



**Gender Diversity in Sport and its impact  
on governance infrastructure, practice  
and participation in Scotland**

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## **THE OSS**

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## **GENDER DIVERSITY IN SPORT**

### **ABSTRACT**

Sport sits in a unique position in society offering opportunities for physical activity, community building, employment (athlete, coach and administrator) and entertainment. In Scotland, social, cultural and economic inequalities exist which perpetuate divides between those who benefit from the opportunities sport offers and those who do not. Gender relations reveal inequalities which are widespread and experienced as limited access to playing space, coaching, competitions, funding, equal pay and prize money, decision-making roles and media coverage. The rhetoric and reality of gender equality present a mixed picture of participation and delivery of sport in Scotland.

The Scottish Government's Sporting Equality Fund committed £300,000 to 14 projects which supported women's sport over the period 2012-2017. This funding stream was renewed in 2018 with a further £300,000 made available. 'Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week' is another government initiative which promotes participation, and during the summer of 2019 the Scottish women's national football team were funded by government to train full-time in preparation for the 2019 World Cup in France. Progress towards gender equality in Scottish sport is slow and erratic. This paper will discuss why it is important to make gender central to how sport in Scotland is positioned, funded and monitored.

At the time of publishing Scotland is in lockdown in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. As such sport in Scotland and around the world is on pause. This is, therefore, an opportunity to champion gender and gender equity in community sport so that when the restart button is pushed sport continues to grow and is more easily accessible to boys, girls, men and women around the country.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender is an ordering principle in society which influences and directs how we think, live and interact with each other as social beings. Gender impacts structural divides: who has power, who has wealth and who can influence how power is exercised (Lorber, 2010). These structural divides extend into the labour market, influencing how sectors and organisations are stratified horizontally and vertically (Kanter, 1977; Acker 1990; McDowell,1997). They extend into the family unit influencing how domestic labour and caring responsibilities are allocated (Hochschild,1997; Wajcman, 2016). They also impact on political representation in relation to gender imbalances at local, regional, national and global levels. The impact of gender on society is acutely experienced by individuals through the implementation and funding of policies which repeatedly disadvantage women (Fawcett Society, 2013<sup>1</sup>; Women’s Budget Group, 2014, 2015; O’Hagan, 2016; O’Hagan, Gillespie, McKay, 2016). Sport is not immune from gender inequality and this is reflected in the numbers of women participating from the boardroom to the playing field (Dennehy and Reid, 2018; EIGE, 2016; Women in Sport, 2018).

In Scotland and more generally in Western society gender inequality is not a constant, it is not rigid, it changes over time and space and sport is not immune (Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 2000). Resistance<sup>2</sup> to gender as an ongoing topic, category and perspective remains a challenge for researchers, activists and practitioners who are required to overcome narratives of ‘the job being done’ as anti-discrimination legislation and policies are part of many mainstream sports organisations and institutions (Kelan, 2009; Evans, 2017). Unfortunately, practices prevail in society and more specifically in sport which are opaque and continue to reproduce gender inequalities. This paper seeks to explore gender as a topic to advocate that greater knowledge and understanding is required to ensure the rhetoric of equality and diversity is challenged to support robust and sustainable action on gender in Scottish sport from community to national sport.

### **Bats and Balls or Dolls and Tutus**

What is your gender? This frequently asked question has, for many, a simple answer – male or female. But biological identifiers do not address the complexities of the phenomenon that is gender. Gender is a process which begins when we are born. In different social, cultural and economic environments, we all experience influences which inform how we construct and perform our gender identity. The constant drip of messages about how we should perform our gender is easily identified in the children’s toys to which we assign masculine and feminine values and, for many individuals, is how the social process first becomes obvious.

Boys are more likely to get a ball to kick and throw, while girls are more likely to get dolls and tutus. The narrow versions of masculinity which boys often experience in sport begin with the toys that encourage certain types of physical activity. If they are not in sync with dominant masculine and heterosexual norms they can feel isolated and bullied (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Similarly, girls playing sport can experience the need to comply with a version of femininity which is ‘soft and sexualised’ and in direct conflict with the strength and power demanded by their sport.

