Subtexts of Research on Diversity in Sport Organizations: Queering Intersectional Perspectives

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A great deal of research focusing on organizational diversity has explored dynamics that exclude women and minorities from positions of leadership in sport organizations. The relatively little change in diversity in these positions suggests a need to employ ways of engaging in diversity research that do not center on identity categories and primarily focus on practices. Drawing on notions of subtexts and on queer theory, this critical narrative review aims to make visible and to question organizational practices and processes that may contribute to the diversity "problem" within sport organizations. A subtextual analysis of 32 articles published in leading sport management journals reveals how dynamics of organizational culture, such as an uncritical use of the concept of diversity, the invisibility of practices sustaining gender binaries and heteronormativity, and the intersection of heteronormativity and White normativity, contribute to sustaining the status quo in sport organizations. The authors build on these findings to challenge scholars to further explore and address these practices and processes in sport organizations and in their own research by employing queered intersectional approaches.

Keywords: discourse, gender binaries, heteronormativity, queer theory, sport governance, whiteness

The problem of a "lack of diversity" in sport organizations has produced over 25 years of fruitful research. Early studies include DeSensi's (1994) and Doherty and Chelladurai's (1999) reflections on cultural diversity in sport organizations, Fink and Pastore's (1999) framework of diversity initiatives, and Shaw and Hoeber's (2003) study of gendered discourses in national sport organizations, to name but a few. A great deal of research focusing on organizational diversity has explored dynamics and factors that exclude women and minorities (e.g., people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer [LGBTQ+], Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Latinx, Asian, and/or disabled) from sport organizations and, even more so, exclude them from positions of leadership (e.g., Borland & Bruening, 2010; Burton & Leberman, 2017; Doherty et al., 2010; Melton & Cunningham, 2014; Misener & Darcy, 2014).[1]

Organizational diversity programs, including those in sport, tend to be created as part of a business approach to management. The shift to a focus on diversity management was an instrument used by sport organizations to identify factors that could be used to create policies that prevent discrimination and exclusion and, as a result, contribute to the productivity of, efficiency of, and/or financial gain for the organization (Cunningham, 2011). An early study of diversity management in sport organizations thus concluded that "for diversity initiatives to be truly embedded within the organization, those in power must be convinced of diversity's relationship to organizational effectiveness" (Fink & Pastore, 1999, p. 314). The implementation of policy measures to alter the trajectory of these dynamics has brought about some change in

a few contexts, but a significant change in diversity in positions of leadership has generally not occurred (e.g., Knoppers et al., 2021).

A lack of diversity in leadership positions continues to reproduce inequalities not only in sport organizations but also in the rest of society (Acker, 2006; Holck et al., 2016). In part, this lack of significant change in diversity in positions of leadership may be due to more than the aforementioned factors. The relatively little change in diversity in positions of leadership in organizations suggests that it may be time to employ ways of engaging in diversity research that do not center on identities and, instead, primarily focus on practices. Various scholars have argued that the categorization of employees into identities has meant that dominant organizational practices that (re)produce the "usual" ingrained ways of doing gender and other social power relations that result in exclusion may often be overlooked in such research (e.g., Christensen, 2018; Jackson, 2006; Noon, 2017).

The purpose of this paper is twofold: (a) to make visible and to question organizational practices and processes that may contribute to the diversity "problem" within sport organizations and (b) to challenge scholars to further explore and address these practices and processes in sport organizations and in their own research by employing queered intersectional approaches. Using a subtextual approach, we aim to contribute to a critical turn in research on diversity in sport organizations beyond identities to create space for alternative approaches to understanding and promoting more radical forms of diversity and inclusion in sport management research and practice. The next section discusses the theoretical and methodological bases of this review.

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Methods and Analysis

This critical narrative review provides a subtextual analysis of research on diversity in sport organizations, governance, and leadership. A critical narrative review is well suited to the intention

of identifying what subtexts are prominent in this body of research and what gaps and silences they reveal.

Following Creswell and Creswell (2018), we developed a list of keywords to guide our literature search, including "diversity," "gender," "sexuality," "race," "ethnicity," and "disability." With this set of keywords, we conducted a search across three leading sport management journals: *Journal of Sport Management* (*JSM*), *Sport Management Review* (*SMR*), and *European Sport Management Quarterly* (*ESMQ*). The review included empirical studies of any design, theoretical interventions, and review articles. Editorials were excluded. The time restriction placed on the publication period was 2010–2020 to cover a full decade of literature published in the journals. The cutoff dates were the final published issues of 2020 for each journal; preprint articles that had not been assigned to an issue, or had been assigned to a 2021 issue, by the time of the review, were excluded.

