and domestic life in both management and governance. Witz (1990) showed how gender, fit (position), and dominance are inextricably bound up with each other and are constantly negotiated by the dominant and subordinate groups.

An accumulation of privileges allows a dominant group, such as White middle to upper social class men, to appropriate resources and shape opportunities that subsequently make them the ideal candidates for certain positions, which then results in the structural division of labor in organizations. In other words, they collectively and strategically use their positions of privilege to mobilize power and to exclude subordinate groups.ⁱⁱⁱ This includes access to board membership and to certain types of board positions (division of labor).

Subordinate groups are not powerless, however. They may (need to) negotiate strategies to enter positions or occupations from which they were originally excluded. These negotiations are also gender-loaded when women attribute stereotypical feminine qualities to certain jobs to construct their own fit. For example, by framing coaching as an activity that requires caring and nurturing, women coaches constructed women as a better fit than men for coaching youth sport (West, Green, Brackenridge, & Woodward, 2001). Yet members of a subordinate group can also engage in behaviors that negate stereotypes to show that they are different from the rest of their group.

For example, women may behave in ways associated with male managers to prove their capability and to show they are not like most women. Women's use of behaviors commonly associated with either gender may, therefore, be situation-specific as they negotiate gender to show that they "fit" certain positions of leadership. Thus, they negotiate inclusion for a position from which they were originally excluded (Witz, 1990, 1992). The use of Witz's theory may, therefore, provide insight into the gendered processes of negotiating fit and marginalization.

In the present study, we used Witz's perspective to look at ways in which women negotiate their "fit" to become members of executive boards of national sport associations. Specifically, which strategies are used by the dominant and by the subordinate group to negotiate selection of women to boards of directors of national sport organizations?

Method

Procedure

The data were collected between fall 2003 and spring 2005 with the use of semi-structured interviews with board members of Dutch national sport organizations. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain insight into the ways in which members of dominant and subordinate groups negotiate meanings when a member of the subordinate group attempts to enter the dominant group. The selection of both groups of informants, male and female board members, was based on the gender ratio of their sport, type of sport (individual or team), popularity of the sport, and availability for participation in the study. Men outnumber women sport participants in all sport organizations. As there are no popular sports that women dominate numerically, we chose two sports where the rates of participation are similar for men and women. The remaining sports are male-dominated. Therefore, the selected sport organizations reflected the gender composition of Dutch national sport organizations.^{iv} Every selected board member was willing to participate in the study. The interviews lasted about 60–90 min.

Participants

Those selected for these interviews belonged to either the dominant or the subordinate group. Twelve male chairs of national boards were interviewed about the selection processes of new board members. We assumed the chair of a board is best able to articulate selection procedures and plays a crucial role in this process and board culture. In the present study we assumed that they represent the dominant group. All chairs were men because there were no women chairs when the data were collected.

We also conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 women who were the highest-ranking women board members in these Dutch sport organizations. Eleven of the 12 women had at most one female colleague on the board. These women therefore represented the subordinate group in this analysis.

Profile of the dominant group

All interviewed chairs were former athletes. Most of them had also been a coach or member of a jury in their sport and had been a board member in- and outside sport. The men varied in age between 55 and 68 years, with one exception who was in his 40s. Ten men had a partner (female), and most of them had children although they were no longer at home. All but one participated in boards where men were a large majority, that is, a range from no women at all to a maximum of two women.

Profile of the subordinate group

All of the women had been athletes in their sport (two at the elite level). Fifty percent of them had also been a coach or a member of a jury. Seven of those interviewed were the only women on the board, and while five had at least one female colleague. The women varied in age between 32 and 66 years. They had held voluntary positions of leadership in sport and/or non-sport organizations. Ten had a male partner when they became a member of a board. Two-thirds of the women had children, but, of these, only three combined having (small) children at home with a board membership. All but two of the women engaged in paid work (in law, finance, management, government, or ran their own business), although not always full-time during their tenure on the board. Many women were used to operating in a male-dominated world. One woman said: "In my whole career I've always been one of the few women, so that [skewness] is a normal situation for me. I don't even notice it any more."

Interviews

The interviewer focused on career and life choices and on the strategies these men and women used. Comparable topics were discussed with both groups (see Appendix for a list of topics). In the interviews with the 12 male chairs, special attention was paid to their attitudes towards related policies like affirmative action, and to their explanations. In addition, attention was paid to the procedures that were used to select members of the board of directors, and to their attitudes towards changes in gender ratio of their board. In the interviews with the women special attention was paid to the ways in which they were recruited and selected, how they negotiated their entrance and the factors that influenced their decision to join the board. The interview data were analyzed after every interview to determine the extent to which recurrent patterns occurred in the data. We continued to conduct interviews until no new information appeared (saturation). We, therefore, assume that the resulting data reflected the attitudes of most male and female board members of national sport associations in The Netherlands.

Witz's (1992) notion of negotiating fit was used to analyze the various strategies used by the dominant group (male chairs of national sport associations) to include women and by the subordinate group (women members of national boards) to become board members. The results reveal how men and women candidates negotiate their notions of "best fit" with each other. In our presentation of the data, we use quotes that best illustrate the various themes.

Results

Strategies of the Dominant Group

Witz (1990, 1992) argued that a dominant group, in this case male board members, tends to use various strategies to ensure social homogeneity in a position or occupation. The incumbent board members in the current study tended to police the boundaries of entry with the use of two strategies. One such strategy pertained to the use of affirmative action policies and the other was their use of recruitment and selection procedures.

Affirmative action policy

Most chairs, especially those involved in governing a gender-balanced sport, acknowledged the importance of the representation of women in their boards. They reasoned that a board needs to represent the entire membership and not just one-half of their members. Some were convinced that women board members were needed because they are better able than men to look after the interests of women's sport. They claimed that the issue of women board members was often discussed when there was a board vacancy. The chairs that supported affirmative action policies attributed the increase in the number of women board members to these policy measures.^v Such measures included the selection of a woman when a male and female candidate were judged to be similar or when replacing a departing woman board member. At the same time some chairs insisted that "qualities are never equal" and that it is very difficult to find qualified board members, especially women. As one of them said: "Because it is very difficult to find a [good] board member, affirmative action is of little use. You are happy to have any candidate with the right qualifications."

These chairs ascribed relatively little power to themselves for the implementation of affirmative action policies, however. Support of the other board members for affirmative action was deemed essential if women are to be selected. As one chairman said: "Women can be found if you look for them, but board members must be willing to select them."

Another chair, who acknowledged the importance of women board members and affirmative action, blamed his colleagues for the lack of results. He said: "If we had an affirmative action policy, it would probably be pushed aside, because we think other matters are more important." These chairs not only attributed the lack of support by their colleagues for the under-representation of women board members but they narrowly circumscribed the conditions under which women would be selected, that is, only if these women bring qualities to the board that current board members do not possess. Most of the chairs showed little interest in actually implementing affirmative action measures. They argued that implementation should not be based on the number of women board members, but on the quality of the women candidates. In addition they contended that the implementation of affirmative action policy might work against women and/or that women might not have the ambition to be a board member. As one of them said: "I have seen women enter boards as a result of affirmative action policy, but that had little to do with

quality, but with priority. How many incompetents were selected as a result of this policy?” Even when a board supported affirmative action measures and a qualified woman was available she was not automatically selected as the following example illustrates. A chair explained that his board wanted more than one woman board member:

We prefer a woman when candidates have equal qualifications. Having more women is good for our image. Others might get the idea we are a club of only males. I think it is important to change it, if you have a male-only image. I personally recruited the board members that joined the board in the last few years. We had found a woman candidate who was a chair of a very large sport club. If we had taken her, we would have had two women by now, but we chose someone else [a man] because I was convinced he could add quality to the board.

Later in the interview he continued:

If someone leaves the board now, we will certainly look for a woman. I would support having at least two women in our board; they bring a different perspective. We might be able to ask the woman again, who was available for our last vacancy. She might be appropriate for the portfolio of handicapped sports. That position may become available soon, although we already have a man in mind for that portfolio

Although this man was convinced that his board engaged in affirmative action, the example shows that this intent may not translate into an increase in the number of women on a board, due to the recruitment and/or selection processes of the board. It is not surprising then that most chairs were convinced that the number of women in boards will change by itself, without policy measures. Their support of affirmative action in theory and their failure to support it in practice illustrates a preference for what Kanter (1977) calls ‘homologous reproduction,’ that is, a continued preference for member of the dominant group because they are the ‘best’ fit. The same can be said for their methods of recruiting new members.

Recruitment

Most boards use formal and informal methods to find the right candidate. They formally announce a vacancy a few months before the formal selection procedures begin. They ask individuals they know to be a candidate, and they ask sport clubs and other sport organizations to nominate candidates. They use internet, sport assemblies, and advertisements in newsletters. This formal procedure usually does not yield many results. The board then follows a more informal route with use of their own networks. A chair described a common procedure:

We used to use the volunteer leisure job vacancy bank, but that rarely gave good results, so now we look in our own networks, but you have to consult your colleagues about that. You can not just bring in a complete stranger for an important position.

Another chair described the recruitment procedure as follows: “You look for people who are more your own age and have a perspective that can add something to the board.” One of the

chairs explained why he supported this procedure: "A candidate must be supported by everyone in the board because we are a circle of friends." In this way as long as there is no necessity to change their way of governing, boards tend to reproduce themselves.

Sometimes, however, the need to have a woman alters this procedure. A chair attributed his own success in adding two women board members without much of a hassle to his own perseverance and networking. He said: "If you spot a qualified women, you must try to keep in contact with her so that you can ask her when you need her." It is interesting that all of the women board members referred to in these interviews were asked to become board members because of their gender and because of their skills. The required skills are formally part of the selection procedures.

Selection

Most boards draw up formal selection criteria for each vacancy. These include clarity of vision for the future of the association and sport, ability to see 'the bigger picture,' experience in governance, and affinity in the sport. Being a board member requires possessing a mix of suitable skills, knowledge, attitude, and available time. A chair said:

Having a job in governance or politics or in companies is handy, for example. A candidate with experience in governance or politics is important for our networks and for getting permission to do things while insiders in companies help us with sponsorships.

All chairs declared that the quality of the candidate is crucial for the selection. By quality they meant that the candidate possesses knowledge of the sport, is acquainted with the nature of the position, has experience in governance, and has the necessary personal qualities. Their quality criteria are those associated with high level jobs in society, where status, reputation, and networks are important. This implies that, by selecting candidates who do these kinds of jobs, more professionalism, power, and money are added to the sport. Candidates must, therefore, be perceived to add value to the board. In that sense, they may be different than other board members but at the same time their presence must not change the board culture, as most incumbent board members value it. Consequently, anyone who becomes a board member must adapt to this culture. Although this 'fit' counts for all candidates, the physical bodies of members of a subordinate group represent another culture and dominant societal associations with that physicality. So, if a woman candidate becomes a board member, she must be able to adapt to this culture, although physically she does not 'fit.' A chair warned that selecting a woman only because of her gender and not the 'fit' can be disastrous:

To choose a woman just because she is a woman is the most stupid thing you can do. Such a person must be able to see how the current board members work together. If there is a women who fits in there, it is fine.

Obviously then the dominant group of men determine criteria for board membership, but do so in a contradictory manner. They want more of the same, added value that is congruent with board culture, and yet also want women whom they see as 'different.' They want women because they are morally obliged to have them, but, at the same time, they want the board culture to remain the same. This gate-keeping strongly influenced the ways in which these women negotiated their entry on to these boards.

Strategies of the Subordinate Group

We asked women board members about their perception of the recruitment and selection process and about their strategies for furthering their own candidacy in these processes.

Recruitment

The data show that all of the interviewed women were members of (predominantly) male networks. Their membership in these networks was part of the recruitment procedure for their candidacy for these high positions. Being part of a network was not sufficient, however. Each was asked to become a member of the executive board for specific reasons, one of which was gender. As one of the women said: “They were looking for a woman because there were no women on the board at that time, and they wanted more young board members.” In other words, their recruitment was part of an effort by the respective boards to change the gender ratio. The women pointed out that an all male board in a sport in which many women participate is no longer seen as legitimate. This is true only of all male boards, however, and not of boards with one woman member. An incumbent woman board member described what had happened before the recruitment procedure got under way for a new board member. She was consulted by other board members to see if she felt uncomfortable being the only woman board member and if she thought another woman should be added. She had said:

If you think I need another woman, you are wrong. I am fine. It is better to find the right person than [to select] a woman. I prefer someone who fits in the team; it does not matter if it is a man or a women.

Thus she was complicit with the same values and standards of the other (male) members. Such attitudes have ramifications for the subsequent entry of women to sport governance. Although board membership of national sport associations is generally viewed as a prestigious task in the Netherlands (Anthonissen, 2006; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001), these women were initially reluctant to consider the invitation to become a board member. One said: “I thought, ‘Why do they ask me when they have only old guys on the board?’” Another woman explained: “I actually accepted this job against my will, and I refused several times, because I didn’t think much of the actual members of the executive board.” In addition, some of these women did not want to join the board because of their perceptions of the role that they were expected to play on the board and because they knew they could be held responsible for unpopular board decisions. One of them explained:

They decided to reduce the number of board members from 7 to 5. I was very busy when they asked me because I had a little girl, my mother was very ill, and I ran the household. I thought “If the situation is that I will be the only woman among four full-time working men, of whom there is always one or two missing, then I’ll always be the scapegoat if anything goes wrong.” So I said, “I do not want to be a member of the board if there are only five board members.”

The women who were interviewed were very aware that, although they were supposed to be like “one of the men” with respect to their work experiences, their sport histories, and the structure of their domestic lives, they were not supposed to act like men in every sense once they were

members of the board. These results do not necessarily mean that these women were not ambitious, but that they would only accept a board position under specific conditions. They thought that they had to be circumspect about expressing their personal ambitions and that they had to show that they had a passion for the job itself. One woman explained how ambitious behavior could be judged in a gendered way. She said:

You should never show that you are more qualified than the others because they will cut you down to size. You must show your commitment and enthusiasm instead. When women are too ambitious, it becomes hard for them to realize things; if they show they are modest, things happen. My experience shows you can come far, if you do it that way. It is clear that there are different expectations for the way men and women behave. Look at career patterns of men and women; a man is not worth anything if he shows no ambition, but about an ambitious woman, they say: "Here we have another bitch."

The results provided evidence that these women were aware that they could influence their chances and that these chances were gender-loaded. One woman applied for positions for which she knew few women would apply. She explained that the chances of (qualified) women to be chosen for such positions were great because these women are in demand and are seen as exceptions. She described how she realized her ambition to reach a higher position:

I know the dynamics; they are similar everywhere. I took all the steps that needed to be taken [to become a board member] but without further ambitions. Anything I undertake, I want to do well. Because I do it well, I am often asked to do other things. I think that is the way it works for women.

Selection Criteria

The women believed that they were chosen as candidates (perceived fit) because they were women, had the necessary experience in sport, and/or occupied a high level paid position outside of sport. Most had advanced through various levels of board membership from local to provincial and national. As one of them said: "They knew me, because I had been a member of various committees, and they had read my name in the minutes. Of course they thought, 'This lady has a big mouth, but who the hell is she?'" Those who became board members in the last few years did not have to take all the steps from a lower to a higher-level position to reach their actual position, as did their predecessors. All of them, however, had a paid professional position outside of sport and/or a master's degree. One woman said: "They were looking for a lawyer, because they needed help with contracts for sponsors." Women with similar backgrounds knew that they were in demand and could become members of executive boards in sport and non-sport associations because they had worked in financial sectors, had experience in governance, and/or had been in politics.

Another criterion that played a role in the selection of these women for positions on boards of national sport associations was the structure of their domestic lives. The interviewed women realized that male board members expected the female candidates to be available when they themselves were. One of the women said that her wish to have children was one of the issues that was discussed in her candidacy conversation. The candidacy committee made it clear that "they thought it would be very difficult [for a mother] to combine caring for young children with

a board membership.” Obviously, the degree of perceived fit was layered and complex, although it was presented as gender-neutral.

