

Sport Management Ethics and Integrity

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Introduction

Nine papers are included in this review. Seven papers have been organised under a heading of equalities. Two papers examine the ongoing problematic of racial discrimination. One article studies LGBT+ inclusion policies in Australian cricket and two further papers investigate the inclusion of transgender athletes in sport in the context of US state legislative interventions. Two papers focus on New Zealand sport equalities policy. The first article provides a historical analysis of disability sport policy in New Zealand while the second examines diversity and inclusion in rugby. Under the heading of governance, one paper investigates the normalisation of unethical behaviours in sports governing bodies while a second piece examines the complexity of violence against women in sport.

In this review, two articles are drawn from each of *Communication and Sport*, the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, the *Journal of Sport Management*, and *Sport Management Review*. One article was published in the *Journal of Global Sport Management*. Scholars included in the review are working in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

1. Equalities

a. Sport and racial discrimination

The media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of race and ethnicity in sport, often influencing public opinion through the creation of stereotypes and biases. Media representation can have an impact on the way that athletes are treated and viewed by their peers and fans with negative coverage leading to discrimination of athletes of certain racial and ethnic backgrounds, both on and off the field. In their introductory piece to a special issue of *Communication and Sport* that is dedicated to the problematics of media representation of race in sport, Hardin and Billings (2022) note that, since the inception of the journal some ten years ago, over one hundred articles have been published on the subject. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the most cited articles concern the protest taken by NFL quarterback, Colin Kaepernick and his protest against racial violence in America. It is beyond the scope of this digest to review each of the articles, but given its wide appeal and global recognition, Kaepernick's actions continue to generate scholarly interest. In an empirical study that examines how Kaepernick's

protests against the US national anthem were received, Mueller (2022) found that public approval was weaker than scholars or journalists had reported. She accounts for this finding on two substantive grounds. Firstly, that people of colour, who may not support the action, felt compelled to show solidarity with Black protesters. Secondly, that social desirability bias led others who disapproved of the protests to keep their views to themselves out of concern for seeming out of step with mainstream liberal opinion. Mueller's work helps to problematise dominant narratives in respect of how such protests are received and contributes greatly to a more nuanced understanding of the continuing impact of Kaepernick's decision to take the knee during the playing of the national anthem.

b. LGBT+ inclusion in sport

Transgender inclusion in sport has become an increasingly important issue as more individuals who identify as transgender seek to participate in organised sports. The inclusion of transgender athletes has been a contentious issue in the United States (and elsewhere) with some arguing that allowing transgender athletes to compete in accordance with their gender identity will create an unfair advantage in certain sports, while others argue that excluding transgender athletes from competition is discriminatory and unjust. As a consequence of these debates, some states in the US have introduced legislation that seeks to limit the ability of transgender athletes to compete in accordance with their gender identity which has been met with legal challenges and public opposition. Two articles published in the past year address these debates. Drawing on a Foucauldian inspired Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of four state level Bills that aim to exclude transgender athletes from school athletic competition, Desjardins *et al* (2022), argue that the effect of the discursive practices surrounding the legislation is to reinforce biologically reductive binary conceptions of sex and to produce an essentialist gendered body. Critically, the authors give a full account of the emotional and affective weight of the discourse and how these help to produce subjects and justify transphobic discrimination.

Approaching the same issue of state legislation to exclude transgender athletes from the perspective of legal scholarship, Coffey (2022) examines the breadth of legislative interventions and the legal strategies that are being adopted by those activist groups that are challenging them in the courts. Returning the legal battles to the main issue at stake, Coffey concludes by asking, 'is it unfair to cisgender female athletes to allow transgender female athletes to compete or is it unfair to exclude transgender athletes? Does allowing

transgender women access to interscholastic and intercollegiate sport provide fewer opportunities for cisgender women?’ (16). These are some of the critical questions that are facing many SGBs as they attempt to navigate the issue of transgender inclusion in ways that are fair to everyone. Perhaps, the lesson from these studies is that sports should be given the space to do so to the best of their ability without interference from governments that are often acting from polarised political and cultural biases than from a concern for fair sporting practices.