In education, gender stereotypes prevail in subject choices and set in train segregation in the labour market with women dominating care and service sectors and men dominating construction and engineering. In 2007, the Scottish Qualifications Authority announced a drive to increase the number

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/policy-submission-to-the-review-of-the-public-sector-equality-duty> accessed 19 May 2020

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/sex-and-power-2020> accessed 19 May 2020

of girls taking physics and computing subjects. Some teachers openly expressed that the effort was not worth the outcome and one headmaster in a *Scotland on Sunday* article says:

“I think it is much better to realise that there are differences between boys and girls, and the ways in which they learn. Overall, boys choose subjects to suit their learning style which is more logic based” (Horne; 2007).

Is the implication that girls learn in illogical ways? The choice of words is important to ensure that stereotypes are challenged rather than reinforced.

Gender is a relational concept, is inherently social, involves the body and its physical presence and is fundamentally embedded in sport and accentuated as athletes progress to elite levels where their body is simultaneously “The site, the instrument and the object of their daily work, the medium and the outcome of their occupational exertion... and much of their existence is consumed by servicing, moulding and strategically manipulating their bodies”(Wacquant, 1995, p72).

Sport is widely considered a gendered domain, and a site for struggle where boys and their physical skills are the norm and girls are often marked as ‘other’. For example, in 2018 Laura Matthews from the charity Women in Sport<sup>3</sup> was giving evidence to a Welsh Assembly inquiry into physical activity of children and young people. She says girls think sport is not for them when they hear boys being told they “throw like a girl”. The message may appear to some to be harmless, but for girls it is insulting and for boys it suggests there is a benchmark of masculinity which if not achieved marks them as deficit.

Media coverage of elite sport holds the power to influence public thinking and the maintenance of norms and stereotypes which can translate into community sport. The London 2012 Olympics was called the gender equality games with men and women competing in all 26 sports. Women competed for the first time for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Brunei and in Team GB 48.2% of the athletes were women. By contrast only 15% of the press journalists and photographers were women, a statistic that was replicated in Rio 2016.

Media coverage of women’s sport continues to stagnate despite the optics of presenting pictures of gender-balanced teams in Commonwealth and Olympic Games. Women in Sport reported in 2014 that 7% of all media coverage was of women’s sport. The 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project found in the category of celebrity, arts, media and sport only 23% of women in the UK were called on as experts or commentators, down from 31% in 2010. Prize money and pay for elite athletes is gendered across sport. For example, the English FA Cup prize fund for men’s teams is £30.25 million, for women it’s £250,000. This equates to a first-round winner in the men’s competition receiving £36,000 while the women’s team for the same first round win will receive just £850. The gender pay gap at the Football World Cup is \$370 million with the prize pot for men being \$400 million and for women \$30 million (which was doubled in 2018 from just \$15 million). For Scotland’s women’s football team this translates to a six-figure sum being paid from FIFA for playing in France.

After the London 2012 Olympics, Franks and O’Neill (2016) studied British newspapers to see if there was any change in sports journalism using content by-lines and comparing the data with a study from 2002. They found female by-lines accounted for only 2.3% from over 2,500 sports articles in two seven-day periods. This finding was markedly lower than the 8% found in a 2011 International Sports Press Survey report which analysed 11,000 by-lined sports articles from 80 countries (Horky and Nieland, 2011). In a study of British newspaper coverage during the London 2012 Olympics, the Gender Hub found that women’s sport reached 30% for the two weeks of competition then quickly

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-politics-43415517/telling-boys-they-throw-like-a-girl-puts-girls-off-sport>

returned to 10% post competition. During the event, coverage dominated news sections which explained the sharp increase and the equally sharp return to between 3% and 10% day to day (Gender Hub, 2013).