Although the women believed that they had to fit criteria made for and by male candidates, they had to meet other criteria as well. A woman explained:

They told me they wanted a woman on the board who was married, who had children, who had her master’s degree, who had experience in the labor market, but was still a ‘normal’ woman and not a radical feminist or a battle-axe. ... also someone who does not get sidetracked by details. Maybe they thought I met these requirements. I never was a very dominant person, but I said what had to be said, or what I thought had to be said. Perhaps, there were not many individuals who did that in those days.

The foregoing quotation illustrates another dynamic of selection criteria. The women who were interviewed believed that they had to show that they were not outspoken and that they did not fit ‘negative’ images some men might have of women. A woman described her selection: “There were not many women in boards at all, and especially none who could say difficult things in a polite way. Perhaps that is why they wanted me.”

Domestic Life

These women were well aware of ways in which their domestic life could interfere with their work on the board and vice versa. Most of the women did not have children; those who did have them had waited until the children were older before they accepted a membership on a board. Most were also complicit with dominant patterns of domestic arrangements and agreed that women who have young children are not ideal candidates for board positions. They reasoned that the usual board membership of 4 to 8 years is difficult for mothers to combine with having a baby or caring for young children although they said little about fathers in similar situations.

These women had time to work as a board member because their male partner was willing to take over some of their domestic obligations. Each of the interviewed women consulted with her partner before she accepted board membership. None of them would have accepted a nomination if her partner had not agreed. A woman explained that her husband encouraged her to become a candidate because she was critical of the work of the existing board; board membership would give her the opportunity to prove that things can be done better. These women concluded that, in this sense, they had an exceptional partner.

As one woman explained:

My husband settled it. He said, “You are made for that job, do not worry, it will turn out all right.” Nevertheless, it was hard for him sometimes, because he had a time consuming job. There are not many men who like their wives to get into something like this.

Male board members probably require partner support for successful sport governance as well, but, as the quotation illustrates, male partners who are willing to give this kind of support may be more the exception than the rule. Wives may be expected to increase their domestic responsibilities when their husbands become board members. One interviewed woman

expressed a different view, however. She attributed the responsibility for balancing the time demands of board membership to women themselves. She said:

I am not going to cook when I have a meeting and I am not at home for dinner. He is not handicapped! He can do it! Moreover, it does not matter if you have children; even then your husband can cook, find the children's sport clothes, et cetera. I never understood that. They are also his children.

Although this woman expressed another perspective, all of the women thought child rearing to be more a woman's than a man's responsibility. In this way, they were complicit with dominant ideas about men's and women's tasks and responsibilities and the separation between public and private lives. They were, therefore, a perceived fit only if their domestic responsibilities did not interfere with membership tasks.

Taking the decision

The initial resistance of the women to join the board was often dissolved by passion for their sport, by the perceived opportunities to actualize their visions about sport, and by the perception they were wanted as board members. "I thought 'If I say no, I may never get another chance,' and I had so many plans and ideas, so I thought 'I just have to do it.'" A woman described how her chair went to bat for her: "The chair of the board asked me to become a member. He had influence in the local clubs and thought he could get the other regions to vote for me. I never would have put myself up as a candidate." The perception they had of the situation influenced their strategy to become a member of the board. Often their love for a sport tipped the scale toward candidacy. As outsiders they negotiated board membership because they saw it as an opportunity to do something for (women's) sport.

Discussion

Various factors enable a dominant group to control the access that a subordinate group has to positions of leadership (Witz, 1992). The results of the current study illustrate how incumbent male board members can keep control of the board by affirming and negating affirmative action policies and policing 'fit' during recruitment and selection processes. At the same time the results also illustrate how women may comply with these processes of recruitment and selection as they struggle to fit the demands made of board members. None questioned the criteria for selection. It is possible that those who did were not selected.

Strategies of the Dominant Group

Toward affirmative action policy

Although the IOC has mandated change in the gender composition of sport boards, the number of explicit measures taken to increase the number of women on the boards of Dutch national sport organizations has decreased in the past few years. The chairs involved in this study tended to comply with IOC recommendations to recruit more women to their boards to avoid having an all male board that was 'bad' for their image. They resisted the use of formal procedures and of affirmative action policies to create a gender balanced board however. Their main argument

prioritized the ‘quality’ of the candidate who had to be found through the ‘usual’ procedures. Although they discussed the possible recruitment of women candidates, they also weakened that emphasis by arguing that ‘quality’ was gender-neutral. They asserted that women would be chosen when a man and woman candidate are equally qualified, but, at the same time, they argued that “abilities are never equal.” Thus they resisted pressure from outside (IOC) to change the construction of the board by suggesting that their own procedures were gender-neutral and did not (implicitly) advantage men. With this strategy they were able to continue using their establishment, recruitment and selection methods, and in so doing, were able to reproduce themselves as dominant group. Even chairs of gender-balanced sports that were sensitive to the gender image of their board prioritized reducing gender skewness in theory only but not in practice. Once a board had one or two female members, the moral obligation seemed to be met, and relative little attention was paid to recruiting more women.

Toward recruitment and selection processes

The women were selected in part because of their membership in predominantly male job or sport networks. Our results confirm other research that provides evidence that male networks are often an informal field where selection for high level and important board positions takes place. Rutherford (2001) found that limited access to men’s networks is the greatest barrier for women in attaining management positions and that women managers are often unaware of these exclusionary practices. Sheridan and Milgate (2003) found that similar criteria were used to recruit men and women members for corporate boards, but that high visibility played a greater role in the selection of women than of men. In addition, although these recruitment criteria were presented as gender-neutral, men dominated these high powered jobs and continued to be selected for them. In other words, the criteria for membership of boards of directors tend to be related to a segment of the labor market where women are also under-represented and where ‘old boys’ networks play an important role. Yet the limited numbers of women who are part of male networks tend to become candidates for board membership only when they fit the right profile. The women in the current study were recruited because they were well educated, had high level jobs, had no young children, were flexible in their time schedule, and behaved ‘properly.’ They were not openly feminist, and they had experience with, knowledge about, and, commitment to their sport. In this manner, homologous reproduction can occur even when members of a subordinate group are involved.

The findings also echo the results of a study by Hovden (2000) of the gendering of selection processes for positions of leadership in Norwegian sport organizations. She found that leaders of the boards of sport organizations were expected to be result oriented, cooperative, courageous, determined, impartial, and loyal. They also had to have a good reputation, extensive social, business, and political networks, and various organizational experiences. Hovden characterized this as a ‘male heavyweight’ profile. Reproduction of the existing values in a board was guaranteed because only women who were perceived to ‘fit’ became members of male networks and were candidates for positions of leadership. Similarly, Power and Butterfield (2003) found that the greater the identification of women managers with characteristics associated with senior male managers, the better their chances of realizing their ambitions. Those who preferred alternative ways of managing were less likely to aspire to senior manager. In other words, only those who were seen as ‘fitting’ continued the climb up the organizational and occupational ladder. Thus, processes of identification with stereotypes associated with men and a distancing from those associated with women tend to shape the dynamics of selection processes and may

explain the limited number of women available for positions of leadership such as board membership. Yet the 'fit' is never totally congruent because the visibility of a woman as member of a subordinate group marks her as different. Women board members in the current study could not completely identify with their male colleagues because they had to negotiate the stereotypical images held by these male chairs about women, child rearing, feminism, education, job experience, and the nature of board work.

Strategies of the Subordinate Group

Toward recruitment and selection processes

Women board members knew that they were chosen for a board membership because they were assumed to fit the profile of a suitable female candidate. In general, these women tended not to question, but to accept and adapt to, the criteria for candidacy. This is contrary to findings in other contexts. Sheridan and Milgate (2003), for example, found that women members of boards of directors of publicly listed companies in Australia were more concerned than men were about the lack of diversity in a governing board. Similarly, Acosta and Carpenter (2005) found that women athletic directors in U.S. colleges and universities expressed greater concern about the skewed gender ratio than did their male counterparts. In contrast, the women involved in the current study tended to be complicit with the recruitment and selection strategies used by the incumbent board members. They agreed that the 'fit' of a new candidate is more important than 'gender.' Mattis (in: Burke & Mattis, 2000), who studied the behaviour of women directors in organizations, called the complicity of women with dominant managerial behavior "a conspiracy of silence" (p.199). This complicity ensures homologous reproduction and perhaps explains why Wacjman (1998), in her study of senior managers, found few gender differences in managerial styles. This complicity, however, tended to help the women involved in the current study to gain a board membership and to convince them that these criteria were gender-neutral and resulted in equal opportunities for women and men to become board members. This complicity may also reflect the attitudes of the sectors in which they work. Fifty-nine percent of the employers (men and women) who work in Dutch (non-sport) organizations think that too much attention is paid to the position of women in organizations and that gender no longer plays a role in employment (Van der Lippe, 2004). This contradicts the fact that the percentage of women board members of these Dutch organizations is only 25% and at the corporate level it is 6.4% (CDWI, 2004; Merens et al., 2004).

Besides possessing skills and qualities that ensure 'fit,' the women participating in the current study also had to have a domestic life that paralleled that of incumbent board members. Domestic responsibilities played an important role in determining 'fit.' Although the combination of board membership and domestic responsibilities is rarely seen as an issue for many men, these women had to develop a strategy to combine both responsibilities so that they could be 'free' (like their male counterparts) of responsibilities at the required times. These women were able to do this because they had an exceptional partner who was prepared to take on these domestic responsibilities when his wife had board meetings and similar obligations. At the same time, being a board member and having small children were seen as incongruent. This again reflects the wider societal context where Dutch women tend to choose activities and work that fit with their domestic responsibilities whereas men often choose activities that fit with their job responsibilities (Cloin & Boelens, 2004). Thus a board membership may have added value for men and mean more work and juggling for women.

The results of the current study provided evidence about women's frequent reluctance to become board members and the ways in which gender may play an important role in this reluctance. Although explanations for women's lack of interest in board membership are often framed as reflecting their own preferences and choices, structural and cultural contexts obviously play a significant role and may keep many women out of high-level positions of leadership in sport. Rutherford (2001) argued that women are more likely to want and to attain positions of leadership in organizational cultures that emphasize and create equal opportunities than in organizational cultures where gender differences are denied. The women involved in the current study were also aware of the gendered dynamics of board membership at such a high level and how they had to negotiate stereotypes to be considered a good 'fit.' According to Witz (1992), the subordinate group uses strategies to be included in groups from which they were originally excluded. In contrast, our research does not reveal a subordinate group that is eager to be included. Although they do have the ambition to influence a specific sport, these women only want to be included in the board under their own conditions.

Our results support Witz's (1992) contention that a dominant group attempts to keep control of a profession or activity in often invisible ways that need no justification. None of the women or men who were interviewed questioned the procedures or the criteria used for selection. These definitions of 'fit' tend not to be grounded in a systematic determination of the skills a board needs and a structured procedure but may have been based on the ways these men themselves qualified for board membership. These processes of negotiating fit not only reproduce existing (homogenous) boards but also reproduce gendered ways of selecting board members. Women who were chosen for candidacy had to fit a certain (contradictory) profile. They were chosen because of their skills and because they are women. If they had not been women, they might not necessarily have been chosen.

The attitudes of the chairs suggest that the number of women involved in high levels of sport governance will not increase drastically in the near future. Once a board has one or two members it may assume it has solved the image problem and has met its moral obligation of ensuring women's representation on the board. This resistance to women's participation in sport governance may reflect meanings given to sport as a primary activity. Messner (1988) has argued that, after women became athletes in large numbers, the ideological domination of sport by men shifted from the level of participation to leadership. Keeping women out of governance by declaring them as 'fit' for such positions only when token women are needed, strengthens male domination in sport.

In part, this gender skewness in sport governance perpetuates a peculiar form of injustice because sport is bifurcated into men's and women's sport, and women should be involved in the governance of their own sport. The resistance to women's significant involvement in sport governance also limits the social capital that women can accrue. Hoye (2002) has argued that board membership in the nonprofit sector, such as sport, creates social capital for these members. Women's exclusion from these boards not only prevents them from impacting the governance of sport but also from accruing highly valued social capital. The complicity with and lack of criticism of recruitment and selection procedures by both women and men involved in our study are also cause for concern. Possibly the general voluntary nature of sport participation and its accompanying perception of equal opportunity (Knoppers, 2006; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2001) and the specific experiences these leaders had had in sport that confirmed these meanings, may have reinforced a perceived gender neutrality of procedures in sport and produced it as a dominant 'common sense' manner of thinking.

The results indicated that, although the necessary qualities required for board membership, such as a strong track record, expertise in management and governance, a great deal of social capital, and high visibility (Sheridan, 2001; Sheridan & Milgate, 2003; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003), seem to be similar in profit and nonprofit organizations, the manner in which women, as members of a subordinate group, and men, as members of a dominant group, may negotiate women's fit and their crossing of boundaries also depends a great deal on ways in which gender is practiced in a specific setting (Martin, 2001). If the primary activity of an organization is part of the construction of a desirable masculinity, such as occurs in sport, the boundaries of entry to governance may be more strongly policed than when the primary activity is associated with preferred femininity (Messner, 1988). The data suggest that boards negotiate to find a 'normal' woman, that is, a woman who 'fits' and who differs in some ways from what is perceived to be a stereotypical or 'average' woman.

Further research is needed to explore how strategies of fit and of control vary with meanings given to the primary activity and to governance. In addition, the dynamics between dominant and subordinate groups discussed here may also vary by the type of social relation under study. Little is known about how the ethnic majority as dominant group and ethnic minority as subordinate group negotiate fitness for candidacy and selection to positions of power. Do the gendered bifurcation of and meanings given to sport more strongly influence negotiations and perceptions of fit based on gender than on ethnicity? Further research is also needed on women who were considered as candidates for board membership but were not appointed. They were not part of this study, while they could give further insight into dynamics of exclusion. Finally, further research is needed to explore women's and men's strategies once they do govern together. Board memberships are usually 4–8 years long, which means that these women might be able to change the existing culture from within. Consequently, constructions of fit/lack of fit for board membership and of marginalization may also change.

Appendix

Interview Topics

1. The process of entering the board: why, how and when, with whom and under which circumstances, recruitment and selection processes.
2. Affirmative action policy: what is done, how is it done, resistance, arguments and meanings, attitudes towards affirmative action.
3. Gendered meanings: meanings given to changes in the gender ratio and to board membership.
4. Private circumstances: description and organization of family life, housing, role of the partner, care for others such as children and parents.
5. (Paid) labor: relationship between board membership and (paid) labor/activities, organization of (paid) labor, priorities.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*, 139–158.
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In A. J. Mills & P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248–262). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Acosta, V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2005). *Women in intercollegiate sport: A longitudinal, national study – Twenty-seven year update, 1977–2004*. Retrieved August 22, 2005, from <http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport/>.
- Anthonissen, A. (2006). “The path to success”: Shifting discourses in a football club. In A. Knoppers & A. Anthonissen (Eds.), *Making sense of diversity in organizing sport* (pp. 29–43). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.
- Burke, R., & Mattis, M. (Eds.) (2000). *Women on corporate boards of directors: International challenges and opportunities*, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- CDWI (2004). *Women board directors of the future*. Retrieved on June 15, 2006, from http://www.globewomen.com/cwdi/Global200_KeyFindings.htm.
- Cloin, M., & Boelens, A. (2004). Onbetaalde arbeid en de combinatie van arbeid en zorg [Unpaid labor and the combination of paid labor and care]. In W. Portegijs, A. Boelens, L., & Olsthoorn (Eds.), *Emancipatiemonitor 2004* (pp. 179–208). Den Haag, The Netherlands: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Collinson, D., & Hearn, J. (1996). Breaking the silence: On men, masculinities, and management. In D. Collinson & J. Hearn (Eds.), *Men as managers, managers as men: Critical perspectives on men, masculinities, and management* (pp. 1–24). London: Sage.
- Daily, C., & Dalton, D. (2003). Women in the boardroom: A business imperative. *Journal of Business Strategy, 24*, 8–9.
- Gamson, J. (1997). Messages of exclusion: Gender, movements, and symbolic boundaries. *Gender & Society, 11*, 178–199.
- Hovden, J. (2000). “Heavyweight” men and younger women? The gendering of selection processes in Norwegian sport organizations. *NORA, Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies, 8*(1), 17–32.
- Hoye, R. (2002). *Board performance of Australian voluntary sport organizations*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Leisure Studies, Griffith University, Australia.
- Inglis, S. (1997). Roles of the board in amateur sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management, 11*, 160–176.