The literature search resulted in a total of 1,184 publications for initial consideration in the review. The majority of results at this stage were not relevant to the purpose of the review. Publications were omitted if they focused exclusively on diversity of athletes or participants rather than on sport organizations, governance, or leadership (i.e., leaders, managers, employees, coaches). This selection process led to the authors reaching a consensus on a final corpus of 32 publications that were included in the review: 18 from *JSM*, 13 from *SMR*, and one from *ESMQ*. This was the final sample to which the subtextual analysis presented in this paper was applied.

Subtexts

Subtexts are implicit or hidden processes that preclude those designated as Other from entering and fully participating in sport organizations (Bendl, 2008; Benschop & Doorewaard, 2012). Subtexts refer to an organization's hidden arrangements—that is, the principles, measures, routines, and ways in which organizational culture reinforces exclusion. Fink (2016), for example, revealed how sexism is an invisible subtext of and in sport organizations that excludes women. These hidden assumptions or subtexts are not passive or static but are situated within agentic power relations that include resistance and counter-resistance (Bendl, 2008). Specifically, individuals are not necessarily docile but can and do resist dominant ways to thinking and doing, as the examples given throughout this paper suggest.

A subtextual analysis can also be applied to the research itself, revealing norms, absences, and silences in how diversity is questioned, framed, and understood within a field. For example, a subtext often underlying identity-based research is that individuals identified by categories based on their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, and other identities, form homogenous groups that engage in similar practices; those groups are assumed to constitute an individual's identity. This subtext often results in policies targeting specific groups. Young heterosexual women, therefore, may be framed in terms of (potential) parenthood, possibly requiring assistance with childcare, whereas gay men are not. Similarly, the focus on only self-identified LGBTQ+ participants and excluding heterosexual participants in research on sexuality can work as a subtext that implicitly reproduces heterosexuality as "normal" and "natural" and strengthens heteronormativity (Rumens et al., 2019).

Discourses and Power

Our critical narrative approach and the subtextual analysis presented in this paper are primarily grounded in a Foucauldian framework drawing on notions of discourse and (bio)power (Foucault, 2008). A Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses on "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1974, p. 49). Ball (1990) explained that Foucault's concept of discourses refers to "what can be said and thought, about who can speak, when and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships" (p. 2). Discourses are ways of thinking and doing that may become truth or common sense, often known as regimes of truth (Foucault, 1974). We concur with Sveinson et al. (2021) that discourse analysis can assist in uncovering the multiple ways that power, inequality, and social dominance are enacted in the sport management field. We conceptualize (management of) diversity as a discourse whose "forms, practices and meanings are spatially and temporally constructed through relations of sameness and difference" circulating in a population (Ahonen et al., 2014, p. 266). This focus on constructed difference and sameness is what Foucault (2008) typified as a form of biopolitical power because it is a way of governing a population by assigning individuals/bodies to specific categories and social identities, such as women/men, gay/heterosexual, Black/White, and abled/disabled. Our focus is on ways in which this discourse may manifest itself in organizational practices that, because they are the norm, are often subtexts.

In the sections that follow, we draw on our subtextual analysis of research on diversity in sport organizations to argue that normative reproduction of diversity occurs through the practices and processes of sport organizations and through sport management research. We identify gaps and omissions in revealing norms, absences, and silences in how diversity is questioned, framed, and understood within the field of sport management. We propose that intersectional approaches and especially those that are critically interrogated and/or disrupted or queered might help challenge normative practices that lead to exclusion at both the level of knowledge production and organizational practices.

Subtexts of Diversity Management at Work

A diversity of identities among employees is considered to add value to an organization (IOC, 2018; Spaaij et al., 2020). Those who belong to or identify with the dominant group or norm define who counts under the label "diverse." Minorities and women are often constructed as the "diverse," the Other. They are seen as having an identity that differs from the organization's norm, that is, from the dominant group (Christensen, 2018; Nkomo et al., 2019). These identity categories not only carry a label but also have an implicit subtext or norm that assumes that an individual can be identified by one identity that prescribes how they behave or should behave. In other words, these discursive subtexts can create identities, that is, form the identities of which they speak. Furthermore, those who are seen as diverse compared with the norm (White, male, heterosexual, and able bodied, for example) are often held responsible for adding diversity to an organization (Christensen, 2018). They "do" diversity.