The messages about sport and other physical activity begin at home with parents and family and for girls this can continue an intergenerational legacy of inactivity. The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation report 'Changing the Game for Girls' found that "mothers are a particularly powerful source of encouragement for participation in sport and physical activity for younger girls. However, some parents can be complicit in girls' disengagement from activity. Girls also said they were constrained by stricter rules as to where they could play." (WSFF, 2012) The gendered messages delivered to girls and boys reinforce stereotypes about who should play sport and what sport they should play. To disrupt these messages and their impact requires making gender central to how sport in Scotland is positioned, funded and monitored.

### **Gender and Sport in Scotland**

The challenge for sport in Scotland is to recognise that, while some changes (legal and political) have been instrumental in addressing gender inequality, concluding that gender equality is a reality or an achievable reality is fundamentally flawed. Goals of 50/50 in political representation or public boards is possible, but what are the equality goals for sport? Is gender equality to be measured on participation rates, coaching ratios, equitable investment in athletes and facilities or other markers?

The Equality and Human Rights Commission defines equality as ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics<sup>4</sup>.

Numbers continue to be utilised as the key means for measuring inequality, but numbers alone cannot address the influence and impact of social, cultural and structural impediments to individuals and groups. Dennehy and Reid (2018) argue that in Scotland, statistical data is only one aspect of exploring the position of women in sports leadership. They examine why it is necessary to review the sports governance system and socio-political discourses within the national context to uncover why leadership in sport is gendered.

In 2017 Engender, Scotland's feminist policy organisation, published 'The Gender Matters Roadmap' which outlines a series of measures that the Scottish government and other bodies can take to make significant progress towards women's equality by 2030. Sport is one area of importance in the roadmap and the objective is for women to have equal access to resources and opportunities and to be able to fully participate in society and culture:

"This roadmap sets out a series of measures that, with political will, can be taken by Scottish government and other bodies in pursuit of these goals. With these measures, we hope that Scotland can make significant progress towards women's equality by 2030." (Engender, 2017, p4)

There is increasing consensus that women generally have, and continue to have, less access to power and privilege in sport and wider society. But consigning gender inequality to a 'women's issue' achieves little as evidenced by the limited results in public and private sector representation, leadership and decision making. Recognition of the structures which perpetuate gender inequality and a commitment to reforming them can unlock sustainable and progressive transformation.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/understanding-equality>

For example, how does the privilege of private education and access to sports facilities and coaching impact on those whose talent is spotted, funded and developed? At the 2012 London Olympic Games 41% of UK medallists were educated in the private sector where 7% of pupils in England and 5% of pupils in Scotland are educated privately. Similarly, in 2017, BBC Scotland research<sup>5</sup> found information on 383 of 525 of Scotland's elite athletes indicating that 9 out of 10 went to private schools (22%) or state schools in wealthy areas (68%).

Such evidence challenges stakeholders in sport and their governance structures to activate greater support and development of school sport, addressing not just gender but ethnicity, class and disability. The responsibility society invests in PE teachers to encourage and teach physical literacy, skills and approaches to competition is an area which requires closer scrutiny from national governing bodies, clubs, councils and coaches.

Coaching is critical to the development of sport from grassroots to elite levels. And every two years, UK Coaching<sup>6</sup> conduct a survey to assess the number of active coaches. For the past two reporting periods (2017 and 2019) the number has remained static at 6% of the UK adult population.

In 2019 Scotland reported 5.39% of adults do some coaching, a drop of 1.6% from 2017. However, in contrast to the other home nations, there are more women coaches in Scotland than men. Dig a little deeper into the data and the figures UK wide show while male coaches are twice as likely than women to coach in a sports club or sports institute, women are more likely to be coaching in a community or youth group.

The gender imbalance in both the coaching level (and the opportunities for development) for women coaches<sup>7</sup> is also replicated in board representation, decision making and administration in Scotland and could be usefully addressed through gender mainstreaming in policy implementation:

“Gender mainstreaming<sup>8</sup> has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016)

If Scotland wishes to encourage wider participation in sport – its administration, representation and governance by men and women – and maintain it, then gender needs to be better examined and understood amongst sport leaders and sport policy makers. Recognising inequality and the intersectionality of inequalities is important to creating a multi-dimensional view of how individuals experience access to sport and wider society.