- Itzin, C. (1995). The gender culture in organizations. In C. Itzin & J. Newman (Eds.), *Gender, culture and organizational change: Putting theory into practice* (pp. 30–53). London: Routledge.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kikulis, L. (2000). Continuity and change in governance and decision making in national sport organizations: Institutional explanations. *Journal of Sport Management*, *14*, 293–320.
- Knoppers, A. (2006). The skill levels of men are quite diverse: Gender and coaching. In A. Knoppers & A. Anthonissen (Eds.), *Making sense of diversity in organizing sport* (pp. 58–70). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.
- Knoppers, A., & Anthonissen, A. (2001). Meanings given to performance in Dutch sport organizations: Gender and racial/ethnic subtexts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *18*, 303–317.
- Knoppers, A., & Anthonissen, A. (2005). Male athletic and managerial masculinities: Congruencies in discursive practices? *Journal of Gender Studies*, *14*, 123–136.
- Martin, P. Y. (2001). 'Mobilizing masculinities': Women's experiences of men at work. *Organization*, *8*, 587–618.
- Martin, P. Y. (2003). 'Said and done' versus 'saying and doing': Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender & Society*, *17*, 342–366.
- Merens, A., Cuijpers, M., & Boelens, A. (2004). Politieke en maatschappelijke besluitvorming [Political and societal decision making]. In W. Portegijs, A. Boelens, & L. Olsthoorn (Eds.), *Emancipatiemonitor 2004* (pp. 179–208). Den Haag, The Netherlands: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Messner, M. (1988). Sport and male domination: The female athlete as contested ideological terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *5*, 197–211.
- Nuijten, S., Lucassen, J., & Van Kalmthout, J. (2004). *Verenigingsmonitor 2003, de stand van zaken in de sportvereniging* [Sport club monitor 2003: The state of affairs]. Arnhem, The Netherlands: NOC*NSF.
- Power, G., & Butterfield, D. (2003). Gender, gender identity, and aspirations to top management. *Women in Management Review*, *18*, 88–96.
- Rutherford, S. (2001). Organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion. *Women in Management Review*, *16*, 371–373.
- Sarra, J. (2005). Class act: Considering race and gender in the corporate board room. *St. John's Law Review*, *79*, 1121–1160.

- Sheridan, A. (2001). A view from the top: Women on the boards of public companies. *Corporate Governance*, 1, 8–14.
- Sheridan, A., & Milgate, G. (2003). ‘She says, he says’: Women’s and men’s views of the composition of boards. *Women in Management Review*, 18, 147–155.
- Van der Lippe, T. (2004). Emancipatiegezindheid van werkgevers [Attitudes of employers towards emancipation]. In W. Portegijs, A. Boelens, & L. Olsthoorn (Eds.), *Emancipatiemonitor 2004* (pp. 226–250). Den Haag, The Netherlands: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Verweel, P. (2006). Sense making in sport organizations. In A. Knoppers & A. Anthonissen (Eds.), *Making sense of diversity in organizing sport* (pp. 18–28). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.
- Vinnicombe, S., & Singh, V. (2003). Locks and keys to the boardroom. *Women in Management Review*, 18, 325–333.
- Wacjman, J. (1998). *Managing like a man: Women and men in corporate management*. University Park, PA: Polity.
- West, A., Green, E., Brackenridge, E., & Woodward, D. (2001). Leading the way: Women’s experiences as sports coaches. *Women in Management Review*, 16, 85–92.
- White, A., & Henry, I. (2004). *Women, leadership, and the Olympic movement*. Retrieved November 14, 2004, from http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sses/institutes/salp/IOC_lboro_report.pdf.
- Witz, A. (1990). Patriarchy and professions: The gendered politics of occupational closure. *Sociology*, 24, 675–690.
- Witz, A. (1992). *Profession and patriarchy*. London: Routledge.

Notes

¹ Women comprise 28 and 11% of Dutch board members of local and national sport associations, respectively (Nuijten et al., 2004). In 2005, about one-third of the national sport associations had no women in their boards at all. Almost one-half of them had only one woman board member, and only two (rowing and field hockey) had more than two women. The total percentage of women members for these boards was 14% in 2005, an increase of 2% since 2002. In addition, when women become members of local, provincial, or national boards in sport, they are more likely to become secretary (37%) than chair (10%) of the board. Thus, not only is the gender ratio of boards of directors skewed, but a gendered division of labor occurs at all levels of sport governance when women are board members. Sports with a balanced gender ratio of athletes had more women board members than did boards of male-dominated sports.

ⁱⁱ Since 1996, 64 % of National Olympic Committee's (NOC's) and International Federations (IF's) worldwide took measures to increase the number of women in their boards. These policies recommended that women should comprise at least 10% of National Olympic Committees and International Federations by 2001 and 20% by 2005 (White & Henry, 2004). A record number of women (71% of new board members) have become board members in NOC's and IF's since these measures were taken. In 2003 women comprised 10% of the board members of 62% of NOC's and 41 % of IF's (White & Henry, 2004).

ⁱⁱⁱ The term exclusion refers mainly to physical, quantitative aspects of participation, although non-participation does not exclusively refer to exclusion. The term lack-of-fit emphasizes these aspects and refers to normative, qualitative aspects of participation. Therefore we prefer to use the term inclusion/exclusion, instead of fit/lack-of-fit, when referring to the quantitative presence/absence of (in this case) women. And we use the term fit/lack-of-fit to refer to the wider, normative process in which inclusion/exclusion takes place.

^{iv} We do not name the selected sports to protect the anonymity of those interviewed.

^v Boards that had formally adopted policies of affirmative action had more women members than those boards that had not done so. Sixtythree percent of national sport governing boards with affirmative action procedures in place and 45% of boards without such policies had at least one woman member.

Chapter five

Doing and Undoing Gender in Sport Governance

I. Claringbould & A. Knoppers (2008).
Sex Roles, 57, 81-92.

Abstract

Processes of sense making enable individuals to explain or give meaning to their experiences including those pertaining to gender. Meanings shape both individual behaviors and expectations for the behavior of others. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine how board members of national sport associations in the Netherlands made sense of gendered arrangements. We used a sense making approach that acknowledges the significance of context (gender ratio) and constructions of meaning in shaping organizational practices. The results, based on 29 semi-structured interviews, showed how board members gave meanings to gender skewness that included defining board work as gender (in) appropriate and sustaining and challenging behaviors defined as stereotypical. We discuss how the results reflect doing and undoing gender.

Keywords: governance; gender; sport; tokens; sense making

Introduction

Women are under-represented in most positions of authority including senior management and governance (see for example, Wirth 2004; Worldwide 2007). The International Olympic Committee has shown its concern about the low gender ratio in national decision-making structures in sport worldwide and has strongly urged each country to create policies and procedures that “ensure that the benefits of wider involvement in decision-making by women are realized” (Women 2004, p. 4). Yet the number of women involved in sport governance at national and international levels continues to be relatively small and seems to be resistant to change regardless of efforts to increase the percentage of women. For example, the percent of women involved in governance at national level of Olympic sports in The Netherlands only increased from 10% in 2002 to 14% 2005 while 37% of the associations had no women board members at all (Claringbould 2006). In addition, with one exception, the number of women board members per board never exceeded two. Thus, although women comprise about a half of all members of sport associations, they continue to be largely under-represented in sport governance at the national level. The IOC has recognized that targeting only changes in the gender ratio may not be sufficient to increase the number of women on sport governing boards since affirmative action policies “do not directly address the circumstances or attitudes which cause such an imbalance in the first place” (Women 2004, p. 6).

Little is known about the ways in which members of national sport governing boards give meaning to gender and how these meanings serve as mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore how members of national sport governing boards with various gender compositions make sense of gender and reinforce and challenge ways of doing gender. We situate this study within a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance and dynamics of sense making in assigning meaning to actions and practices (Weick 1995). We use a qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews) to explore how 29 women and men members of national sport governing boards make sense of the gender ratio of their board and how such meanings reflect ways of challenging and reinforcing ways of doing gender.

According to Kanter (1977), the gender ratio or composition of a group is a structural determinant of (gendered) organizational behavior. Consequently, numerical gender inequality in organizational positions or jobs influences the behavior of men and women. The gender composition of groups in which the minority comprises less than 15% of the entire group (skewed gender ratio) for example, tends to elicit different behavior than genderbalanced groups. Kanter argued that the greater the skewness of a group, the greater the visibility of the minority and the greater the emphasis on gender differences. Majority group members tend to exaggerate the ways in which tokens differ from them and construct boundaries to safeguard their ways of conducting business and ‘their’ culture. They tend to judge tokens implicitly and explicitly on the basis of societal stereotypes and to see tokens as symbolic representatives of their social category. In contrast, a balanced group is one in which social group ratios range between 40 and 60% percent. In such groups the use of stereotypes and the policing of group boundaries tends to be less than when the gender ratio is skewed.

A considerable amount of research has explored this connection between behavior and social group composition (see for example, Knoppers et al. 1993; Ott 1989; Simpson 1997; Stangl and Kane 1991; Yoder 1991; Zimmer 1988). For example, Simpson (1997) explored the barriers token women experience in their career as they attained high level positions as managers.

These tokens experienced the organizational culture as incompatible and repressive and felt they had to censor what they did and said. They felt more at ease in formal than informal settings because formal settings were more rulebound and therefore easier to negotiate. Simpson therefore agreed with Kanter's (1977) conclusion that the gendered composition of a group of colleagues influences women's experiences in organizations.

The results of research using Kanter's approach also suggest however, that her theory may be primarily applicable to women as tokens in male dominated contexts. For example, Ott (1989), in a study of skewed gender groups in nursing and police work, found that the negative effects of being a token were related to whether or not those who were part of a minority group were perceived to be intruders. Women working in male dominated jobs, like the police, experienced more discrimination than men working in jobs dominated by women, like nursing. Ott concluded that Kanter's theoretical assumptions did not sufficiently explain behavior and numerical inequality and that in addition to structure, gendered meanings also play a role in sustaining gender skewness. The entrance of men into nursing was perceived to enhance the status of the occupation while the addition of women to the police force was not perceived to add to the societal status of policing. In other words, the image of who is appropriate for a job is gender loaded, that is, it is also related to the societal status of that job and the gender of the person. Research in both sport and nonsport organizations (see for example, Burger and Bekker 1993; Claringbould 2006; Claringbould and Knoppers 2007; Wacjman 1998; Yoder 1991) has shown that token women in high-level positions tend to assign themselves skills or engage in behaviors associated with men although they conceive these behaviors as gender neutral. This adaptation may also mean gender meanings change little because tokens adapt to dominant values and norms. Although Kanter (1977) attempted to link structure and behavior, she did not explore the ways in which gendered meanings given to work and to gender may shift, be reinforced and/or are undone in situations where skewed gender ratio occurs. In other words, she did not take into account that individuals make sense of situations by assigning meanings to jobs and gender within a specific structure.

Weick (1995) has argued that individuals continually engage in sense making to make sense of their material and mental worlds. Verweel (2006) has contended that values and hierarchies are embedded in the resultant meanings. Some become dominant and self-evident and others are marginalized. This hegemony and its accompanying marginalization of meanings become embedded in the structure of the organization and in formal and informal rules and regulations. Sense making is however, a continuous process that occurs whenever individuals interact with each other. Thus each national board of sport governance is a setting where meanings about governance and who fits are continually (re)negotiated.

Similarly, feminist organizational scholars (see for example, Acker 1990, 1992, 1998; Martin 2001, 2003, 2006; Rutherford 2001; Sheridan and Milgate 2003) have argued that gender is not so much influenced by structure as it is a social construction. Gendered meanings also shape behavior and (implicit) expectations of the behaviour of others. Behaviors are given gendered meanings and thus (re) produce gender differences as people "do gender" in their interaction with each other. Doing gender refers to the use of gendered normative attributions or stereotypes in social interactions and engaging in what is often referred to as sex-typed behavior and thus reinforcing gender differences. Meanings are in other words, assumed to produce (gendered) structures.

Moreover, Deutsch (2007) and Lorber (2000) have argued that much research that focuses on the 'doing' of gender tends to focus only on the ways in which normative gender expectations,

meanings and behaviour are reinforced and that little attention has been given to the ways in which such situations are also places where gender is undone – that is, where hegemonic gendered meanings are challenged and or changed through actions and interactions. By doing gender, individuals engage in behavior that reinforces dominant ideologies, by undoing gender they challenge these ideologies. Deutsch and Lorber both contend that research that focuses on barriers for, and/or discrimination against women in a male dominated context shows primarily how gender is done while the question how gender is “undone” by women and men receives little attention. The question that therefore guided this exploratory study was: how do members of Dutch national sport governing boards with various gender compositions make sense of gender and thus ‘do’ and ‘undo’ gender?

Method

This study was part of a larger project that explores the ways in which meanings given to gender and to sport influence processes of exclusion and inclusion in leadership positions in sport. A previous study focused on ways individuals negotiate to become a member of a national sport board (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007).

Interviews

Since our focus was on sense making, we used qualitative research methods. Specifically, we used semi-structured interviews to explore the ways members of national sport governing boards made sense of the dynamics of gender composition of their board and did and undid gender. The contextual nature of sense making required the interviews to be as non-directive as possible to allow different meanings to emerge that is, each individual could talk about the board and gender dynamics in whichever way they chose. We could not ask interviewees specifically how they engaged in sense making and how they did or undid gender since those are theoretical terms. We therefore used a variety of topics gleaned from the literature described in the previous section as prompts to ask board members to describe their experiences with respect to low gender ratios in sport governance. We used topics such as the gender ratio of their board, recruitment and selection criteria and procedures, attitudes towards affirmative action policies, the assignment of tasks to board members, ways of conducting business and if and how gender played a role in these issues as prompts. These prompts were used to stimulate the interviewees to talk and were not meant to serve as an exhaustive list of topics that needed to be covered in every interview.

Participants

Interviews were held with male and female members of boards of national sport associations in 2004–2005. Such boards typically consist of 5–11 members. With one exception, the gender composition of all of these boards, was skewed; the number of women ranged from zero to two. The gender composition of one board was balanced, consisting of four women and five men. We considered this board to be an interesting and unique case and therefore included it in our study. Board members of skewed groups were selected on the basis of the gender ratio of participation figures in their sport and type of sport (individual or team sport). This meant that we interviewed board members from male dominated and from gender balanced sports and that these sports represented a variety of individual and team sports. Females do not dominate numerically any of

the Olympic sports. The names of the involved sports are not mentioned to ensure confidentiality for the interviewees. Both women and men board members were selected since we assumed that meanings are created through interactions among board members (cf. Weick 1995) and that the results reflect the ways in which board members constructed intersections between meanings given to gender and board membership.

Purposive sampling was employed; interviewing continued until saturation was attained in the data. This resulted in the participation of 11 male and 10 female board members of gender-skewed boards of governance of national sport associations. Half of the female interviewees were the only women on their board while the other half had a female colleague. All of the interviewed men were members of boards that had no more than two women members. The male board members varied in age from 55 to 68 years old; all, with one exception, had a partner. Most had adult children. Seven of the male board members worked fulltime for pay while the other four were retired. The female board members varied in age from 32 to 66 years old. Six of the ten women had a partner and four had children most of whom did not live at home. Eight of the women had a paid job, often fulltime (6).

Five women and three men who were members of the balanced board participated in the study. This board governed what is considered a gender-neutral sport with similar participation levels of men and women athletes. All men and women interviewees of this board were between 30 and 50 years old. Almost all had fulltime (paid) jobs and half of them had small children at home. These statistics were similar across gender.