The following sections discuss the subtexts that were identified in our analysis of the selected articles. Broken down by identity category (gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity), each section works through normative processes and practices (re)produced within sport organizations that appear to be significantly shaping inclusion/exclusion. The sections reflect the publications in the sample for each identity category and their intersections. There is no separate section on disability, considering that only one article in the sample examined disability in sport organizations or

leadership (Kappelidis & Spoor, 2019, on sport volunteers with disability).[2] We refer to other axes of difference in the discussion as part of our attempt to articulate directions for future research. In what follows, we seek to demonstrate how dynamics of organizational culture, such as the uncritical use of the concept of diversity, the invisibility of practices sustaining gender binaries and heteronormativity, and intersections of heteronormativity and White normativity, contribute to sustaining the status quo in sport organizations.

Gender Diversity and the "Problem" of Underrepresentation of Women in Leadership

One problem that has garnered considerable attention in diversity research in sport management is the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Researchers have revealed that the old boys' network, skewed work–life balance, few available role models and mentors for women, homologous reproduction, resistance to the implementation of policy measures, and negative stereotypes of strong women leaders have all contributed to the problem of underrepresentation of women leaders in sport organizations (e.g., Elling et al., 2019; Evans & Pfister, 2021; Gregorič et al., 2017; Henry & Robinson, 2010; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Knoppers et al., 2021; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003; Singer & Cunningham, 2012; Spaaij et al., 2020).

Burton (2015) and Evans and Pfister (2021) have provided extensive and critical reviews of the literature on this topic. The main premise in citing the literature contained in these reviews is that despite increased participation opportunities for girls and women in sport, they are underrepresented in leadership positions at all levels of sport. Both reviews consist of multilevel examinations of available scholarship that makes a contribution to diversity research by revealing intersecting macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors that constrain women's involvement in positions of power within sport organizations. Although Evans and Pfister's (2021) review was conducted 6 years after that of Burton (and published in a sociology of sport journal rather than a sport management journal), the similarity in the findings, again, suggests the need for a change in research focus. Both papers reveal how gender can influence organizational practices such that images, cultures, interactions, and gender-appropriate behaviors are linked to socially constructed masculine or feminine ideals within organizational operations. This is useful and important knowledge. Making a further analysis using a subtextual lens reveals assumptions, absences, and silences in the way that "the field" is thinking about and enacting gender diversity. In particular, this lens reveals the dominance of thinking about how "masculine forces" shape participation and experiences and the framing of the problem as a "lack" of diversity.

Burton (2015) contextualized the review within a broader examination of gender relations in sport. In the introduction, she referred to several oft-cited phrases within the sport management and sport sociology literature, starting with sport being a "gendered space." Burton went on to cite Anderson (2009) to explain that what that means is that sports "actively construct boys and men to exhibit value and reproduce traditional notions of masculinity" and that sport serves as a social institution principally organized around defining certain forms of masculinity as acceptable while denigrating others; that is, "All processes in sport operate within a hegemonic masculine norm" (Burton, 2015, p. 156). Burton (2015) also stated that "hegemonic masculinity serves as an operating principle within sport organisations that restricts women's access to leadership positions within sport" (p. 157). Such assertions are not necessarily inaccurate, but there are subtexts operating through this line of questioning. The examined research in sport management tends to imply that masculine norms are fixed and operate independently of femininities. However, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have argued that desired masculinities are policed by language that devaluates or repudiates that which is currently associated with femininity, which is seen as abject. Van Gilder (2019) examined the discursive practices embedded in talk by military service members and how these practices reinforced hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity. She found that femininity was linked to weakness, "being emotional, acting effeminately, or being physically weak" (p. 159). Labeling someone's behavior as effeminate is considered an insult, especially in sport. Smits et al. (2021) examined the content of homonegative talk among male athletes and found that it was used to connote weakness associated with abject femininity. Whitehead (2002) and Gregory (2011) have argued that this type of homonegative talk is embedded in daily organizational practices as well.

This devaluation of femininity has been called femmephobia and is often linked to incompetency (Adams, 2013; Hoskin, 2019, 2020). The disciplinary power of a discourse of gender that supports femmephobia may contribute to the gendered hierarchy embedded in sport organizations (see also Fink, 2016). Although homonegative language is often condemned in public relation campaigns by sport organizations as being homophobic (Bury, 2016), its intersection with gender is often ignored or is not challenged. Specifically, the abject feminine subtext of this homonegative language is rarely mentioned or censored. To paraphrase Janet Fink (2016), femmephobia is hidden in plain sight but ignored. In the context of looking at the subtext of assumptions made within sport management research, the notion that "sport is gendered" is, therefore, more nuanced and complex than merely just men subordinating women through dominant masculine norms.

Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) explored leadership development practices adopted by key stakeholders of the Australian sports industry and how they affect the role of women in different organizations. Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) examined three case studies: a financial institution (sponsor), a media organization, and a professional sport organization (PSO). Interestingly, the PSO was a women's only PSO that was ostensibly not operating within a hegemonic masculine norm. In fact, Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) found that within this organization there was an assumption that work and organizational practices were gender neutral or "positive" for women. It was assumed that because women were overrepresented in this PSO, this also meant that there was no need to understand gendered practices. The subtext of this conclusion is that women do not engage in gendered practices. A dominant discourse that "men are privileged and women are marginalized" within sport organizations can, therefore, close off other ways of thinking about gender diversity within sport organizations. Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) also stated that this PSO had a leadership environment that was "relational and collective not macho or individualistic," which they implied has occurred because of the overrepresentation of women within the organization. Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) have uncovered an organizational culture that has not problematized gender imbalance but rather allowed for the implicit acceptance of prevailing gender norms, revealing the deeper underlying gender binary and the subtextual stereotypes that are part of that.

As we have revealed, the problem of gender diversity in sport organizations and leadership is typically understood and analyzed in binary terms of men and women where the "lack" of women is seen as the problem. For example, we often see "impact of gender roles and stereotyping" in the literature on the lack of gender diversity in sport (Burton, 2015, p. 163), but it is rarely meant in a way that opens up gender beyond a category of "women." For example, Sartore and Cunningham (2007) noted that frameworks put forward to understand the lack of women in leadership in sport organizations have not addressed "the emotional and cognitive processes of women as they encounter disparate acceptance and treatment within the male-dominated sport domain" (p. 245). Sartore and Cunningham (2007) therefore, suggested a greater understanding is needed of how women respond to gendered adversity.

Kihl et al. (2013) contended that gendered practices within organizations are not always operating to constrain women, so there must be a more complete appreciation for how gender is practiced by both men and women in regard to issues of power within organizations. Indeed, Burton (2015), too, suggested that the examination of gender in leadership needs to provide a more complete understanding of the challenges faced by both men and women in leadership positions. However, within the field of sport management, these dynamics and practices remain relatively unknown because the focus of the problem within the literature on gender "diversity" has not really focused on diversity at all. At best, the line of questioning that dominates sport management literature gives us knowledge about the ways in which sexual difference has been constructed rather than gender diversity. Focusing on alternative discourses that have enabled some women to take on leadership roles and on dominant discourses that have marginalized some men could be instructive.

Sexuality and Homonormativity

Two recent and thorough reviews of the literature on the obstacles encountered by LGBTQ+ in sport reveal that most of such literature focuses on athletes rather than on sport leaders or managers. Shaw and Cunningham's (2021) scoping review concluded that this literature describes the (primarily negative) experiences of athletes identified as nonheterosexual and transgender. Only 6.5% of the articles identified by Shaw and Cunningham focused on sport managers, coaches, and/or parents. Denison et al. (2020) conducted a narrative review of the quantitative evidence available in the sport literature to explore how the discrimination and exclusion experienced by LGBTQ+ people in sport informed their sport experiences. The authors found that the quantitative evidence corroborates what has been concluded in qualitative research: with few exceptions (e.g., Anderson & McCormack, 2018), attitudes toward nonheterosexuals have become more positive, but practices and behaviors have changed relatively little. Again, most of the research captured in these reviews focuses on athletes rather than on those working in sport management and pays relatively little attention to the subtextual organizational norms that may contribute to this discrimination and exclusion.

The intent of research focusing on nonheterosexuals working in sport organizations and the policies that flow from this research is to identify explicit discriminatory and exclusionary practices for those identifying as LGBTQ+ (e.g., Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham & Hussain, 2020; Cunningham & Melton, 2011). For example, Cavalier (2011) revealed how the sport workplace for gay men is not necessarily a welcoming or affirming environment.