The wider issue LGBT+ inclusion in sport has been a mainstream topic for academics for many years. For some time there has been a division in scholarly findings with some studies finding that there has been a welcome improvement in access for those who identify as LGBT+ while other surveys have found ongoing discriminatory cultures and practices. Using a mixed methods research approach that involved a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to study inclusion in Australian cricket, Storr *et al* (2022) found that there was often support by community groups for inclusion but that this was not always replicated at the level of governing body administrators at local and national levels. The authors conclude that, ‘there appeared to be attitudinal support (active and passive) for LGBT diversity ... within the sport, especially towards normative commitment-type behaviors, such as challenging discriminatory language. However, this support often did not translate into activism’ (742). The study helps to overcome the binary divide between studies that report either more or less inclusion by offering a more granular, nuanced picture that identifies broad normative support at the level of principle, but a lack of implementation of LGBT+ inclusion policy in practice.

c. Disability sport policy

Disability sport policy in Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich and complex history. This policy has been shaped by a range of social, political and cultural factors, including changing attitudes towards disability, advancements in sports technology, and the growing recognition of the value of sport for people with disabilities. Adopting a welcome historical analysis, McBean *et al* (2022) chart the development of disability sport policy through several chronological stages. In the 1970s and 1980s a growing awareness of the importance of sport for people with disabilities led to the development of new sports programmes as well as the establishment of national organisations such as the Halberg Trust to promote disability sport in New Zealand. In the 1990s the government began to play a more active role in disability sport policy with strategies aimed to promote greater

inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream sport, as well as to develop specialised programmes for people with disabilities. In more recent years, the primary policy objective has been towards a more integrative approach and the establishment of the New Zealand Disability Sports Foundation to support disabled access in sport. Noting that practical implementation of policy rests with national sports organisations, the authors conclude that, despite government policy aimed at integration, delivery of sports programme remains mostly segregated. They account for this finding partly by suggesting a lingering ableism that persists in national sports organisations.

d. Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) in New Zealand rugby

In the context of New Zealand Rugby, discursive practices play an important role in shaping attitudes and beliefs about diversity and inclusion, as well as creating narratives about these issues. Discursive practices help to reinforce existing power structures, for example around traditional notions of masculinity and toughness, which can create barriers for certain groups such as women and members of the LGBT+ community. At the same time, discursive practices can also be used to challenge these dominant narratives and push for greater inclusion in rugby. This might involve the use of alternative discourses that highlight the contributions and experiences of diverse groups, or the use of inclusive language that signals a commitment to D & I. In their qualitative study, Turconi *et al* (2022), deployed a discourse analysis within a Critical Management Studies framework to investigate how discursive practices can be simultaneously supportive and restrictive to D&I's development. They found five discursive practices around D & I to be significant in perpetuating these dual and sometimes contradictory roles. These were speech acts, othering, meritocracy, performance, and the role of sport which, they conclude can often help to promote D & I while at the same time prevent it from being fully realised.

2. Ethical Governance

It is well-known that British sports have seen a remarkable improvement in success, as measured by medal tallies, at recent Olympic Games. However, such success has arguably come at the cost of unethical practices, including bullying of athletes, in some high-performance sports cultures. Swimming, cycling, canoeing, and gymnastics have each been the subject of complaints by athletes about unethical treatment in the pursuit of Olympic medal success. Feddersen and Phelan (2022) seek to explain how unethical practices in the governance of sports can become embedded and fail to be challenged

by those working in the sports. Using a combination of case study and ethnographic methods, the paper examines how unethical practices may have become normalised in two unnamed British Olympic sports. They conclude that five factors are at play that allow unethical behaviours to go unchallenged. These are (1) you have not spent time in the trenches, (2) it has always been like this, (3) policing space, (4) I am just doing my job and (5) giving opportunities to those close to me. The authors argue that the banality of the justifications given by those working in sports for inaction to challenge unethical behaviours is important in creating a culture of inadequate governance and failures in the duty of care towards athletes.