## **Gender and Intersectionality**

Social categories such as gender, class, race and ethnicity can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. This concept known as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) often begins with gender as the core identifier from which an individual can layer other social aspects of their identity. The growing implementation of intersectionality as a means of acknowledging the differences between people and as a more sophisticated approach to data collection and analysis has much to offer sport in Scotland.

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<sup>5</sup> BBC Scotland, 2 Jan 2017. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38452215>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukcoaching.org/resources/topics/research/coaching-in-the-uk>

<sup>7</sup> For the full report – Spotlight on Gender from UK Coaching use the link above.

<sup>8</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

Gender is a social category which strongly contributes to how we develop our social identity over the course of our lives (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Society regulates men and women along gender lines. In sport particularly, it is women's and girls' bodies which are highly regulated and draw on narrow versions of acceptable femininity (Fisher and Dennehy, 2015). In 2018<sup>9</sup> a global study of more than 14,000 women by scientists at St Mary's University<sup>10</sup> in association with FitrWoman, a fitness app, found that 40% of women in the UK decreased their amount of physical activity or withdrew from it entirely during puberty. This figure is higher than the global figure of 25%.

Dr Georgie Bruinvels co-founder of FitrWoman and one of the researchers and a Great Britain cross-country runner said:

"The drop-out figure was linked to the impact of menstruation, body changes such as breast and body hair growth, embarrassment and low confidence, feelings of inadequacy, unflattering sports kit, a lack of enjoyment and that sport was "not cool"... It is significant that two in five girls in the UK and Ireland decrease their participation during puberty. This is not what we would expect because through this maturation process, capacity for exercise increases."

Addressing access in sport is one aspect of intersectionality which makes a useful contribution to understanding why it is not just the experiences of individuals which are important but identifying the structures of power which impact on those experiences.

Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) identify four distinct yet interconnected domains of power – interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural – which provide a useful framework for considering how females experience sport from the grassroots to elite levels.

Power relations are about interpersonal social relations and the advantages and disadvantages experienced in different environments. For example, football is a global sport but not everyone can play. The men's game has more resources than the women's game. Not all women are able to play and throughout history different political and legislative devices been used to prevent women from playing.

How the female body is marked by society as 'other' is a process which intersects when space for sport is claimed by male bodies. Clark (2013) found that many girls at primary school begin a journey which sees them more likely than boys to be confronted with a regulated space in which to play sport. Such regulation imposes restrictions and reduces their opportunity to engage in unstructured and spontaneous physical activity.

The safety fears which parents have for their daughters connects public space with danger and sexual predators and harassment. This can impact on the lack of girls playing self-generated games in public spaces without adult supervision.

Girls and boys are receiving the message that girls' bodies are a potential site of conflict which continues as they mature into adolescence and adulthood. Stanko (1993) makes the important argument that threats and harassment against women throughout their lifetime serve as a form of 'sexual terrorism' that keeps all women hyper-alert to these threats, positioning them as personally responsible for their individual safety. Clark (2013) draws on Stanko's ideas to explore girls' experiences of sport as they transition into high school.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/womens-sport/2019/03/26/revealed-two-five-british-irish-girls-shun-sport-puberty-far/>

<sup>10</sup> Bruinvels G, Burden RJ, McGregor AJ, et al Sport, exercise and the menstrual cycle: where is the research? British Journal of Sports Medicine 2017;51:487-488.

Clark interviewed a girl named Spirit who over the summer holidays has to run on the track, but is clearly drawn to other athletic disciplines. However, she is restricted by the intersection of her gender, age, geography and family values.

“I just love the feeling of running as well, especially cross-country. Because you don’t know where you’re going, that’s what I love about it.” (Clark, 2013)

The opportunity for girls and women to enjoy physical activity and sport in unrestrained ways which do not mark their bodies as physically vulnerable or weak presents sport with a lever to engage with some fundamental societal issues about who owns our public space, and how can everyone access the space safely and without being objectified or harassed.