Analysis

All interviews were fully recorded and transcribed. The data showed that the various prompts elicited a great diversity of data related to the ways board members made sense of the gender composition of their board. Analytical induction was used to analyze the data (cf. Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000; Marshall and Rossman 1995). We therefore searched the data for emerging themes rather than for what was said per prompt. Analytic induction requires iterations of close reading and rereading of the data to identify and modify salient themes that emerge from the data. The authors first engaged in this process of reduction and interpretation independently; subsequently they engaged in iterations of modification until both conceptual saturation and complete agreement was attained on three related emergent themes that appeared repeatedly in the ways in which these board members talked about gender and its relationship to board membership. The resulting three themes therefore reflect how all the interviewees made sense of gender within this context. These themes are not mutually exclusive but reflect salient meanings held by the board members (Marshall and Rossman 1995). The reliability of these themes is also confirmed in their similarity with those found by Yoder (1991) in her investigation of tokenism, although in her study 'gender appropriateness' was embedded within the theme of gender status. One theme that we call 'gender composition' pertained to comments about the ways in which they experienced the gender composition of their board. Specifically, gender composition data pertained to the ways in which men and women talked about the gender composition of the board, for example, "... I was the only woman on the board..." Another theme, gender appropriateness, included arguments and descriptions of how board tasks, behavior and positions were connected to the board members' perceptions of gender. This theme included ways in which the board members thought specific abilities and positions were gender-specific. Gendered images of the ideal chair and of treasurer, for example, were part of this theme. The third theme, gender behaviors, describes nonjob related behaviors that are assigned gendered

meanings. This included (comparative) comments about and the valuing of emotions, ways of interacting, parenting, etc..

The results indicated that the members of boards with a skewed gender composition constructed gender somewhat differently than did those who were members of the “balanced” board. These differences fit Weick’s (1995) contention that sense making is contextual. Although we do not assume causality, we present the results from the types of boards (gender skewed and balanced) separately in order to highlight the full range of meanings that these board members used to make sense of the gender composition of their boards and of sport governing boards in general. Our goal was to add to understandings of how board members make sense of gender composition and how that reflects ways of doing and undoing gender. Who said what or how often something was said is of lesser importance than what was said (grounded meanings). Therefore we do not quantify the data.

Participants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Since the number of women in sport governance at the national level is relatively small, we do not identify the sports these board members represent. The balanced board may be relatively easy to identify however. Therefore we asked them for and received permission to publicize the results of this study although we promised them anonymity as well. We name and explain each theme using quotes that best illustrate its meaning and note exceptions where they occur.

Results and Discussion

Gender Composition

Skewed boards

Members of skewed boards had various reactions to the gender composition of their boards and sport governing boards in general. They used both the gendered composition of the labor market and of sport to explain the gendered skewness of their board. Most of the women members were used to being in a token position and related their tokenness to the ways the job market is structured. A female lawyer said: “The law firm where I work consists primarily of men. I’ve always been one of the few women, so that is a normal situation to me, it does not even bother me anymore.” Similarly, a woman explained that the perceived scarcity of women with an interest in governance and in high level positions meant she, as are other such women who are employed in high level positions, are asked to be a member of many boards, not just in sport. Others situated the reason for gender composition within the gender structure of sport. The comment by a board member justifying the skewed gender composition of his board is typical: “The whole [sport] world is a man’s world. The emancipation of women is not seen as an issue, especially with respect to boards of governance of [sport] clubs. All clubs are directed by men.” The interviewed board members find gender skewness in sport governance ‘normal’ and show little support for changing the situation.

A man argued that “recruitment of women is bullshit; [the current] skewness has to do with the kind [male dominated] of sport. A focus on women restricts and limits you. If they are not there, they are not there.”

All the interviewed “token” women attributed feelings of difference and of visibility to their token position. The following description illustrates a common experience. “For six years I was the only woman on the board; last year there finally was another woman on the board. But I get

along well with men.” These tokens saw themselves as similar to and as different from their colleagues. A woman who agreed with this feeling of normalcy shows how she is also confronted by difference:

I have similar experiences [of being a token] in my job as in [this sport].
Inequality is not a problem for me. But sometimes I notice that I have a different way of thinking, and, in a way I’ll always be confronted with that.

This recognition of tokenism also played a role in the decision of these women to become members of sport governing boards in the first place. They were reluctant to take on board membership primarily due to the skewed gender composition of the specific board in question. Three women questioned why they were asked to be a member of a board with only men. In that sense, their choice to become a token member of an all male board could be construed as a way of undoing gender.

Balanced board

Members of the balanced board paid little attention to the gender composition of the board nor did women express feelings of being different from their male colleagues. Three women noted a difference when the board became balanced. One explained:

When the fourth woman entered the board, the atmosphere became better. I thought ‘this is really something different’. It is hard to explain what exactly changed, but it did. We all felt that way, at least the women on the board. It clearly strengthened us, although we did not feel very special or so.

Although they were satisfied with the gender composition, they realized that this could be temporary. A male board member cautioned that: “If many women were to leave the board, then we must pay more attention to the subject, because then we have a problem to solve.”

Summary

The results show that these board members ‘did’ gender by perceiving a low gender ratio in board membership as normal and a board with a balanced gender composition as unique. Women contributed to the undoing of gender by becoming a member of these boards while the members of the balanced board ‘undid’ gender by being aware of the temporality of this balance and how this balance can be empowering. We return to this subject later.

Gender Appropriateness of the Job

Skewed boards

As we indicated earlier, positions and tasks are assigned gendered meanings. Tasks or responsibilities tend to be allocated according to perceived gender “fit.” Feminist scholars (see for example, Acker 1990, 1992, 1998; Ridgeway 1997; Yoder 1991) have shown how these meanings and values are often gendered and therefore can be labeled as gender loaded although those involved may see them as gender neutral. The men and women participating in the current study considered their recruitment and selection procedures for board membership to be gender neutral. Yet none of the boards involved in the current study had ever a woman chair, while most

of these women held the position of general secretary or were general member. A male board member contended that “opportunities are absolutely the same for both sexes.” These members also “did gender” by assuming men are more appropriate to (do certain tasks of) the job than women. For example, gendered attributions about the time such membership takes were used to explain why board membership fits men better than women. A male board member argued that “women do not want to become board members, because membership takes too much time. That is their own choice.” Energy spent on minimizing obstacles for the membership of women was considered to be a waste of time and effort. This sense making about skewness and gender appropriateness was filled with contradictions however as the following quote illustrates:

We have no female board members, and that is not a problem. We do have female members at the provincial and local levels. I don't think we miss anything by not having a woman member [at the national level] although it would be good to have one. In other meetings I have seen how women facilitate certain processes, and reduce macho behavior. I don't have the idea it makes much difference though, maybe they pay more attention to others by sending a card or flowers. And ... they have a different view on things.

By defining macho-behavior as a problem in male dominated boards, this man argues that the entrance of women may make the job more appropriate and appealing for a larger group of men and women while at the same time he discounts the need for women members. Traditions and symbols can add to the (gendered) status of a job and subsequently play a role in the perceived appropriateness of men and women as board members. This can be expressed through clothing, food and drinking habits, lifestyle, etc (see for example, Doherty and Chelladurai 1999; Shaw 2006). Examples emerged from the current data as well. A woman described how every new board member received a tailored suit that they were required to wear at official meetings. This suit and wearing it seemed to have different meanings for men than for women. A woman explained that such signifiers of board membership meant that:

It does not take much effort to find male board members, I can immediately give you ten names if you want them. I don't understand how it works, but to men, board membership is a status job, they love it. And they receive a tailored suit with the logo of the association on it. Of course those suits make you look like a monkey, but you have to wear it to official meetings or receptions because those are the rules.

Women were expected to comply with and accept traditions and symbols without questioning them.

Gendered meanings become more salient if women members address issues such as sexual harassment, affirmative action policies, women's rights in sports, etc. These issues are defined as “female” issues and are traditionally seen as inappropriate agenda items by these boards. A female board member described how colleagues on the board reacted to her proposal to create sexual harassment policies:

I can still see it clearly [after I presented my proposal], I stood there, and a member said he liked me as a person, but where did I get these ideas? According to him sexual harassment never occurred among athletes. He thought I was being discriminatory and that I tarnished the reputation of the sport by talking about an ordinary thing such as sexual harassment. So although everyone knows it happens, you should not talk about it.

Yet, sometimes naming an issue that is seen as inappropriate can shift a perception of inappropriate to appropriate. A woman described how her audience was willing to listen to her about the position of women in sport :

I once had to give a speech about differences between men and women in [sport]. Then I said: ‘Do you know how many [Dutch] men won a golden medal in the Olympic games? Well, women have won six but no man has ever won one. So you should not underestimate the value of women in [sport].’ And then some men said ‘Eh, I never thought of it like that.’ In that sense, I think I opened their eyes about the position of women in sport. They thought I was right.

Although these women (and not these men) said they usually introduced subjects related to the position of women in sport, they were aware that this was considered inappropriate and ‘against tradition.’ Yet by doing so, they challenged the status quo and in that sense were undoing gender.

Finally, the interviewed men and women recognized that there are male board members who expect women to perform tasks associated with women like pouring coffee and cleaning. The men and women who were mentioned this found such assignments to be inappropriate. As a man said: “Sometimes older board members expect women to clean and wash dishes, because their wife does so at home, but women should never do that and other men should correct these men.” In this recognition of inappropriateness of women serving coffee, this board member acknowledged that the boundaries of appropriateness had shifted somewhat over time.

Balanced board

The data indicated that the ways members of a balanced board assigned meanings to positions and tasks were also related to perceptions of gender appropriateness. This balanced board recruited new board members in the same way as gender-skewed boards did by selecting them based on (work) experience and educational background. The assignment of tasks within the current board was not perceived to be gender loaded. A man asserted that “there are no [gender] differences in task assignment.” Women were considered qualified to hold relatively important board functions such as being responsible for the development of elite sport or being chair. The current male chair said: “It is my personal ambition that a woman succeeds me.” Other members agreed that the chair of their association could just as well be a woman.

Although members of this board thought that the balanced composition of the board happened more or less accidentally, they continued to encourage social diversity in their board in part through their method of recruiting and selecting members and were conscious that such procedures could be gendered. They consciously looked beyond their own networks to find new candidates and tried to be aware of possible biases. A man said: “If we are looking for a new board member, we always place an announcement on our website, because we want to attract

people who do not belong to our own networks.” Another man said that when they search for new candidates they look for people who:

... do important things in their daily life, which means that if you do not pay attention to (gender in) selection procedures, then selection can easily take place via male networks. In a man’s world you think of men first and not so much of women. You think ‘let us call him’ instead of her. That is very subtle.

This board member seems to be aware of the invisibility of women among men and thus the implicit image of men’s appropriateness.

Women members said the image of the board made membership attractive. A woman explained: “This board has an image that ‘we want to do a lot of things and we do them.’ We’re rather no-nonsense and are not pretentious.” Although this image may seem gender neutral, two women related it to the type of masculinity practiced by male board members in general. A woman said: “I enjoyed becoming member of a board that emphasizes content. I really don’t want to waste time on conflicts, power games and macho behavior by board members.” Possibly the image of a board as a man’s world influences the choices women make in becoming board members and may explain their (lack of) interest (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007).

The large time investment that is required for board work formed an important obstacle to becoming a member of this board. A board member described how his predecessor ‘diplomatically’ lied to him about the time required needed to do the work. When a board member left the board citing lack of time, a discussion arose, in which gender and age attributions played a role. A male board member argued:

“They (women) pull out sooner than men. We had a woman member, but a year later she quit. She had a demanding job and a family. Her husband had problems with it, he thought it was too much.” In this example the board member attributed the problems women might have with time investment to their gender while other gender-neutral solutions like limiting tasks, or increasing the number of members to share the tasks were not discussed. This implies that time consuming jobs are constructed to be more appropriate for men than women while men also find it problematic. This finding is similar to that found in the management and organizational literature as well (see for example, Acker 1990, 1992; Wacjman 1998).

Summary

Gender obviously played a role in how men and women were perceived to be an appropriate fit for board membership. Although all of the interviewed board members said gender was not an issue, the data suggest it did play a role for both the skewed and balanced boards. First, these men and women were privileged by the perceived congruencies between meanings given to board membership and position in the labor market. In general this means that more men than women are perceived to be suited for board membership, because they more often have top positions in the labor market. Second, gender played a role in selection procedures. Although these board members did not see structural obstacles that might limit women’s participation in board of governance, they tended to assume recruitment and selection procedures were gender neutral and equally accessible to men and women. Only two acknowledged that recruitment often took place through male networks. Third, a number of board members believed that affirmative action measures would not have positive results because women were unwilling to become board members and did not have the necessary time or required abilities.

Members of skewed board also did gender by relying on traditions and symbols that have different meanings for men and women. Men reacted negatively when women placed “women’s issues” such as sexual harassment and women’s lack of power on the agenda. These processes strengthen the appropriateness of men’s issues as ‘business’ and of men as members of boards of national sport associations. Yet women on skewed boards undid gender by virtue of their membership and by introducing issues related to women and women’s sport in the face of resistance.

Sport governance (and managerial work) at the national level is considered to be a high status (volunteer) job in the Netherlands (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007). Skewness and a possible change in the gender composition of a national board may therefore have different meanings for men and for women who comprise a board. Male members may prefer to maintain the social status that the skewed gender composition of a group or board provides and thus may continue to create gendered meanings that makes board membership seem inappropriate for women (cf. Yoder 1991). In this way, meanings given to gender and to a job or position may intersect to produce inclusion/exclusion. We return to this topic in the discussion.

The interviews with members of the balanced association showed that educational level and job experience played a role in the selection of new members, just as they did in the other boards. The resulting gender balance of this board may in part be due to contextual matters and may reflect the meanings and history of the sport itself. Its roots as a gender balanced student sport means that many people involved in the sport are highly educated. Since a high level of education is often a requisite for board membership, the number of women who are perceived to have leadership potential and/or have the appropriate skills may be greater than in other sports. In addition, primarily students govern this sport at the local levels. These local boards may serve as a potential training ground for the learning of governing skills and building networks. Also, the current board seemed to be aware of subtle forms of differentiation that may advantage men in selection procedures. Although tasks and duties in Dutch sport governance are often assigned on the basis of gender attributions, within this balanced board both women and men held high status positions and as such ‘undid’ gender. Yet the board members also ‘did gender’ in their discussions about the gender appropriateness of specific tasks and board membership. These results reflect Acker’s (1990) argument that the concept of a job or task is “implicitly a gendered concept, even though organizational logic presents it as gender neutral” (p. 149).

Gender Behavior

Skewed boards

The meanings given to men’s and women’s behavior in the current study seemed to interact with meanings given to the gender composition of the board. A woman board member talks about interactions:

Men interact differently with each other [than women do], and if there are more men than women, you (as a woman) have to adapt to the situation and be yourself at the same time. Having sense of humor helps a lot, being too serious does not.

Although men and women members of skewed boards tended to give similar meanings to what they defined as masculinity and femininity, men tended to say more often that the behavior of men and women in the board did not differ. For example, a man argued that: “Women work just

the same as men, they are not more thoughtful or so.” In contrast, all of the female board members and four male board members contended that differences existed; they did not necessarily think women’s input was better, but that it was different. The interviewed board members often used stereotypes to talk about men and women in general. They said women tended to be more realistic, emotional, rational, communicative and focused on consensus than were men. A man said: “Sometimes women are better in bringing the whole situation into the picture. In every committee of which I am a member, I notice women ask different questions, and have different interests.” Another man said: “Women connect better, are more focused on content, and are modest.” Male board members were described as less efficient and able to position themselves better than women. A woman said:

If you look at their way of debating, you see men repeat each other. In general, they say something that has been said by at least one other board member. Women open their mouth only if they have to say something important.

According to the respondents, men were more focused on performance, influence and power and engaged in rivalry and solidarity, competition and ‘macho behavior’ more so than did women. Three board members acknowledged men and women influenced each other’s behaviour through their interactions. Two men and one woman described how women could have a facilitating role that reduces men’s “macho behavior.” Others described how women tended to be influenced by their male colleagues and adapt to the ways in which male colleagues do and give meaning to the work. These women tried to reduce what they saw as ‘feminine’ behavior by behaving in ways that they defined as gender-neutral.