A paper that might be considered as an exemplar of the kind of poor governance practice that allows unethical behaviour to flourish is provided by Forsdike and Fullagar (2022) who examine violence against women in the Australian community sport system. Adopting a feminist viewpoint in order to gain critical insights into a pervasive problem, the article suggests that even where appropriate policies are in place that are designed to prevent such abuse, there is often a lack of implementation at the local level to give effect to those policies. The study 'underscores the importance of developing a gender lens to think about the overlapping domains of practice in terms of; sociocultural environment (e.g., behaviors and attitudes towards women, unlearning gender scripts, resistance to change), organizational and individual capacity (e.g., competing safety priorities, resourcing, staff/volunteer training, better collaboration) and the physical and digital environment (e.g., co-designing for gender equity and safety in more than human spaces)' (22 preprint author copy). The article extends our understanding of gender violence in sports by conceiving it as hardwired as an aspect of sports organisations rather than something that simply happens in those settings.

3. Conclusions

The articles summarised in this edition show the continued importance of equalities and anti-discrimination policy and practices to both scholars and sports' administrators. The field remains a rich and developing domain of study that ranges across the global field of ethical sports management. It is pleasing to see the development of critical approaches to these studies and the willingness of researchers to reach across to other disciplines, such as sociology and philosophy, in order to find the tools through which to gain a critical theoretical purchase on their data.

4. Annotated Bibliography

Coffey, L. M. (2022). 'Equity or Discrimination: Addressing Legal Challenges to Transgender Participation in U.S. High School and College Sport'. *Journal of Global Sport Management*. Published online.

The visibility of transgender athletes in elite sport has prompted concern surrounding the potential competitive advantages for transgender women who underwent through male puberty before transitioning. In the United States, several states have passed legislation banning transgender women from high school and/or college sport for the purpose of removing this advantage and keeping sport equitable for cisgender women. The author addresses the legality of transgender participation bans and related lawsuits. She considers whether they are likely to withstand challenge under the current legal system, and how sport organisations may respond when the law is not clear.

Desjardins, B. M., Ketterling, J., & Hepburn, T. (2022). 'It's not fair! Constructing gendered legal subjects via trans-exclusionary sport legislation.' *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(4), 673-687

Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the authors analyse four Bills that seek to ban transgender student participation in school sport. They argue that, in seeking to regulate the participation of trans students in school athletics, legislatures are producing essentialist gendered subjects through binary conceptualisations of sex and gender. Further, by operationalising an instrumental view of sport – wherein winning and thus achieving material reward motivates participation – legislatures can construct trans girls as threats to cisgender girls' future success and mobilise affect and emotion to both produce subjects and to justify transphobic discrimination.

Feddersen, N. B., & Phelan, S. E. (2022). 'The Gradual Normalization of Behaviors Which Might Challenge Ethical and Professional Standards in Two British Elite Sports Organizations'. *Journal of Sport Management*, 36(5), 409-419.

The authors seek to understand how serious unethical behaviours in British sport can develop and go unchallenged to the extent that they become normalised as part of the competitive culture of the sport. They use a theoretical concept known as 'functional stupidity' to conclude that the problem lies in a collective lack of reflexivity, of wilful blindness and of looking the other way rather than challenge unethical behaviours. They found that the common rationales for accepting such behaviours were: (1) you have not

spent time in the trenches, (2) it has always been like this, (3) policing space, (4) I am just doing my job and (5) giving opportunities to those close to me.

Forsdike, K., & Fullagar, S. (2021). 'Addressing the Complexity of Violence Against Women in Sport: Using the World Café Method to Inform Organizational Response'. *Journal of Sport Management*, 36(5), 473-487.

The authors deploy an innovative method of World Café technique to gather data on the persistent problem of violence against women in Australian community sport. The procedure involves gathering participants drawn from a diverse range of perspectives into an informal group to discuss the issue, using flipcharts and similar means to record findings. Combining insights from feminist research and a socio-ecological perspective, the article contributes to sport management scholarship by using an innovative methodology for collaborative knowledge sharing and creation to explore the challenges and opportunities for organisational action to address violence against women.