This is not a binary issue, however, since as we argued earlier, no one has just one identity. Walker and Melton (2015) concluded that those sport employees classified as having multiple marginalized identities, such as Black lesbians, could be viewed as a threat to hypermasculine, heterosexist norms in intercollegiate sports. Similarly, Melton and Cunningham (2014) revealed how employees who did not resemble prototypical sport employees (i.e., were not White, heterosexual, male) were hesitant to show support for LGBTQ+ equality because it might add to their own marginalization. Such research, however, seems to suggest that identities are fixed and ignores the role of implicit organizational norms in producing these practices. The identification of explicit discriminatory and exclusionary practices revealed in the literature cited earlier also does little to advance theoretical thinking about norms embedded in daily practices, language, and institutional structures in sport that assume that heterosexuality is a fundamental norm, and that presuppose binary relationships between "biological" sex and gender identity and between sexuality and sexual identity (Colgan & Rumens, 2015).

Increasing numbers of sport organizations have policies in place that forbid discrimination based on gender and sexuality. Some sport organizations are seen or may present themselves as being gay friendly. This often means lesbians, gays, and bisexual employees are welcome and may be "out of the closet" without formal repercussions. A subtext of "gay friendly" presents a tension for nonheterosexual employees between being visible or being accepted (Williams & Giuffre, 2011; Williams et al., 2009) wherein behaviors and practices associated with heterosexuals and heteronormativity are still the norm. This homonormativity requires nonheterosexuals to engage in behavior or in performativity that conforms to dominant ways of doing and constructing gender and family. Engaging in valued heteronormative behavior, that is, homonormativity, can make them "respectable" and may mean they are not perceived as a threat to dominant heteronormative culture despite being perceived as "different." If they wish to be visible as nonheterosexuals, they have to behave in ways that conform to dominant discourses about the behavior of gays and lesbians. For example, Burchiellaro (2021) found that in organizations that were labeled as being gay friendly, LGBTQ+ were disciplined and normalized into performing being LGBTQ+ in a way that was acceptable and congruent with gendered heteronormative organizational culture. Specifically, those who identified as nonheterosexual were expected to behave in ways that fit dominant organizational culture. Similarly, Newhall and Walker (2018) found that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals working in sport organizations had to engage in a performativity that meant reproducing themselves as acceptable in the way they looked, dressed, acted, and worked according to prevailing norms that were congruent with the image their organization wished to present (see also Robertson et al., 2019). Similar to managers in nonsport organizations, these administrators tried to erase behaviors that might point to their gay identity. They attempted to behave like their heterosexual colleagues to be congruent with dominant heteronormative organizational culture.

These practices mean, however, that nonheterosexuals are invisible in organizations. Williams et al. (2009) found that lesbians and gays who wished to be visible could only do that by enacting the stereotypes associated with them; these were often judged negatively because they did not fit organizational heteronormativity. These stereotypes depicted lesbians as women with hairy legs, who wore men's clothes, who had piercings, and who played softball. Smits et al. (2021) found that visibility of gay men

was associated with a gay esthetic and judged as a form of abject femininity. This paradox of invisibility and acceptance versus visibility and abjectness does not change relations of power as dominant discursive practices associated with desirable heteronormativity have changed little. The LGBTQ+ may be welcome in organizations, but they are disciplined to conform to heteronormative discursive practices to create homonormativity (Ward & Schneider, 2009). Specifically, although LGBTQ+ are constructed as bringing diversity into an organization, their behavior must conform to dominant heteronormativity. Explorations of how heteronormativity is understood in an organization must, therefore, also focus on discursive, often subtextual, practices that constitute homonormativity and how those self-identifying as heterosexual experience them. This normativity is, however, also associated with Whiteness. In the next section, we, therefore, discuss how such organizational subtexts of diversity management extend to normative Whiteness.

Race, Ethnicity, and White Normativity

Organizational climates that are supportive for women and LGBTQ+ are not necessarily racially inclusive and may continue to be shaped by a subtext of White normativity. "White" can refer to a socially constructed category that applies to those perceived as "white." White normativity, however, rests on the "definition of whites as the norm or standard for human, and people of color as a deviation from that norm" (D'Angelo, 2018, p. 25). It refers to "cultural norms and practices that make whiteness appear natural, normal, and right [. . .] and ways of thinking, knowing, and doing that naturalize whiteness and become embedded in social and institutional life" (Ward, 2008, p. 564). A focus on White discursive norms and White culture instead of identities can reveal the extent to which organizational culture is based on the interpretive frames of Whites. Ward (2008) found that even in an LGBTQ+ organization considered as being racially diverse at all levels, including leadership, White hegemonic practices of the broader culture had been absorbed. This meant that Whiteness had become the norm for ideas and practices about diversity. She identified subtexts of practices that "privilege[d] the knowledge, customs, and ways of thinking, speaking, and doing most familiar to whites" (p. 563). These external norms were shaped by the demands of institutional stakeholders and dominant diversity discourses of similar organizations. Ward (2008) concluded that diversity programs have been primarily designed for Whites and not for racial/ethnic minorities. These programs tend to "naturalize whiteness by teaching whites how to better understand the behaviors of people of color" (Ward, 2008, p. 575).