### **Think Gender, Think Women – Breaking Down Stereotypes**

Whatever perspective one takes to engage with gender, drawing on the extensive body of theoretical and empirical work that exists can encourage productive challenges to assumptions about gender. Below are three different perspectives defining gender, each contributing to the depth and breadth of knowledge which exists in academia, organisations and society. These definitions come from different specialisms in academic research; employment, philosophy and sociology, illustrating the breadth and depth of work undertaken in the field of gender studies. It is not that one quote is better than the others, it is that different readers will have different response to the quotes.

“I view gender as having a social structure and related practices with a history that entails opportunities and constraints and a plethora of meanings, expectations, actions/behaviors, resources, identities, and discourses that are fluid and shifting yet robust and persisting.” (Martin, 2003)

“One does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone. One is always ‘doing’ with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. What I call my ‘own’ gender appears at times as something that I author or, indeed, own.” (Butler, 2004)

“Gender is not so much about biological differences, but more about how the relationships in society can incorporate and encourage hierarchies, which can favour one individual over another.” (Le Feuvre, 1999)

The ‘Heidi and Howard’ case study (McGinn and Tempest, 2010) illustrates how binary thinking reinforces stereotypes as in the persistent ‘think manager, think male’ which was first coined by Schein (1973) and still persists in workplaces. In the ‘Heidi and Howard’ study, students are presented with one of two biographies of a well-connected, real, successful venture capitalist in Silicon Valley. For some students, this person is called ‘Howard’ and is described as effective, competent and almost unanimously all the students would like to work for him. For other students, this person is called ‘Heidi’ and given identical characteristics to ‘Howard’, and while she is considered competent the students do not want to work for her. When compared side by side, ‘Howard’ is found to simply be more likeable than ‘Heidi’.

Challenging the gendering process which marks Heidi (the real person) as unlikeable is easy to dismiss as inconsequential, but this outcome underpins why some sporting organisational cultures can be perceived as being unwelcome to women and even marking them out as ‘other’. In the Women in Sport (2018) *Beyond 30%* report two male respondents illustrate this point.

“She was brilliant at her job, but the level of battery that she used to face for being a woman was unreal. That was almost the first thing people would mention before we were even talking about her ability and I find it astonishing.”

“I think there’s no secret that in the sport sector, historically – there’s a culture of the old boys’ club.”

By acknowledging gender and questioning its impact on a case by case basis, it is possible to disrupt the cultural norms which maintain hierarchies and exclusive networks.

The language of gender diversity and equality has been instrumental in creating ‘gender fatigue’ amongst different groups. Professor Kelan (2009) describes ‘gender fatigue’ as a phenomenon that assumes gender no longer matters because the issue has been solved. Like the workplace, sport is constructed as gender neutral where discrimination is viewed as single-issue events.

Gender fatigue has led to an environment where the questions of ‘equality with what’ and ‘diversity of who’ does not drive discussions or agendas and limits engagement with delivering real world solutions. As neuroscientist Cordelia Fine explains:

“The gender inequality you see is in your mind. So are the cultural beliefs about gender that are so familiar to us all. They are in a messy tangle of mental associations that interact with the social context.” (Fine, 2010, p235)

Gender is easy to see when it is confined to biological indicators, yet difficult to understand because it is embedded in our actions, attitudes, values and behaviours.

The five quotes used in the following paragraphs come from Research Scotland’s ‘Equality and Sport’ report (2016) commissioned by sportscotland and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The quotes were selected to highlight why equality generally and gender equality fatigue exist in sport, in Scotland, and the disconnection between awareness and action.

“There is awareness, but I’m not sure that equality is seen as a priority for action. People aren’t doing much about it.” (sportscotland staff member, focus group)

“If anything, it’s paid lip service and may be considered late in a project to tick boxes rather than a genuine desire to be more inclusive.” (sportscotland staff member, survey) (p42)

The lip service critique plagues gender equality work. The priority given to diversity, inclusion and more recently unconscious bias training prevails through public and private sector organisations<sup>11</sup>. In her book ‘Gender Equality by Design’ Bohnet (2016) argues that gender equality is a moral imperative and a necessity for business which cannot be unlocked using training. She says there is little evidence that the £6 billion spent annually by US corporations on diversity and unconscious bias training is effective. Building capacity in leadership and using behavioural design to help people be better critical thinkers creates ‘conditions for success’ shifting away from the dominant ‘numbers game’ discourse.