Hardin, M., & Billings, A. C. (2022). 'In the Wake of a 'Racial Reckoning': Resistance... or Persistence in Sporting Representations?'. *Communication & Sport*, 10(6), 1019–1022.

In an introductory editorial piece to a special issue on sport, race and the media, the authors survey the territory, noting that media constructions of the intersections between sport and race remain fertile ground for scholars. They note that 'research has observed this social construction of racial and ethnic identities through mediated sport across global cultures. Although manifested differently in different geopolitical contexts, media (broadly defined) consistently represent sporting bodies, in a variety of ways, as inherently inferior or superior based on racial identity' (1019). The special issue problematises these media practices, notably, as discussed above, through unexpected findings concerning the disapproval by many people of colour of national anthem protests in the United States.

McBean, C., Townsend, R. C., & Petrie, K. (2022). 'An historical analysis of disability sport policy in Aotearoa New Zealand'. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(3), 419-434.

Drawing on archival data the authors outline the evolution of disability sport policy, highlighting key initiatives of government sport agencies from 1937 to the contemporary disability sport policy landscape. They identify the diffusion of power between government agencies and national sports organisations as a notable problem for inclusive disability

sports policy and practices. They conclude that attitudes which they characterise as 'enlightened ableism', whereby intentions are often good but are not matched by effective action, serve to continue to marginalise athletes with disabilities from effective participation in sport.

Mueller, L. (2022). 'Do Americans Really Support Black Athletes Who Kneel During the National Anthem? Estimating the True Prevalence and Strength of Sensitive Racial Attitudes in the Context of Sport.' *Communication & Sport*, 10(6), 1070–1091.

After Colin Kaepernick popularised the practice in 2016, kneeling during the US national anthem became a prominent form of racial protest activism. "Anthem protests" gained renewed attention after the police killing of George Floyd and nationwide unrest in the summer of 2020. The researcher found hidden opposition to anthem protests, especially among people of colour, who may feel heightened pressure to support racialised protesters. A second experiment reveals that social desirability bias persists even after respondents hear reassurance that nobody will judge their views. These findings indicate that mainstream surveys misrepresent attitudes toward contemporary racial issues, and that anthem protests have yet to gain wide acceptance in the general U.S. population.

Storr, R., O'Sullivan, G., Spaaij, R., & Symons, C. (2022). 'Support for LGBT diversity and inclusion in sport: a mixed methods study of Australian cricket'. *Sport Management Review*, 25(5), 723-747.

The authors explore the extent and nature of support for LGBT diversity in sport, with an empirical focus on cricket in Australia. Using a mixed method research design, the authors combine an online survey (n = 337) and semi-structured interviews (n = 17) across various levels of competition and administration. Drawing on Avery's theory of support for diversity, the findings demonstrate a perceived lack of institutional support through endorsement and activism for LGBT diversity but noticeable support from the grassroots cricket community. The authors conclude that if cricket in Australia is to truly be a "sport for all," and policy imperatives around diversity and inclusion are to be achieved, clear and consistent institutional support showing both commitment and action towards LGBT diversity must be demonstrated.

Turconi, L., Shaw, S., & Falcous, M. (2022). 'Examining discursive practices of diversity and inclusion in New Zealand Rugby'. *Sport Management Review*, 25(4), 589-607.

The authors examine how decision makers interpret diversity and inclusion (D&I) within a national sport organisation (NSO). Discourse analysis within the context of Critical Management Studies was established as a framework to investigate how discursive practices can be simultaneously supportive and restrictive to D&I's development. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with key personnel at one NSO, New Zealand Rugby. The findings identified five discursive practices related to D&I. These were speech acts, othering, meritocracy, performance, and the role of sport. The discussion illustrates that these discursive practices can be simultaneously supportive, ambiguous, and contradictory.