These insights suggest a need to look at not only the heteronormative culture of sport organizations but also how this culture, and programs that purport to address gender and sexual diversity within sport organizations, are racialized and produce racialized identities. Diversity management research in sport is yet to address this need in earnest despite outstanding advances in theoretical understanding of how our biases, epistemologies, and values are shaped by Whiteness and colonialism and, in turn, affect sport management research and practice (Chen & Mason, 2019; Singer, 2005; Smith & Hattery, 2011; Vadeboncoeur et al., 2021). Very little research considers intersections between constructions of Whiteness and heteronormativity (Borland & Bruening, 2010). When intersectionality is taken into account, it tends to focus on the influence of multiple marginalized identities rather than on

intersecting organizational norms and practices and on athlete experiences rather than coaches or staff members (Walker & Melton, 2015). Only two of the articles in our review sample that focus on the inclusion of women and LGBTQ+ in sport organizations apply an explicit intersectional approach to the topic, thereby revealing important aspects of subtextual organizational norms of Whiteness. For the most part, research on gender and sexual diversity in sport organizations and leadership focuses on identities and implicitly (re)produces Whiteness as natural, as the norm, through its silence and invisibility. It is left implicit in most studies of women and LGBTQ+ in sport organizations that these are understood, and understand themselves, as White. This lens has made it difficult to view, for example, "non-White" and "woman" as an area of convergence that is worthy of critical research (Borland & Bruening, 2010).

One of the very few studies of the intersection of race/ethnicity, sexuality, and gender in the context of sport organizations and leadership that centered on identity formation found that women with multiple marginalized identities or minority lesbians were usually viewed as a threat to identities associated with hypermasculine, heterosexist norms of intercollegiate sports (Walker & Melton, 2015). Taken-for-granted assumptions of how sport organizations should operate, which materialized through both implicit practices and explicit policies, often seemed impermeable to the extent that individuals who did not fit these norms usually did not gain access to or maintain membership in these organizations. Walker and Melton's (2015) findings show a tipping point dynamic for minority lesbian women, who often viewed the organizational culture as "too difficult to change or challenge and, therefore, they leave sport to find more welcoming and diverse work environments" (p. 268).

The second study that examined intersections among constructions of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality identified barriers contributing to the underrepresentation of Black women in coaching positions in collegiate basketball in the United States (Borland & Bruening, 2010). The authors found that the cumulative effect of these barriers has been for Black women "to downplay their race, gender and sexuality—in other words, shroud their collective identities—to fit ascribed social roles in athletic departments" (p. 417). The research participants discussed the importance of presenting "a proper image," that is, of curbing their natural actions, reactions, words, and behaviors to avoid calling attention to differences. For example, they quickly became aware during their playing careers that "with the success of Black student-athletes in college basketball comes the perception that Black females are more suited for playing than coaching" (Borland & Bruening, 2010, p. 413). Engaging in valued White normative behavior made them more "respectable" and meant they were potentially not perceived as a threat to dominant White normative culture. These findings led Borland and Bruening to conclude that "overwhelmingly, the culture of Division I athletics encourages conformity with White, male values. This encourages assimilating behaviors by members of marginalized groups if they hope to gain a leadership position" (p. 417).

What the findings from these studies have in common with the literature discussed in the preceding sections is that they illustrate how current shifts in practices of inclusion and "acceptance" of women and minorities into sport organizations operate as a form of organizational control. As Burchiellaro (2021) pointed out, this control seems to occur less through outright exclusion and more via the normalization and regulation of certain expressions of difference within the organization. This normalization and

regulation are internalized through, for example, the performance of "acceptable" or desirable difference within heteronormative and White normative organizational cultures. At the same time, the underlying subtexts of such diversity management remain largely invisible or unchallenged.