They experienced contradictions in behaviors that were expected of them. They did not want to be seen as different from their male colleagues because such differences might result in marginalization of their work. On the other hand, they were criticized if they behaved like men or were perceived to be a feminist. For example a woman was afraid she would be called “a bitch” if her attitude was perceived as being too competitive “while a man would be called ‘courageous’ in a comparable situation.” Similarly although these token women tried to avoid behaviours stereotyped as feminine, they also tried to show how their own ‘feminine’ characteristics contributed to the quality of the board. This is reflected in the following interchange between the interviewer and a woman member of a skewed board:

Woman: You must understand you are not something special just because you are the only woman in the board. Board membership is about your contribution to the sport, and in that perspective I am just like everyone else.

Interviewer: But you just said women and men behave differently.

Woman: Yes, but that has to do with their features, women are milder and they are better listeners.

These results in general are similar to the results of research conducted by Shaw and Slack (2002) and Shaw and Hoerber (2003) on meanings given to behaviors of managerial men and women in sport organizations. They found that behavior defined as feminine was undervalued, and that women were ignored when they engaged in what were seen as masculine behaviors. The researchers concluded that powerful men were positively associated with the organization, while influential women were not.

Balanced board

Male and female members of the balanced board also said that there were differences between men and women board members but thought these differences were small. A man said about women members: “There is really not much difference between qualities of their input, but there are differences in the way they raise issues and solutions.” The gender differences in behavior named by members of balanced boards were similar to those mentioned by members of skewed boards. A male member of the balanced board argued that men show more solidarity with each other while personal matters seem to play a role more often in the lives of women. “Men may tend to brag more and be unnecessarily formal.” A male board member summarized perceived gender differences:

Women communicate different than men. It is better to have a women do tasks where communication is important because they are better at avoiding conflict. So women are better at some board related tasks. For example if clubs are embroiled in conflicts, the men say: ‘Ok, we’ll visit them and tell them to listen and what they have to do,’ while the women say: ‘I would ask them what all the trouble is about, and try to dialogue with them.’ So women often tend to create a dialogue, while men tend to control and give orders.

This quotation not only describes the ways these board members make sense of behavior but also shows how meanings assigned to behavior and job appropriateness intersect. The data indicated little difference, if any, between members of skewed and balanced boards, in definitions of stereotypical gender behavior. Differences were visible, however, in the meanings given to what they saw as nonstereotypical behavior. They felt free to challenge stereotypical behavior. None of the women who were members of the balanced board thought they had to adapt to the behavior of other women or men. They could be critical if they wished. As a woman explained:

I am very liberated and a feminist. I like the men/women ratio to be equal. Some people in the board do not like that. I can give you the names of colleagues who do not agree with me at all, but I tend to emphasize this topic.

These men and women attributed stereotypical images of men and women to themselves and to each other but they also ascribed stereotypical behaviors that are often attributed to men to female board members and vice versa. A man explained that: “Women in our board are not so typical, ... these women are rather straight forward and goal oriented.”

A woman said: “Our marketing director is a counselor in his work life, he is good in creating dialogue and consensus and can be quite personal. He is quite feminine.” The next quotation of a male board member is another example of such a-typical behavior:

X is a bit older, he gets his pension, but he is really involved in this board. He relieves tension, when it arises. He has a feminine role in the board. Women are very good at that too though. They sometimes say: ‘Come on guys, back to the basics, what are we doing?’

Members of the balanced board also emphasized individual differences and attributed those to individual style rather than to gender. The following quotation illustrates this well. A man said: “There are not many differences between board members; where differences exist it is because these board members are completely different men and completely different women. They all have their own style.”

Summary

The token women participating in this study tried to avoid engaging in what they perceived to be negative stereotypical behavior associated with women and adapted to the dominant behavior styles of the men who were in the majority, that is, they tried to make themselves invisible as women. Yet they also resisted this invisibility by emphasizing the added value women can bring to a board. Thus they may have sustained and altered images of stereotypical behavior and may have challenged dominant notions about the perceived gender-appropriateness of the job of board membership.

Members of both skewed and the balanced boards stereotyped certain behaviors and abilities of board members as typical male or female. Members of the balanced board also attributed what they defined as feminine behaviors and skills to men and vice versa however. Dominant societal meanings given to gender seemed to become less rigid and challenged prevailing stereotypical expectations within the context of the balanced board.

Thus, the members of the balanced board seemed to construct and respect a diversity of meanings and challenged stereotypes. We know little however, about the extent to which these board members behaved in similar ways outside of the sport context and how they would have behaved if they had been part of a board with token women or in a different sport.

Conclusion

In this study we explored how members of Dutch national sport governing boards with various gender compositions make sense of gender and thus ‘do’ and ‘undo’ gender. The results revealed ways board members of national sport associations made sense of gender in the context of their board. Specifically, these board members used the gender composition, perceived gender appropriateness of the task/job and gendered constructions of behavior to make sense of the existing skewed and balanced gender ratios and in their sense making engaged in ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ gender. We have discussed the three themes in the previous section and will use this section to reflect on insights and implications about doing and undoing gender that emerge from these results.

Because they defined a skewed gender ratio as normal and a balanced gender ratio as unique, those who were members of a board that had a skewed gender ratio did not problematize gender skewness. They therefore tended to reproduce gender liminally and un-reflexively – that is, they were not really aware of the ways their sense making was gendered and/or did not consider gender to be an issue (Martin 2001, 2003, 2006). Martin (2003) explained that:

Liminal awareness allows men (and women, in other circumstances) to act as they please without being concerned about the effects of their behavior on others... That is, if they believe their practices are not gendered, they can honestly deny acting in a gendered way, even if others experience them as doing so (p. 356).

In contrast, those on a balanced board showed more awareness of gender composition and behaviors and noticed the results of a shift from a skewed to a balanced ratio. They seemed to be more reflective about stereotypical behavior and were able to describe behavior in oppositional stereotypical ways, that is, they ascribed behavioral stereotypes associated with women to men as well.

It is possible that although the participants were promised confidentiality, the data may be influenced by social desirability. Board membership at the national level of sport organizations is a representative task and the lack of women in these organizations has been point of discussion for a long time. Consequently, those interviewed may not have wanted to risk negative publicity and may have denied or minimized gender differences. This may mean the gendered meanings given by the interviewed are even more explicit than presented in this study.

In general, these women and men constructed the lack of women board members as a women's issue. Although some of the men did gender liminally and did little to undo gender, all of the women were aware of the gendered meanings given to skewness, to tasks and to behaviors and positioned themselves in various ways towards these meanings. The role men may have played in creating the existing skewness or skewness in general was largely ignored or not mentioned by those interviewed. Yet, the responsibility that men who were members of the balanced board took to ensure the increase of the number of women board members and to create the possibility for a woman as chair indicates that they tried to undo gender by challenging the construction of gender appropriateness. Although the balanced group did gender when they described male and female qualities, they also undid gender when they assigned stereotypical behaviors in atypical ways. Board members of the balanced group did not always create a gendered hierarchy of valued behaviors. They rarely assigned more positive qualities to men than to women. Thus hierarchical gender status seemed to play a relatively insignificant role within this board. These results differ from those reported by Knoppers et al. (1993) who found that an increase of women in a male dominated job in sport was accompanied by a greater emphasis on gender differences and stronger stereotyping. The study of Knoppers et al. focused on coaches, however, for whom the job was a career while board membership is a volunteer activity. In addition, the coaching study took place 14 years ago, gender-related behaviors and meanings may have shifted since then.

The current study also showed that the use of meanings that reinforced dominant ways of making sense of gender was not totally dependent on the composition of a group. Despite their position, token women persisted in introducing what their colleagues saw as "women's issues," the resulting policies may have altered existing meanings given to gender (see also Bratton 2005; Claringbould 2006). Kanter (1977) has shown that that tokens may react to their token status by emphasizing their achievements and qualities, and/or by minimizing their differences from the dominant group, although the latter tend to occur most often. The results in the current study show that tokens used both strategies. They did gender for example by showing the expected 'feminine' supportiveness and empathy; they affirmed gender behavior by behaving in what they perceived to be gender-neutral ways and by adapting to prevailing culture of the board. At the same time, they undid gender by accepting a position on a board where they would be tokens, by holding themselves responsible for placing what were defined as women's issues on the agenda, and by emphasizing the ways their presence contributed to board performance. In addition, they negotiated gendered meanings to increase their own professional credibility. Thus they constructed board membership as appropriate for them as women and consequently, their

board membership may have slightly altered gendered meanings assigned to membership of sport governing boards, job appropriateness and behaviors although they were tokens. These results suggest that a 'critical mass' of women that Kanter (1977) contended was required to change meanings given to gender, may not always be necessary to produce change. Possibly, their high level of education and of positions in the paid work world enabled these women to engage in these ways of sense making although this background did not exempt them from experiencing discriminatory practices. Thus although, men who were part of skewed boards in sport governance showed little interest or motivation to change the gender composition and/or to represent and empower the interests of women in sport, they were part of processes, however minimal, of undoing gender as they interacted with token women who did not totally conform to stereotypical expectations of women.

Although members of a balanced board tended to accept deviations from stereotyped behavior, our results also show how the construction and use of gender differences and stereotypes did not disappear in a situation where the gender composition was balanced. They were used in a different, more symmetrical, less status bound manner however (cf. Ridgeway 1997). Possibly there membership of a balanced group increased the awareness of these men about gender issues.

Behavior seemed to interact with the gender composition of the board as well as type of sport. Fink et al. (2003) have argued that different organizational cultures require different methods or practices to manage diversity. Inasmuch as the gender composition of boards contribute to and create different board cultures, the ways such diversity is constructed may also vary by gender composition. Yet a sole emphasis on gender composition of a board or organization and adding women to change it can mask processes of doing and undoing gender. Doing gender is not a structural or women's issue, but part of governing processes in which both men and women play a role (Shaw 2006). Acker (1990) has argued that assignment of tasks and jobs, interactions, identity management and meanings given to symbols and traditions all interact to construct gendered organizations. Thus a change in only structure (gender composition) may result in few shifts in the doing of gender on the boards of national sport associations.

The ways these boards make sense of gender also have commonalities. The point of departure of all of these board members for example, was that a man embodies the image of a board member. This use of a man as image or reference point "excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man" (Acker 1990, p. 150). It is not surprising then that the women in this study felt judged on their deviations from this image.

Although the women who were members of the balanced board seemed to have access to a wider range of behaviors, they were acutely aware of their positioning with respect to dominant meanings given to the behavior of women. The qualifications of male board members were not mentioned as an issue. Stangl and Kane (1991), who explored the skewed gender ratio in coaching, have argued that male competence needs to be questioned, including their ways of assessing competence. Collectively men are in control of the selection processes of board members and their ways of sense making define gender appropriateness of the tasks and of behaviors and become hegemonic.

The approach to the analysis in the current study was grounded in processes of sense making (Weick 1995). This approach acknowledges the agency of those involved in a specific context. The focus of most of the sense making of those interviewed was on the role of women and what women did or did not do. The results suggest however that men can play an important role in the

undoing or deconstruction of gender meanings given to tasks or behaviors. This role by high ranking men and its trickle down effects should not be underestimated. These men had a considerable amount of power in the sport world and outside of it. A male chair whose ambition is to find a woman to succeed him, sends a message that a representative and gender balanced board is the entire board's responsibility and not just that of women. Kanter (1983) calls such people 'change masters.' They use their positions to bring about change in the ways organizations make sense of gender.

Since this study is exploratory in nature, further research is needed that compares situations of varied gender composition in male dominated areas to explore the dynamics of inter-relatedness between gendered meanings given to gender ratios, tasks and behaviors and the role change masters (can) play in that.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4, 139–158.
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In A. J. Mills & P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248–262). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Acker, J. (1998). The future of 'gender and organizations': Connections and boundaries. *Gender Work and Organizations*, 5, 195–206.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Bratton, K. A. (2005). Critical mass theory revisited: The behaviour and success of token women in state legislatures. *Politics & Gender*, 1, 97–125.
- Burger, E., & Bekker, M. (1993). Leidinggevende vrouwen of vrouwelijke leidinggevenden? [Managing women or women managers?]. *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies*, 14, 42–57.
- Claringbould, I. (2006). *Vrouwen in zicht* [Women in view]. Nieuwegein, The Netherlands: Arko Sportsmedia.
- Claringbould, I., & Knoppers, A. (2007). Finding a 'normal' woman: Selection processes for board membership. *Sex Roles*, 56, 495–507.
- Deutsch, F. M. (2007). Undoing gender. *Gender & Society*, 21, 106–127.
- Doherty, A. J., & Chelladurai, P. (1999). Managing cultural diversity in sport organizations: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 13, 280–297.

- Fink, J. S., Pastore, D. L., & Riemer, H. A. (2003). Managing employee diversity: Perceived practices and organizational outcomes in NCAA division III athletic departments. *Sport Management Review*, 6, 147–168.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Kanter, R. M. (1983). *The change masters: Corporate entrepreneurs at work*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Knoppers, A., Meyer, B. B., Ewing, M., & Forrest, L. (1993). Gender ratio and social interaction among college coaches. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10, 256–260.
- Lorber, J. (2000). Using gender to undo gender: A feminist degendering movement. *Feminist Theory*, 1, 79–95.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing qualitative research* (2nd ed.) London: Sage.
- Martin, P. Y. (2001). ‘Mobilizing masculinities’: Women’s experiences of men at work. *Organization*, 8, 587–618.
- Martin, P. Y. (2003). ‘Said and done’ versus ‘saying and doing’: Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender & Society*, 17, 342–366.
- Martin, P. Y. (2006). Practicing gender at work: Further thoughts on reflexivity. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13, 254–276.
- Ott, E. M. (1989). Effects of the male–female ratio at work: Policewomen and male nurses. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13, 41–58.
- Ridgeway, C. (1997). Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 218–235.
- Rutherford, S. (2001). Organizational cultures, women managers, and exclusion. *Women in Management Review*, 16, 371–373.
- Shaw, S. (2006). Scratching the back of “Mr. X”: Analyzing gendered social processes in sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20, 510–534.
- Shaw, S., & Hoerber, L. (2003). “A strong man is direct and a direct woman is a bitch”: Gendered discourses and their influence on employment roles in sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 17, 347–375.
- Shaw, S., & Slack, T. (2002). ‘It’s been like that for donkey’s years’: The construction of gender relations and the cultures of sports organizations. *Culture, Sport, Society*, 5, 86–106.

- Sheridan, A., & Milgate, G. (2003). 'She says, he says': Women's and men's views of the composition of boards. *Women in Management Review*, 18, 147–155.
- Simpson, R. (1997). Have times changed? Career barriers and the token women manager. *British Journal of Management*, 8, S121–S130.
- Stangl, J. S., & Kane, M. J. (1991). Structural variables that offer explanatory power for the under-representation of women coaches since Title IX: The case of homologous reproduction. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8, 47–60.
- Verweel, P. (2006). Sense making in sport organizations. In A. Knoppers & A. Anthonissen (Eds.), *Making sense of diversity in organizing sport* (pp. 18–28). Oxford, UK: Meyer & Meyer.
- Wacjman, J. (1998). *Managing like a man: Women and men in corporate management*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sense making in organizations*. London: Sage.
- Wirth, L. (2004). *Breaking through the glass ceiling: Women in management*. Update 2004 Geneva: International Labour Office. Retrieved on August 9, 2006 from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/F267981337/Breaking%20Glass%20PDF%20English.pdf>.
- White, A. & Henry, I. (2004). *Women, leadership and the Olympic Movement*. Loughborough University, UK: International Olympic Committee and Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy. Retrieved November 14, 2004, from http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sses/institutes/salp/IOC_lboro_report.pdf.
- Worldwide (2007). *Worldwide guide to women in leadership*. Retrieved on October 7, 2007 from <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/>.
- Yoder, J. D. (1991). Rethinking tokenism: Looking beyond numbers. *Gender and Society*, 5, 178–192.
- Zimmer, L. (1988). Tokenism and women in the workplace: The limits of gender-neutral theory. *Social Problems*, 35, 64–77.