From Identity-Based Diversity Research to Queering Intersectional Approaches

The literature discussed earlier suggests that a common form of diversity research in sport management consists of identifying and collecting data from those who are seen as diverse about their experiences. Another method that has been used is to ask those identified as belonging to the dominant group about their attitudes toward and acceptance of women and minorities. These methods reify identities and chart results by identity. As we indicated earlier, such methods assume identities are fixed, or at least operationalize them as such. A Foucauldian understanding of identities assumes that individuals are shaped by shifts in power relations and also influence them, so they are in a constant state of flux. This dynamic has been called subjectivation (Markula-Denison & Pringle, 2007) We contend, therefore, that research on diversity in sport management should not only be intersectional but also be critically questioned or queered and be (re)directed toward understanding the shifting nature of gender/sexual/racialized/ethnic norms in the sport workplace and its cultures, how these shifts are understood by individuals, and how these discourses shape their subjectivities.

A queer perspective assumes that heteronormativity can be seen as both a normative regime and an analytical category. The focus of queer analyses is on critically examining ways in which practices associated with heterosexuality and Whiteness (and their intersections) become the "natural" norm in organizations. This norm is based on assumed binaries of gender and sexuality and other social relations, creating a structure what Butler (1993) has called heterosexual matrix or hegemony. Rumens et al. (2019) argued that heteronormativity is a basic principle embedded in organizational culture and needs to be queered, that is, questioned and disrupted. We, therefore, do not use the word queer as an identity label but as a verb, as something an individual does. Queer theory does not rely on fixed binary conceptions of gender or sexuality and, instead, explores processes through which heteronormativity is embedded in organizations and shaped by subtexts based on intersecting norms of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and other social relations (e.g., Bendl et al., 2008; Bendl & Hofmann, 2015; Herz & Johansson, 2015; Pullen et al., 2016; Souza et al., 2016).

Queer theory can be used to challenge not only heteronormativity but all other forms of normativity, including intersectional analyses (Butler, 2004). Intersectional analysis challenges the additive approach to identities, for example, that identities of non-White women are additively based on gender with an added layer of race/ethnicity. Queer theorists, however, view subjectivities as constantly evolving, fluid, and multiple in their intersectionalities. This means that social relations of power are seen as cultural, problematic, and unstable. Identities are assumed to be constructed by discursive norms that are constantly repeated in all dimensions of society. Butler has called this repetitiveness performativity. According to Butler (1993, p. xii), this repetition is used "to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (p. 2). This assertion reflects Foucault's (1974) conceptualization of discourse as forming the object of which it speaks.

How can research in sport management that focuses on diversity be queered? Brim and Ghaziani (2016), in an introductory essay on queer methods, argued that "no particular method is queer in its own right; instead, researchers can bring a theoretical perspective to their portfolio of methods that has the potential to queer those established protocols and procedure" (p. 23). A queer perspective deconstructs demographic or identity-based diversity by critiquing and challenging binary and identity thinking. It does so by questioning the assumptions or subtexts underlying identity-based diversity research and by examining how gender-based discursive practices based on biopolitics contribute to the (re) production of noninclusive organizational cultures that are heteronormative (Acker, 2006; Christensen, 2018; Rumens et al., 2019).

How can we utilize this logic/practice to disrupt some of the assumptions we hold in terms of binary approaches to understanding gender and other axes of difference in sport organizations and their intersections? A subtext of the gender binary, for example, often contains an implied absence of trans and nonbinary actors/agents. What are the stereotypes associated with noncis gender? What does opening up those gendered assumptions (absences and silences) do for rethinking about over- and underrepresentation in leadership positions? If behaviors, actions, and values that are most often associated with heterosexual cisgender men are perceived to be superior to femininities (those most often associated with women and at times seen as abject), where do trans or nonbinary people fit within this, considering that the whole conception relies on binaries of either/or, superior/inferior, masculine/feminine, and man/woman? Furthermore, the notion of "representation" can be disrupted and questioned. Advocates for gender equality in sport have been encouraged to think about population statistics and to design equity initiatives to achieve population parity within sport organizations (e.g., 50/50), but this is problematic too. Who is counted and why (not) within census populations—what sex or gender markers are required? What might the problem of underrepresentation of women in sport leadership expose about the gendered structures and cultures of sport organizations and the reproduction of normative practices if it were opened up to include cis- and transwomen and nonbinary people?

A challenge for applying a queer perspective to diversity management in sport organizations is to maintain a critical focus on a "wide field of normalization" rather than confining ourselves to homophobia as the primary category of analysis (Warner, 1993, p. xxvi). Indeed, queer theories (of sport) have been critiqued for being interwoven too often with the dynamics of Whiteness (McDonald, 2006; Sykes, 2006). King (2009) has argued that a queer approach "recognizes the symbolic power" of LGTBQ visibility but understands that "socially endorsed visibility always produces new exclusions and that it tends to signify and enable assimilation into dominant norms, not resistance to them" (p. 285). Therefore, she contends, "To work within a wide field of normalization also demands that we consider how norms of gender, class, and race intersect with sexual norms" (p. 285). In a similar vein, McDonald (2006) argued that "those deploying queer must give up the primacy of sexuality, that is, exclusively anchoring analysis within the domain of the hetero–homo binary, as this framing ignores complex processes of racialization, a process always and already interacting with this binary" (p. 43). According to McDonald (2006), one strategy involves "the active process of disidentification, a shift in worldview toward recoding and reordering commonsense understanding" (p. 43), that is, the disruption of the subtext of White normativity. There are clear opportunities for greater crossfertilization of insights and ideas with recent work on

Whiteness and colonialism in sport management in this regard (e.g., Chen & Mason, 2018; Vadeboncoeur et al., 2021) and with Black and decolonial queer readings (e.g., Pereira, 2019).

We would argue that a critical focus on a wide field of normalization should extend well beyond intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, grounded in the idea that no single category of identity—nor any single pattern of organizational practice—is extricable from other nodes of identity or practice. Exchanges between, for example, queer theories and disability studies have revealed valuable overlaps as well as differences, including their shared opposition to hegemonic normalcy, their deconstruction of binary and essentialist identity categories, and their use of concepts such as performativity (Sherry, 2004). Similarly, Henderson (2019) proposed that queering of social class as a form of social power opens up interesting questions for research, such as the extent to which the middle class (including White women and LGBTQ+) are (becoming) an "unmarked" category in sport organizations characterized by middle-class normative practices. We might hypothesize that a hidden subtext of middle-class normativity in sport organizations might result in working-class women and minorities experiencing vulnerability to exclusion, prejudice, stigmatization, and isolation in those organizations as well as in attempts to act in alignment with normative middle-class expectations and dispositions. These are just some of the avenues of inquiry that a queer perspective invites us to explore to reveal the subtexts that are part of intersecting organizational practices and processes that exclude those designated as Other from entering and fully participating in sport organizations as leaders, managers, and coaches.

Queer theory shifts the focus of diversity research from exploring diverse identities to an understanding of how difference and sameness are performed (performativity), disciplined, and experienced. Queering such research requires beginning with a critical focus on normative practices. This means researchers need to question the construction of categories and associated identities instead of reifying them and assuming that they are fixed. It also means that scholars need to welcome multiplicity, contradictions, and misalignments and to question the constructions of binaries and the normativities associated with them. For example, Muhr and Sullivan (2013) suggested that researchers ask employees and other research subjects to talk about how they use categories or labels, such as men, feminine, heterosexual, and so on, how they would describe themselves using these labels, and how and why various colleagues might fit in those categories/labels. Such accounts might reveal how normativities are constructed and maintained and with what consequences.

Conclusion

This critical narrative review aimed to make visible and to question organizational practices and processes that may contribute to the diversity "problem" within sport organizations and to examine how diversity is questioned, framed, and understood within the field of sport management. To this end, we conducted a subtextual analysis of 32 articles published in leading sport management journals. We have identified that normative reproduction of diversity occurs through the practices and processes of sport organizations and through sport management research. Specifically, uncritical use of the concept of diversity, the invisibility of practices sustaining gender binaries and heteronormativity, and the intersection of heteronormativity and White

normativity contribute to sustaining the status quo in sport organizations.

Diversity and its management are framed as a valuable goal by sport organizations; however, this frame will remain an empty ideology unless scholars, managers, and policymakers recognize, address, and radically change how prevailing discursive practices in sport produce organizational cultures that are supported by gendered, racialized, and heteronormative subtexts. Therefore, we have argued that queered intersectional approaches might help disrupt norms that lead to exclusion at both the level of knowledge production and of sport organizational practices.

Notes

1. We recognize that the use of diversity distinction categories to define diversity is problematic because such categories are not exhaustive of the domain (see Mor Barak, 2008). We decided to focus on gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and disability in this paper because they are the most commonly studied diversity categories in sport management, as reflected in the sample (see "Methods and Analysis" section). We are aware that this list is incomplete and that the meanings assigned race/ethnicity and resulting categories vary by context.

2. Misener and Darcy's (2014) editorial for a special issue of *Sport Management Review* on managing disability sport is also relevant in this regard. As discussed in the "Methods and Analysis" section, editorials were excluded from our review.

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