Chapter six

Gender Neutrality, Gender Normalcy and Gender Passivity

In the preceding chapters processes that create, strengthen and challenge gender distinctions were discussed (Claringbould, Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008). These studies revealed how gender differences are created and given meaning during interaction, how these constructions can vary by context, and how these constructions can vary by the assignment of duties and positions. In chapter 2, Elling & Claringbould (2005) gave an overall view of factors that play a role in the creation of (gender) distinctions in participation and in volunteer and paid work in sport. We discussed possible consequences of these (gender) distinctions for *processes of inclusion or exclusion*. Chapter 3 focused on exclusionary practices in sport journalism (Claringbould, Knoppers and Elling, 2004). We described four organizational processes (Acker, 1990; 1992) showing how the enactment of gender in sport journalism is layered and manifests itself at *individual, interactional, institutional and symbolic levels*. The focus of chapter 4 was on the ways new members were recruited and selected for national sport governing boards (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). We showed how gender is *negotiated in interaction* and how such interactions can strengthen and challenge gender distinction (division of labor) in these positions/boards. In chapter 5 we (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008) looked at discourses used by members of national sport governing boards composed of various gender ratios. The results indicated that gender meanings were *context dependent, changeable and paradoxical*, as they varied across gender ratio. Together these studies demonstrated how gendered meanings given to positions of leadership in sport are reinforced and challenged, either implicitly or explicitly, and how these meanings are linked to processes of inclusion and exclusion in the contexts under study. The results illustrate and corroborate Connell's (2005) contention that the overwhelming majority of top office-holders are men because there is a gender configuring of recruitment and promotion, of the internal division of labor and systems of control, of policy-making, and of practical routines and ways of mobilizing pleasure and consent (p. 73).

As is described in Chapter 1, we used a research perspective that provides insight into the construction and reconstruction of gender in organizational processes. Acker contended that four organizational processes play an essential role in the construction and reconstruction of gender and play a role in maintaining and challenging gender inequality: 1) identity constructions, 2) division of labor, and 3) construction of meanings and symbols, that are defined in 4) interaction. Although these processes can be distinguished from each other analytically, in reality they overlap and intersect and reinforce, reproduce or challenge exclusionary practices. In this chapter we attempt to explain how these processes may intersect and work together to support various discursive practices. 'Discursive practices' refer to ways our participants drew on discourses in (collective) interactions with each other and their organizations. We analyze the results uncovered by the four studies by answering the question: how do dominant meaning constructions that emerged in these studies play a role *in maintaining* gender distinction? We used the results of the various studies as 'data' and looked for themes that showed how the gender status quo was maintained by those participating in these studies. Three discursive practices emerged from this analysis: gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity. The next step was to ground these practices in Acker's (1990; 1992) perspective to make visible

the impact, complexity and layeredness of these three discursive practices. In the previous chapters we focused on perspectives identified by Acker as if they were separate entities. In this chapter we attempt to bring them together to explore how the use of discursive practices may be a result of and/or work to strengthen and/or challenge these processes.

Gender Neutrality as a Discursive Practice

Those participating in these studies often perceived organizational processes as gender-neutral practices. Specifically, these women and men often assumed that gender did not play a role in organizational processes and that men and women had equal opportunities in every respect. Yet each study revealed hidden gender practices and (sub) structures sustained by a discourse of gender neutrality.

The Discourse of Gender Neutrality in Relation to Division of Labor

According to those involved, the meanings that are attached to the work of sports journalist and board members of national sport organizations were gender neutral. However, these meanings influenced the gender ratio and division of positions of men and women in sports organizations. For example, positions in sports journalism and sports governance were constructed as irregular and time-consuming occupations/activities. This was seen as a gender-neutral practice although it influenced men and women differently. For example, those involved said that women in sport journalism could not cover some sport events because they could not afford to be away from home for a long period of time. The position was constructed as one that required time investment that could not readily be combined with childcare. Thus, implicitly, individuals who appeared to be unable to adjust to the required time investment, mostly women, were excluded. The perceived gender neutrality constructed this as women's choice. Similarly many male and female board members assumed that the methods of recruitment and selection they used, were gender neutral (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). Board members felt that criteria that emphasized 'quality' should be decisive in the selection of a new board member. Generally, however, recruitment and selection processes took place through male networks and as a result the chances of finding a woman who 'fit' decreased. Thus, selection and hiring were based on gendered ideas and expectations about the performance of journalists and board members. As a result the existing division of labor was reproduced. Labeling these processes as gender neutral meant ignoring that they favored men.

The Discourse of Gender Neutrality in Relation to Gender Meaning.

Many of those involved in these studies, especially men, labeled their work as gender neutral. For example, many male sports journalists (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2004) defined their profession as neutral with regard to gender and ethnicity.¹ They argued that an increase in the number of women and ethnic minorities in sports journalism would not influence the profession or the content of sport coverage. They assumed that they themselves reported and covered sport in gender-neutral manner and associated this neutrality with professionalism. These journalists made clear that their ideas about how the work should be done was incongruent with the associations they had about the way women and ethnic minorities covered sport. Male journalists questioned the quality of the coverage of men's sports such as soccer by female journalists. In other words, they thought women often were unable to give meaning to their work in a gender-neutral manner (like men did). These results are similar to

those found by Pfister (2006) and Hovden (2006) in their research on leadership positions in Danish and Norwegian sports organizations. They found that the images of the ideal leader were considered gender neutral although the characteristics that described the ideal leader were associated with a highly desirable form of masculinity (cf. Connell, 2005). In this way the so-called gender neutral definitions of functions implicitly shaped gender distinction in public and private domains. Discursive practices of gender neutrality influenced identity work as well.

The Discourse of Gender Neutrality in Relation to Identity Work

Acker (1990) described 'identity work' as a process in which people learn what their position is and what kind of behavior is expected of them. As a rule women journalists and board members tried to adjust to their context, which they labeled as gender neutral (Claringbould, Knoppers & Elling, 2004, Claringbould, Knoppers, 2007). By so doing they complied with a profile that is more often labeled masculine than gender neutral or feminine. In spite of this, women holding positions on sports boards seemed to believe they employed a gender-neutral stance. If they actively disrupted the discourse of gender neutrality by behaving in what were considered feminine and/or feminist ways, they risked not being taken seriously. Although women were often aware of (constructed) gender differences, they tried to adopt a gender-neutral stance that implicitly referred to practices associated with male identities. This paradoxical situation did not seem to apply to men. White male journalists, for example, assumed that they adopted a gender-neutral stance: they contended that work or recruitment and selection methods were not influenced by ethnicity and/or gender. These men evaluated the work done by women and ethnic minorities on the basis of their ability to adjust to these so-called gender-neutral ways of working. This also meant that they did not feel responsible for the absence of women and ethnic minorities in positions in sport.

Discussion

This dominance of discursive practices of gender neutrality occurs in both sport and non-sport organizations. Acker (1990) too has argued that "gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender" (p. 146). Hovden (1999) who found similar results in her study of selection procedures for national sport committees and board membership, concluded that the dominant constructions of meanings in many organizations are not only hegemonically gendered, but so self evident as well, that they are labeled gender neutral. She argued that many organizations employ a dominant image of an organization as a rational and purposeful system. In such organizations both women and men who comply with the required qualifications of rationality and purposefulness can fulfill high-level positions. Even so, men tend to be associated with these qualifications more often than women are.

Acker (1998) has argued that the reproduction of assumed gender neutrality is far reaching and is reflected, not only in hiring and recruitment procedures but also in evaluations of performance. Evaluations are assumed to deal with the way functions are performed and not with the people who give meaning to these functions. Thus functions can be rationalized and standardized and supposedly separated and abstracted from those who hold it. As a result, a function can be represented as gender neutral. Employees who hold such so-called gender neutral positions are assumed to give work a central place in their lives and to have a partner or care-giver who takes on the care duties, or they have a household where there are few care

duties. Based on the definition of the functions women often have to adjust to a perceived 'gender-neutral' concept that actually, privileges many men. Obviously there is a discrepancy between ways in which members of an organizations regard their own organization and describe themselves as gender neutral and the reality of an organization that reproduces forms of male dominance in organizational structures (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Connell & Wood, 2005). The power of discursive practices of gender neutrality seem to lie primarily in the denial of gender distinction in organizational processes, in the preference for images and definitions that favor males and also in the denial of the negative effects of this assumed neutrality on the organization and on the identity work of individual men and women. The practices related to discourse of gender neutrality are complex because they are part of organizational processes and influence individual identities. Moreover, gender neutrality is strengthened through discursive practices of gender normalcy and gender passivity.

Gender Normalcy as a Discursive Practice

Gender normalcy is a discursive practice in which gender inequality is recognized, accepted and considered normal. The results of the various studies described in this dissertation indicated that the existence of gender inequality was often considered self-evident and 'normal' (Claringbould, Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). In contrast, gender equality was considered a unique and exceptional situation (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008). Two perceptions of gender normalcy emerged from the four studies. One refers to the perceived normalcy of a skewed distribution in the number of men and women in an organization, governing board, department or situation. The other refers to duties and functions that are ascribed to men or women. These two perceptions of gender normalcy are interconnected, because for example, if a certain position is held by men more than by women, then it is often thought that the work involved is typically men's work, and vice versa.

The Discourse of Gender Normalcy in Relation to Division of Labor

The skewed proportion of women to men was considered 'normal' amongst board members and journalists. For example, women found it 'normal' to be the only woman at a gathering while men found it 'normal' to be in the majority. This 'normalcy' meant that those involved usually saw no reason to alter the situation. For example, female board members found the skewed proportion in sport governance so normal that they thought they did not fit in very well in a this setting because such positions were considered 'men's work'. Similarly, male board members also considered this situation and their ways of recruiting new board members as normal and concluded that generally women did not aspire to be member of a national sport governing board.

Another discourse of gender normalcy refers to the kind of duties that are allocated to men and women. This normalcy is linked to other social positions, be they paid or unpaid. For example, household and care duties were to a large extent defined as 'normal' female activities. This broader context of gender normalcy was incorporated by both selection committees as well as men and women in their considerations to be a board member or to hold a position in sports journalism. It was assumed to be self evident or normal that a man with young children would attend meetings at irregular times, while this was not considered normal for women working in positions of leadership in sport. Existing societal stereotypes about the assignment of tasks

between men and women (gender normalcy) can therefore maintain existing gender inequality in patterns of labor (division of labor).

The Discourse of Gender Normalcy in Relation to Gender Meanings

Discursive practices of gender normalcy were expressed in the ways in which duties and behaviors were constructed. The meanings given to positions that were part of these studies were gender related and were considered 'normal'. For example, it was considered normal that a man chaired the board. Not one of the sport organizations that were part of the study had a woman as chair. Some thought it normal that women would engage in stereotypic behavior. Similarly male board members or journalists defined their own stereotypic way of working/interacting as 'normal.' For example, some of the men in these studies thought the use of misogynist jokes was normal. Such constructions of normalcy occur in many organizations. Bryans and Mavin (2003) found that men thought that such jokes were relatively unimportant and/or a normal part of organizational life while women were more often negative about the telling of such jokes. Similarly, sport journalists thought that their privileged access to male sport stars and their ways of working were normal. Yet although they used their gender to gain such access, they blamed their female colleagues for using their 'femininity' to obtain information. The hegemony of gender-laden privileges was probably the reason why few men were aware of this discursive practice of gender normalcy. Yet this lack of awareness of this discursive practice of normalcy can play an important role in its maintenance (see also Martin, 2003 for further examples of this point) and is also related to identity work.

The Discourse of Gender Normalcy in Relation to Identity Work

The hegemonic discourse of gender normalcy also shaped the identity work of men and women participating in these studies. Many women, especially those in settings where the gender ratio was skewed engaged in identity work by avoiding or ignoring expressions of gender normalcy. They had to use strategies of avoidance or ignore comments time and time again in order to function 'well.' This may seem to be an effective way of dealing with a situation, but it does not change or shift dominant meanings so that they remain 'normal'. Yet what was constructed as normal varied by context. A different discourse of normalcy was constructed by the balanced board (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008). Here it was considered normal that more women served on a board. Consequently the identity work of these members was less gender laden. Thus the what was seen as 'gender normal' informed the ways these journalists and board members engaged in identity work.

Discussion

The perceived normalcy of skewed gender ratios in positions in sports journalism or on sports governance has consequences that go beyond meaning constructions in the organization in which they occur. McGuire (2002) has contended that the use of informal networks to offer mutual services and to pass on relevant information while others are excluded creates a 'shadow' structure in an organization and advantage those who already hold privileged positions. To a large extent the positions that are considered important are related to men and the less important positions to women (see also Ridgeway, 1997). At the structural level, the normalcy of men holding high-level positions in sport governance can contribute to the gendering of influence and authority in sport organizations. At the individual level a self-selection of women may occur who are able to identify with the male image of managerial functions (self-inclusion) or who are

of the opinion that they would not serve comfortably on a board where male dominance (numerically and culturally) is considered normal (self exclusion). Generally, people prefer situations or positions in which gender qualifications are expressed that coincide or at least are not at variance with what they consider normal for their own (categorical) gender (Maringiu & Ekehammar, 2000).

Discursive practices of gender normalcy in sports journalism, for example, mean that what the public receives as 'normal sports news coverage', is in fact biased coverage, because men's sports dominate and because both women's sports as well as men's sports are primarily seen, heard or read from the perspective of male journalists. Similarly, a male majority takes important decisions that affect practically all members of a sport organization even when the number of women and men athletes is similar in a sport organization. It is questionable whether the discourse of gender normalcy can be legitimized from a democratic perspective, if dominant gender meanings cannot be challenged and/or alternative meanings are ignored or partly or entirely excluded.

Gender Passivity as a Discursive Practice

The discursive practice of gender passivity also played an important role in the construction and reconstruction of gender in the sport organizations under study. These board members and journalists took relatively little responsibility for changing meanings given to gender or to gender inequality. They were mostly against positive action policy, for example, but did not look for alternatives. Since any form of passive behavior constructs meanings (sometimes unintentionally) about the object of its passivity, the discursive practice of passivity can be interpreted as an active contribution to exclusionary and inclusionary practices that emerge from the four organizational processes as described in the various studies (cf. Acker, 1990; 1992). Therefore, men and women who played an active role in reproducing gender, can be labeled as practicing gender passivity when their discursive practices worked to reinforce the gendered status quo. Their passivity can be seen as a form of resistance to changing situations.

The Discourse of Gender Passivity in Relation to Division of Labor

Sport journalists and board members often engaged in a discourse of gender passivity. For example, relatively little use was made of positive action programs despite pressure from outside to change the situation (such as governmental emancipation policies and the guidelines of the International Olympic Committee). In addition, other matters were assumed to be more important than changing the gender ratio. No other formal policies were instituted to deal with skewed gender ratios so that change was dependent on individual rather than collective action. Similarly, board members filled vacancies via recruitment and selection methods they were used to, instead of actively looking for methods to attract female members. This discursive practice of passivity therefore reproduced the skewed gender ratio and thus contributed to the gendered division of labor.

These board members and journalists also engaged in passivity when they refused to make structural changes that would accommodate the lives of many women (and possibly some men) with respect to working hours or meeting schedules. As a consequence here too the opportunities in selection procedures were greater for men than for women (see Claringbould, Knoppers, 2007) so that the existing division of labor was maintained.

The Discourse of Gender Passivity Related to Gender Meanings

In the sport organizations investigated in this dissertation, the discourse of gender passivity was expressed in different ways. For example, when gender issues or positive action policy were put forward, incumbent board members in particular, supplied ‘persuasive’ arguments that made it clear that measures were unnecessary (Claringbould, Knoppers, 2007). They legitimized their gender passivity by assuming that qualified women were difficult to find or nonexistent, that women were not interested in being part of national sport boards and that men and women have equal opportunities (gender neutrality). Others legitimized their gender passivity by assigning themselves insufficient influence and/or knowledge to effect change in the situation, or by arguing that changes would happen by itself. Such legitimizing enabled them to engage in gender passivity and not to feel responsible for changing the existing situation or gender meanings.

In their work as board members and as sports journalists women engaged in gender passivity when they were reluctant to introduce themes that were related to the position of women or seen as ‘women’s issues’ and when they ignored unwanted macho behavior. In so doing, they contributed to the maintenance of existing dominant gender meanings.

This gender passivity of not always raising ‘women’s issues’ was also related to context. Women in a ‘balanced’ group seemed to be more willing and/or found it less difficult to take up an active position on gender or to raise subjects related to the position of women (Claringbould, Knoppers, 2007). The composition of a group, therefore may have played an important role in the reinforcing and challenging of dominant meanings created by gender passivity. We return to this point further on.

The Discourse of Gender Passivity in Relation to Identity Work

The discursive practice of gender passivity influenced gender identity work in various ways. The identity work of men participating in these studies tended to be liminally passive. Martin (2006) describes this as a man’s knowledge of the postures, gestures and practices associated with ‘acting like a man’ (or woman) [that] is below the level of full consciousness; it is liminal. He can do them; he cannot verbally express them. A practical effect of this situation is that he routinely and more or less constantly does things associated with ‘acting like a man’ without reflecting upon them (p. 261).

With the exception of some of the men on the balanced sport governing board, most of the men in these studies could be described as engaging in passive gender identity work.

In contrast, women journalists and board members often adjusted to male-identified constructions of competitiveness, rivalry and (sexually tinted) jokes that at times dominate their work setting. They tended to do so silently to avoid confrontations with their male colleagues. They thought that they had to fight in order to effect change and were not prepared to do so. Women board members also tended to behave as if they were ‘one of the boys’ or conversely, took up an ‘invisible’ stance so as not to disturb the working of the board. These women were grateful for their position and want to avoid creating a stir at all cost by raising ‘women’s’ issues. Thus they seemed to identify with the majority (of men).

Discursive practices for gender passivity related to the identity work of women did not stand alone but were closely aligned with identity work embedded in practices of gender normalcy. The dominant organizational culture in sport governance and in journalism limited these women in pursuing their ambition or reduced that ambition. Paradoxically they felt as if they were limited in their use of qualities that constructed them as different from the majority group, so

that only parts of their identities could emerge that were congruent with that of the majority. As a result, those aspects through which they might have been able to distinguish themselves from the majority were denied or ignored (see also Shaw, 2006). These results are not unique to sport. For example, Bradshaw & Wicks (2000), in a study of women on corporate boards in Canada, found that members of a minority group tended to express their point of view only when it was congruent with the views of the majority.

Discussion

These findings are not unique to sport or to the Netherlands. The results reflect those of studies of Danish and Norwegian sports organizations. Pfister (2006) and Hovden (2006) found that the contexts within which decisions about selection procedures were taken, were not discussed and that managers legitimized the lack of female members by emphasizing the willingness of men and unwillingness of women. Thus organizational structures and cultures remained the same. This discursive practice of passivity also emerged in research conducted outside of sport. For example, Mattis (1993) in a study of women directors on boards of major U.S. companies found that they were reluctant to place matters on the agenda that relate to the skewed gender ratio or to what were defined as women's issues. Thus the discursive practice of passivity is collectively practiced in various contexts and prevents change from occurring. It is of course, closely linked to discursive practices of neutralist and normalcy.

Intersections of Discursive Practices of Gender Neutrality, Gender Normalcy and Gender Passivity

The discursive practices of gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity were interwoven in these various contexts under study. While the strength of the discourse of gender neutrality lay in the denial of male hegemony, the power of the discourse of gender normalcy was in the acceptance of male hegemony as normal. This hegemony was strengthened by the fact that originally sport was organized for men and leadership positions in sport were first held exclusively by men (Messner, 1988). Thus both sport and functions within it were constructed on the basis of what was meaningful and important to men (who tended to have a high social class background, were part of the ethnic majority and claimed heterosexual identities). Both the discourse of gender neutrality and that of gender normalcy presupposed and legitimized a discourse of gender passivity.

Together these discursive practices produced and reproduced the various organizational processes as described by Acker (1990). Specifically, they strengthened implicit and explicit gender meanings through which positional, material and social forms of power inequality between men and women were created. For example, the three discourses were manifest in selection procedures of new candidates for a sport governing board: by assuming that the opportunities for men and women were equal (discourse of gender neutrality), by assuming that it is normal that primarily men govern sport (discourse of gender normalcy) and by dismissing affirmative action policy for female candidates or not wanting to make an effort to recruit female candidates (discourse of gender passivity). Also, one of these practices can emerge from each other. Gender normalcy can lead to or reinforce practices of gender neutrality and gender passivity when, for example, one-sided reporting by journalists is considered so normal that they are not even aware of it and they are, therefore, convinced that they are acting in a gender

neutral fashion. The outcome of this could be that they do not consider it necessary to alter the situation, which would point to a discourse of gender passivity. Thus discursive practices of gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity created through social interaction can strengthen division of labor, gendered meanings and identity work. These results seem to suggest that since both men and women (re)produce gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity, existing meanings attached to gender (inequality) in these contexts will change very slowly even when more women were to occupy positions of leadership in sport.

Resisting and Disrupting Discursive Practices of Gender Neutrality, Gender Normalcy and Gender Passivity

Just like most hegemonic discursive practices, those described above are not total (cf. Connell, 2002;2005). Hegemony is always fluid and often challenged, as the results indicated. On the one hand, discourses of gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity contributed to a social structure and a cultural setting within which male dominance was maintained. On the other hand, the results also revealed moments of disruption (see also, Bratton, 2005; Mattis, 2000). In the next section we describe how moments of resistance to these discursive practices resulted in changes in the dominance of gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity. Although these practices could be distinguished from each other despite their overlap, such distinctions cannot be made when we discuss disruptions to these practices. Disruptions to passivity also mean disruptions of perceptions of neutrality and normalcy. Thus we discuss these disruptions in their entirety below.

Different strategies were deployed to challenge these practices. While some individuals addressed gender aspects directly, others first were silent and then addressed gender-related issues at what they saw as appropriate moments. For example, a woman, who was invited to sit on a committee to stimulate a women's sport, was aware that this was a rare opportunity and decided to ignore the fact that she would be a token woman. Although the discursive practice of neutrality dominated sport journalism, most female sports journalists in the current study, however, experienced little gender neutrality in their work and instead, preferred a shift towards gender normalcy. Furthermore, they were aware much more often than their male colleagues of ways in which gender differences were created and given meanings. They assumed that the presence of women would definitely influence sport and sports reporting and result in 'neutrality'. On the whole, women in these studies were more aware than men of discursive practices of gender neutrality and at times challenged them and at other times stayed silent (passivity). Occasionally men challenged both normalcy and neutrality discourse as well for example by challenging the perceived neutrality of recruiting procedures and actively recruiting women for high level positions.

Board members and journalists who were part of these studies at times also negotiated discursive practices of gender normalcy and thus challenged passivity. Although many women often exercised restraint in addressing 'women's issues', it were mainly women who placed these issues on the agenda. Such issues included sexual harassment, the development of women's sport (competition) and the position of men and women on (national and international) sport boards.

The context of a setting was also a source of disruption for discursive practices of gender normalcy and neutrality. For example, members of a gender balanced board ascribed qualities

constructed as female to men and vice versa. Thus they disrupted dominant understandings of gender allowing alternative gender images and meanings to emerge. Furthermore, in a setting such as that of the balanced board, men and women could more easily engage in behavior that was not congruent with what was considered gender-normal (stereotypical) outside the immediate environment. This resulted in a reframing of gendered identity work. Schmitt and Branscombe (2007) who investigated identity constructions of minority groups, concluded that when somebody belongs to a minority group, they compare themselves to others and when this coincides with their own situation, then they consider themselves 'normal'. However, when this is not the case it can exert an influence on their sense of identity. Dependent on the context it can either give them the feeling that they do not quite fit into a certain situation (with regard to gender composition or position), or it can give them the feeling to fit, because within the context it is normal being different.

The discursive practice of passivity was challenged by those who were not only convinced that the gender ratio needed to be changed but also thought of and/or implemented strategies to realize that change and thus disrupt the ideas of normalcy. For example, an entire board lobbied local clubs to ensure that a woman member became part of an international board. Some board members challenged gender passivity by recruiting new members through other channels than the usual ones and by accepting or encouraging heterogeneity in perspectives and identities.

Discussion

The data therefore contained examples of sports journalists and board members who disrupted these practices and thus shifted meanings in various settings. Several women and men were able to make a difference in their way of working and did not always engage in discursive practices of gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity. Thus they challenged existing stereotypes, ways of interacting, the division of labor and, dominant gender images. Joshi and Jackson (2003) found similar results in gender-related changes on boards of directors outside of sport. They concluded that a policy of diversity is barely effective at the structural level if this is not supported by (influential) senior members of organizations on the board. Similarly, in the current studies, conditions under which disruptions occurred were related to the influence and power of individual board members and journalists, the appreciation for and encouragement of (individual) women and of differences in perspectives and insight, and the will and the conviction to effect change. The use of Acker's (1990) theory of gender and organizations revealed the complexity and layeredness of gendered discursive practices. It gave a theoretical framework for understanding different gender gaps in sport journalism and in positions of leadership in sports organizations. The focus on the discursive practices that incorporate and are a result of these processes has permitted a more holistic picture to emerge. This dissertation offers insight into the question how gender can lead to an organizational structure in which gender inequality is normal, self-evident, unavoidable or even practically invisible and how these discursive practices could be challenged. Currently many women working in sport are confronted with glass ceilings and glass walls whose existence of actual ceilings and walls are denied (gender neutrality). At the same time, individuals are expected to respect these walls and ceilings (gender normalcy), which imply the gendered processes are often a taboo that should not be discussed. In addition, gender passivity ensures that serious efforts to change gender inequality do not always take place. This is probably not unique to the sports sector in the Netherlands. Various researchers (Connell, 2005; Martin, 2003; McGuire 2002; Ridgeway, 1997; Risman, 2004; Shaw, 2006) have shown that existing gender inequality in organizational

hierarchies, also outside the world of sport and outside the Netherlands, is based on processes that often go partly or entirely unnoticed. Some of these have already been discussed in this chapter.

Concluding Remarks

Although the major focus of this study is gender, we acknowledge that other social power relations such as social class, ethnicity and sexuality also marked and colored the position of those participating in the various studies. Almost all our informants were white with a European heritage and highly educated. Further research is needed to explore how these regimes of inequality intersect to produce this homogeneity and possibly, a white upper class dominance. Similar studies need to be conducted that explore constructions of other subordinate groups that have been excluded from positions of leadership in sport organizations (cf. Verweel, 2007) and how such constructions are embedded in organizational processes and practices. As Risman (2004) argued with respect to changes in processes of exclusion: "...the 'how' is important because without knowing the mechanisms, we cannot intervene" (p. 435). We point out that untangling the 'how' and disrupting such processes and practices with respect to other social relations may be complex because, with the exception of certain settings, generally women do not constitute a minority group in society or in sport participation. Yet this dissertation revealed how they are systematically excluded because of meanings given to gender. This could mean that changing meaning constructions with regard to other forms of inequality is even more difficult. It may be simpler to ignore a group when it not only has a lower status position, but also forms a minority. Similarly, the white European way of constituting organizational processes and practices may be 'more' hegemonic than those uncovered in this study about gender. Little research, exists that has explored the complexity, intersection, influence and power of meanings given to gender, ethnicity and class in organizational structures and in identity work through interactions.ⁱⁱ Therefore, further research is needed that can identify and describe the contours of these organizational processes and their resulting discursive practices that work to exclude those who are marginalized and/or subordinated on basis of discursive practices and processes pertaining to ethnicity, sexual preference and social class and how these manifest themselves in sport organizations..

We hope that these results challenge organizational members, journalists, managers, board members and directors in sport to pay attention to the question of how dominant meanings can be reconstructed and how this influences practices and decisions at all organizational levels. Those wishing to explore or dismantle asymmetrical gender or other social relations in organizations in general, and in sports organizations in particular, could begin by identifying the contours of these discursive practices and subsequently locating them in their respective organizational processes.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*, 139-158.
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. In A. J. Mills & P. Tancred (Eds.), *Gendering organizational analysis* (pp. 248-262). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Acker, J. (2005). *Class questions: Feminist answers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Anthonissen, A. & Verweel, P. (2005). New questions concerning managing diversity in sport. *The Cyprus Journal of Sciences, 3*, 83 -102.
- Bradshaw, P. & Wicks, D. (2000). The experiences of white women in corporate boards in Canada In: R.J. Burke & M.C. Mattis, *Women on corporate boards of directors: International challenges and opportunities* (pp. 19-212). Dordrecht, The Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Bryans, P. & Mavin, S. (2003). Women learning to become managers: Learning to fit in or to play a different game? *Management learning, 34*, 111-134.
- Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. & Elling, A. (2004). Exclusionary practices in sport journalism, *Sex Roles, 51*, 709-718.
- Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. (2007). Finding a 'normal' woman: Selection processes for board membership, *Sex Roles 56*, 495-507.
- Claringbould, I. & Knoppers, A. (2008). Doing and undoing gender in sport governance. *Sex Roles, 57*, 81-92.
- Collinson, D.L. & Hearn, J. (Eds.) (1996). *Men as Managers, Managers as Men, Critical Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Managements*, London, Sage.
- Connell, R.W. (2002). *Gender*. Malden, MA, Polity Press/Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. 2nd. Cambridge, Polity Press; Sydney, Allen & Unwin; Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Connell, R.W. & Wood, J. (2005). Globalization and business Masculinities, *Men and Masculinities, 7*, 347-364.
- Elling, A. & Claringbould, I. (2005). Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: Who can and wants to belong? *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*, 498-515.

- Hovden, J. (2006). The gender order as a policy issue in sport: A study of Norwegian sports organizations. *NORA, Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 14 (1), 41-53.
- Joshi, A. & Jackson, S.E. (2003). Managing workforce diversity to enhance cooperation in organizations (p. 277-296). In: M.A. West, D. Tjosvold, K.G. Smith (eds.), *International handbook of organizational teamwork and cooperative working*. West Sussex, U.K., John Wiley & Sons.
- Marongiu, S. & Ekehammar, B. (2000). A gender perspective on Person-Manager fit and managerial advancement. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 41, 175-180.
- Martin, P.Y. (2003). 'Said and done' versus 'saying and doing': Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender & Society*, 17, 342-366.
- Martin, P.Y. (2006). Practicing gender at work: Further thoughts on reflexivity. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13, 254-276.
- Mattis, M.C. (1993). Women directors: Progress and opportunities for the future, *Business & the Contemporary World*, Summer, 140-156.
- Mattis, M.C. (2000). Women corporate directors in the United States. In: R.J. Burke & M.C. Mattis, *Women on corporate boards of directors: International challenges and opportunities* (p. 43-56). Dordrecht, The Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- McGuire, G.M. (2002). Gender, race, and the shadow structure; A study of informal networks and inequality in a work organization. *Gender & Society*, 16 (3), 303-322.
- Messner, M. (1988). Sport and male domination: The female athlete as contested ideological terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5, 197-211.
- Pfister, G. (2006). Gender issues in Danish sports organizations; experiences, attitudes and evaluations. *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 14 (1), 27-40.
- Ridgeway, C. (1997). Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 218-235.
- Risman, B.J. (2004). Gender as a social structure, theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & Society*, 18 (4), 429-450.
- Schmitt, M.T. & Branscombe, N. R. (2002). The meaning and consequences of perceived discrimination in disadvantaged and privileged social groups. In: W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.) *European review of Social Psychology*, 12, 167-199.
- Verweel, P. (2007). *Respect in en door sport*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SWP.

Notes

ⁱ Although the focus of these discursive practices concern gender, we occasionally refer to ethnicity as well since this social relation was also part of two chapters.

ⁱⁱ Exceptions are Acker, 2005; Anthonissen & Verweel.

Chapter seven

Summary

Mind the Gap: The Layered Reconstruction of Gender in Sport Related Organizations

Most sports are structured by gender resulting in sex segregation by sport. This formal division of an activity based on gender is unique in sport, in contrast paid and volunteer work in sport are *not* formally segregated by gender. Qualified men and women may engage in this work regardless of sport. Yet, vertical and horizontal gender segregation also occurs in this work; the higher the level of competition or committee membership, the fewer the number of women represented in positions of leadership and more men than women are involved in paid and volunteer jobs. So although men and women participate in similar numbers in sport, there is still a gender gap in positions of leadership.

The goal of this dissertation is therefore to explore this gender gap and specifically to show how organizational processes may contribute to the construction of genderⁱ in sport related organizations and how this may impact processes of inclusion and exclusion in (volunteer and paid) sport work.

The first chapter shows ways in which gender inequality occurs in the organization of sport in the Netherlands. These findings are used to legitimize this study. In addition the chapter describes a theoretical perspective that can reveal the layeredness, dynamics and complexity of social processes and give insight into the (re)construction of gender. The sociological perspectives described in this chapter are used in different ways in the following chapters. A different dimension of the construction of 'the gender gap' in sport-related organizations is highlighted in each of the ensuing chapters.

Chapter two contains a literature review about processes of inclusion and exclusion in sport organizations such as in club membership, and in volunteer work at various levels. These processes of inclusion and exclusion are organized along lines of gender, ethnicity, validity/ableness, social class and sexual preference and are unique to each social relation. The literature review study shows the complexity of processes of inclusion and exclusion and the need for more empirical research on how these processes take place.

Chapter three is an empirical exploration of ways in which we use a perspective on organizational processes, as described by Acker to examine how sport journalists give meaning to gender and ethnicity that result in the inclusion and exclusion of social groups. The results reveal the layeredness of meanings given to gender and ethnicity and their impact at individual and institutional levels. Although sport journalists are convinced men and women have equal opportunities to become sport journalists, dominant images about the suitability of women and ethnic minorities to be sport journalists suggest otherwise.

Chapter four emphasizes various interaction processes that are used by organizational members to create and negotiate gender. The empirical study is based on interviews with board members

at the top level of sport organizations about selection procedures for new board members. Recruitment and selection procedures are places where the negotiation about the 'fit' of new members takes place. The recruitment and selection policies of these boards directly impact the status quo of gender inequality in volunteer work in sport organizations. The results provide evidence that the ways, in which these procedures occur, reinforce male dominance of these boards. Board members contribute to this process by negating women-friendly policies or refusing adaptations and by continuing to use their own 'old boys' networks to recruit new board members. Female candidates tend to adapt to the dominant male profile but also negotiate images and stereotypes about their managerial qualities.

Although chapter four seems to present a rather homogenous picture of gender construction by top-level committees in sport, chapter five provides more heterogeneous constructions of gender. This empirical study contributes insight into the contextuality, changeability and paradoxality of gender meanings by exploring the ways national sport governing boards negotiate gender with skewed or balanced gender ratios.

The last chapter reviews the previous empirical chapters. I use an analysis of the similarities found in these chapters to explore the entrenchment of the gender gap. I discuss three dominant discursive practices that provide insight into this entrenchment: gender neutrality, gender normalcy and gender passivity. Gender neutrality denies the existence of gender differences, gender normalcy constructs gender differences as normal and gender passivity is a practice used to avoid taking responsibility for changing the gendering of these positions. This analysis also gives insight into how these dominant discursive practices may be challenged to create room for gender (and ethnicity) diversity. Those who wish to change these practices can use these insights to do so.

ⁱ Only chapter three pays attention to the reconstruction of gender and ethnicity.

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Mind the Gap: de gelaagde reconstructie van gender in sportgerelateerde organisaties

In de meeste sporten bestaat een formele scheiding tussen mannen en vrouwen, die tot uitdrukking komt in de sportbeoefening en in de beoordeling van prestaties. Deze formele scheidslijn is vrij uniek in de maatschappij. Sport(kader)functies zijn formeel echter niet op dezelfde manier gescheiden, iedereen kan in principe een sport(kader)functie vervullen, wanneer diegene daar de juiste kwalificaties voor heeft. Toch is het opvallend dat ook in sport(kader)functies duidelijke scheidslijnen zichtbaar zijn. Er is sprake van een verticale segregatie; hoe hoger het niveau van de trainings- of bestuursfuncties in de sport, hoe kleiner het percentage vrouwen dat erin vertegenwoordigd is. Bovendien is sprake van een horizontale segregatie; mannen domineren in het vervullen van sportfuncties. Ook de bredere sportcontext, zoals bijvoorbeeld de sportjournalistiek, is in belangrijke mate een mannendomein. Ondanks dat vrouwen en mannen in vrijwel gelijke mate sport beoefenen, kan gesproken worden van een ‘gender gap’ in de sport. Het doel van deze dissertatie is gericht op het verschaffen van inzicht in processen die bijdragen aan de reconstructie van genderⁱⁱ in sportgerelateerde organisaties en hoe dit kan bijdragen aan in- en uitsluiting van mannen en vrouwen in sport(kader)functies.

Het eerste hoofdstuk biedt inzicht in hoe genderongelijkheid zichtbaar is in de organisatie van sport in Nederland. Hiermee wil ik eveneens verder onderzoek naar genderconstructies legitimeren. Vervolgens biedt het hoofdstuk een theoretisch kader waarin recht wordt gedaan aan de complexiteit en dynamiek van sociale processen en dat gebruikt kan worden om inzicht te krijgen in (re-)constructies van gender. Dit theoretisch kader biedt sociologische perspectieven, die gehanteerd worden in de verschillende hoofdstukken die volgen. Elk van deze hoofdstukken draagt op eigen wijze bij aan het verschaffen van inzicht in de constructie van ‘the gender gap’.

Hoofdstuk twee gaat op basis van een literatuurstudie, in op processen van in- en uitsluiting in sportorganisaties, zoals het (niet) lid worden van een club, het (niet) willen en kunnen vervullen van een functie of het gevoel hebben er (niet) bij te horen. Deze processen van in- en uitsluiting zijn georganiseerd langs lijnen van gender, etniciteit, validiteit, klasse en seksuele voorkeur, maar zijn doorgaans ook persoonlijk en niet eenduidig. Bovendien zijn mensen zich niet altijd bewust van processen van in- en uitsluiting, of van hun eigen bijdrage hieraan. Het onderzoek laat zien hoe complex processen van in- en uitsluiting zijn, en het vraagt eveneens om meer empirisch onderzoek naar hoe dergelijke processen plaatsvinden.

Hoofdstuk drie biedt een eerste antwoord op deze vraag. Het onderzoek “Exclusionary practices in sport journalism” beschrijft manieren waarop sportjournalisten betekenis geven aan gender en etniciteit. Daarbij is gebruik gemaakt van een door Acker beschreven perspectief op organisatieprocessen. Op basis van dit perspectief wordt inzicht geboden in de gelaagdheid van betekenissen die aan gender en etniciteit worden gegeven en de impact hiervan op zowel individueel, als institutioneel niveau. Hoewel sportjournalisten van mening zijn dat er gelijke kansen zijn voor ieder die tot de functie wil toetreden, blijken er dominante beelden te bestaan over de geschiktheid van vrouwen en etnische minderheden in de sportjournalistiek. Het

onderzoek laat zien hoe dergelijke dominante beelden ontstaan en hoe ze doorwerken in organisatieprocessen. Ze zijn bovendien van invloed op het persoonlijk functioneren, omdat individuele mannelijke en vrouwelijke sportjournalisten met dergelijke beelden te maken krijgen en zich daartoe moeten verhouden.

Hoofdstuk vier benadrukt het interactieproces waarin gender gecreëerd wordt en het gaat in op hoe hierover onderhandeld wordt. Het onderzoek heeft plaatsgevonden onder sportbestuurders op het hoogste niveau, namelijk het bondsbestuur. Er is gekozen voor het hoogste sportbestuursniveau, omdat daar de genderverhoudingen schever zijn dan in de lagere bestuursniveaus. Dit onderzoek heeft betrekking op entreeprocedures van nieuwe bestuursleden, omdat daar onderhandeld moet worden over de aanname en geschiktheid van potentiële kandidaten. Het aannamebeleid heeft bovendien direct gevolgen voor het veranderen of in stand houden van genderonderscheid in sportfuncties. Bestuurders dragen hieraan bij door formele aanpassingen in het beleid, zoals het hanteren van streefcijfers en positieve actiebeleid tegen te gaan of te negeren en te werven via de bestaande informele netwerken. Ook selectiecriteria worden afgestemd op een mannelijk bestuursprofiel. Vrouwen die als kandidaat tot dergelijke functies willen toetreden, passen zich enerzijds aan het mannelijke bestuursprofiel aan dat hen wordt voorgespiegeld. Anderzijds moeten zij onderhandelen over beelden van bestuursleden met betrekking tot bijvoorbeeld de zorg voor kinderen en hun bestuurlijke kwaliteiten.

Hoewel in hoofdstuk vier een vrij uniform beeld zou kunnen ontstaan over hoe het er in topsportbesturen aan toegaat, zoek ik in hoofdstuk vijf naar meer diversiteit in opvattingen met betrekking tot gender. Deze empirische studie laat zien hoe genderbetekenissen contextafhankelijk, veranderlijk en paradoxaal kunnen zijn. Hierbij wordt aandacht besteed aan hoe de samenstelling in een groep eveneens van invloed kan zijn op de constructie van gender. Mannelijke en vrouwelijke bestuursleden van een bond met een vrij gelijk aantal mannelijke en vrouwelijke leden lijken zich meer bewust van stereotyperingen en van gedrag dat hiermee samenhangt. Bovendien lijken zij ook a-stereotype gedrag onderling gemakkelijker te tonen en te accepteren. Toch worden ook in een ongelijk samengesteld bestuur dominante beelden met betrekking tot gender doorbroken. Ook vrouwen die als enige vrouw in een bestuur zitten brengen alternatieve standpunten naar voren en maken 'vrouwenissues' bespreekbaar. Het laatste en zesde hoofdstuk is een terugblik op de hoofdstukken drie tot en met vijf. Het analyseert welke overeenkomsten er in deze hoofdstukken bestaan met betrekking tot de vraag: Hoe komt het dat genderreconstructies zo weerbarstig zijn? In dit hoofdstuk bespreek ik drie discoursen die daar debet aan zijn, te weten genderneutraliteit, gendernormaliteit en genderpassiviteit. Genderneutraliteit heeft betrekking op het ontkennen van genderverschillen, gendernormaliteit heeft betrekking op het 'normaal' vinden van deze genderverschillen en genderpassiviteit heeft betrekking op het niet (willen) veranderen van de bestaande situatie ten aanzien van gender. Juist het ontkennen en normaal vinden van de bestaande genderdiscoursen vormen de grootste bedreiging voor verandering en vormen het belangrijkste motief voor genderpassiviteit. Tegelijkertijd biedt de analyse van de hoofdstukken drie tot en met vijf concreet inzicht in hoe deze drie dominante discoursen doorbroken kunnen worden. En waardoor meer diversiteit met betrekking tot gender (en etniciteit) in het bestuurlijke discours kan ontstaan.

ⁱⁱ Alleen hoofdstuk drie heeft ook betrekking op de reconstructie van etniciteit

Dankwoord

Als kind werd ik door mijn moeder gewassen, zittend in een plastic teiltje met water. Een van de eerste dingen die ik leerde zeggen was ‘selluf doen’, vooral gedurende die waspartij. Zoals ik me nooit had leren wassen zonder de hulp van mijn moeder, zo waren de meeste dingen die ik in mijn leven heb gedaan nooit tot stand gekomen zonder de begeleiding en hulp van anderen. Dat geldt zeker voor dit proefschrift. Ik wil daarom een aantal mensen persoonlijk noemen die hieraan hebben bijgedragen.

Om te beginnen mijn moeder, niet alleen omdat ze me heeft laten spetteren in dat teiltje, maar om alle vertrouwen, ruimte en warmte. Ik hoor haar zeggen: ‘hoe doe je dat toch allemaal? Een huis verbouwen, werken en dan ook nog promoveren.’ Wat ben ik een geluksvogel met haar als mijn moeder! Mijn vader dank ik om het overdragen van zijn doorzettingsvermogen en ik had veel bewondering voor de aandacht waarmee hij dingen deed. Bovendien heeft hij me altijd gestimuleerd om een goede opleiding te volgen. Het onderwerp van dit proefschrift had wellicht niet meteen zijn interesse gewekt, maar het hele ritueel en zo’n titel des te meer. Ik had hem er bij de promotieplechtigheid zo graag bij gehad, om zijn trotse glimlach te kunnen zien. Moniek Blommaart, mijn partner en levensgeluk. We delen veel goeds en dat lijkt zo vanzelfsprekend... De rust en openheid waarin ieder haar eigen dingen doet heeft ook het werken aan dit proefschrift in zekere zin heel gemakkelijk gemaakt.

Marjolijn Poulssen, mijn paranimf, moedigde mij in 1990 aan (weer) te gaan studeren en stond daarmee aan de wieg van mijn sociaal-wetenschappelijke interesse. We zijn er altijd voor elkaar, een nimf uit duizenden.

Albert Beekes, mijn andere paranimf, heeft eerst als scriptiebegeleider, daarna als collega en als vriend een belangrijke bijdrage geleverd aan de start van mijn wetenschappelijke loopbaan. Hoeveel inspirerende en stimulerende ontmoetingen hebben er niet tussen hem en mij plaatsgevonden?

Dit proefschrift komt grotendeels voort uit mijn werk binnen het meerjarige onderzoeksprogramma ‘Kwaliteiten van Sport’, gefinancierd door het Ministerie van Volksgezondheid Welzijn en Sport (VWS). Dit onderzoekswerk heb ik voornamelijk gedaan bij het W.J.H. Mulier Instituut, die het programma uitvoerden. Ik dank hen, met name Maarten van Bottenburg en Jan Janssens voor de mogelijkheid die ze me hebben geboden dit onderzoek te doen en voor de prettige samenwerking.

Heel veel dank aan Paul Verweel omdat hij mijn grote wens om sportonderzoek te doen, heeft weten te realiseren. Ik ben er telkens weer verbaasd over dat hij zo’n rotsvast vertrouwen in me heeft. Het geeft me enorm veel energie en plezier in mijn werk.

Peter Leisink speelde op de achtergrond een belangrijke rol vanwege zijn betrokkenheid en belangstelling. Bovendien voorzag hij me gedurende het jaarlijks functioneringsgesprek regelmatig van gouden tips.

Ook wil ik Titia Brantsma - van Wulfften Palthe hartelijk danken voor het vertaalwerk dat ze heeft gedaan voor eerdere versies van het eerste en laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift. Vooral in het begin van mijn onderzoek heb ik veel samen gewerkt met Agnes Elling. Ik heb veel geleerd van haar deskundigheid en heb genoten van onze samenwerking en van de bijzonder gezellige congresbezoeken. Wordt hopelijk vervolgd.

Ten slotte, Annelies Knoppers mijn promotor; inhoudelijk, kritisch, inspirerend, betrokken, stimulerend en ondersteunend. Ik ben onder de indruk van de kundigheid waarmee ze me

stimuleerde mijn hoofd te breken over verschillende problemen. Om vervolgens, meestal gezamenlijk, tot oplossingen te komen, waarbij ik het gevoel kreeg dat ik deze min of meer zelf had bedacht. Ik had me werkelijk geen betere promotor kunnen wensen!

Meer in het algemeen dank ik degenen die ik heb mogen interviewen. Zonder hen was dit proefschrift niet mogelijk geweest.

Ik wil dit dankwoord niet afsluiten zonder mijn familie, vrienden, de mosselclub, kamergenoten, mijn collega's en de studenten van de Master Sportbeleid en Sportmanagement te noemen. Zij vormden een niet onbelangrijke basis voor het realiseren van dit proefschrift door het scheppen van een fantastische privé- en werkomgeving.

Curriculum Vitae

Inge Claringbould was born in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, on March 16, 1960. After finishing high school (the Christelijk Lyceum in Apeldoorn), she continued her education. From 1979 to 1984 she studied at the Foundation for the Training of Educators (Stichting Opleiding Leraren) in Utrecht majoring in Social Relations and Health Education.

After graduation she became a teacher at the School for Patient Care (School voor Ziekenverzorging) in Utrecht.

She continued her education at the University of Utrecht in the Department of Social Sciences from 1990 to 1993 majoring in Organizational Sociology and Policy. She was an instructor in the department of Sociology at the University of Utrecht until 1999 after which she moved across campus to the Utrecht School of Governance. In September 2002 she began researching the dynamics of doing and undoing gender in sport related organizations with a specific focus on the construction of gender in positions of leadership.