The quotes below underpin why gender equality needs to be embedded into how we think and act in sport from coaching to clubs, athletes to parents, teachers to policy makers. Opting out of the responsibility of equality is the first behaviour that needs to be redesigned to ensure that knowledge is shared and understood.

“Equality has undoubtedly come a long way in recent years and has increasing political profile, but it is still not considered a priority area within most sports and for some it is considered an inconvenience.” (Scottish Governing Body of Sport, survey)

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/blogs/unconscious-bias-training-no-such-thing-quick-fix>

“We shouldn’t focus too heavily on equalities. We have a diverse membership so there is no need to focus energy on policies.” (Scottish Governing Body of Sport, focus group)

“Within our sport it has never seemed an issue and there is probably more importance given to this topic than other equally deserving areas.” (Scottish Governing Body of Sport, survey p43)

Change and progress are symbolically used in the language and research of gender relations which seeks to appeal to those who want to live in a society in which people are diverse, visible and valued. But such a conceptual approach to equality is practically difficult to implement because the key lies in an acceptance that change and progress rely on systemic, structural and cultural shifts. To counter the enormity of the task, Professor Mary Evans argues that society is caught in an “appetite for self-congratulation that fails to recognise the various reasons why gender relations have changed and just as importantly, why they have not changed” (Evans, 2017, p10).

Understanding the gender differences in leisure time can be instructive by asking different people what sport they want, when they want it and where they want it. Family sport may be one answer where parents and children can take part in different activities at the same time and at the same venue. Facilities are an important aspect of transformation in sport, and ensuring basic needs are met can go a long way to making people feel welcome. This point is well made in the quote below.

“Within mini rugby, girls are hugely underrepresented. There is an issue with the facilities – we play in a public park with no toilet facilities, which is a much bigger issue for the girls than the boys. There is also an issue with the boys not passing to the girls, which means that the girls get disillusioned and stop attending.” (Active Schools staff, survey) (Research Scotland, 2016, p49)

Every individual has a gender identity which intersects with other influencers and social determinants such as poverty, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability and class. Sport sits in a unique position in society offering opportunities for physical activity, community building, employment (athlete, coach and administrator) and entertainment.

## **Playing Sport**

Research on barriers to girls doing sport continues to grow yet substantial change remains elusive. School sport is a key area of concern as PE is for many children their first experience with sport and competition. In the Ofsted (2014) report ‘Going the Extra Mile’, a survey of over 1,000 young people aged 11-18, only 40% played sport outside of school (football and swimming) and less than 5% competed in netball, hockey, rugby or cricket outside of school. The Scottish Independent Schools Project (Forbes et al, 2008) found that girls’ team sports were undervalued with less – and more marginal – space devoted to girls’ hockey than to, for example, boys’ rugby.

Team sport for girls is less visible in schools than team sport for boys. A group of academics (Allison, Bird and McClean, 2017) recently undertook a systematic review of evidence (177 publications) which identified four studies meeting their criteria including Scottish-based ‘Girls on the Move’ and ‘Fit for Girls’, to assess the impact of team sport on secondary school aged girls. They found few studies which have tested interventions designed specifically for girls in the UK and interestingly, in the studies reviewed, only one study asked the girls what they wanted from a programme of sport.

The quotes below underpin the findings that girls are not being served well enough by sport in Scotland generally and this creates an intergenerational legacy of physical inactivity and disengagement in contributing to sport as a coach or some other role.

“Women in sport has been an issue for years and we struggle to see any change.” (Community Sports Hub officer, focus group)

“We are not serving this generation of girls as well as we should. There is something systematically wrong with what we are offering girls.” (sportscotland staff, focus group) (Research Scotland, 2016, p50)

So, what are the reasons for such limited progress and what needs to happen for progress to be accelerated? Evidence from England finds that men and women do sport in different ways: men are more likely to play in team sport – football, rugby and cricket – while women do individual sport, swimming, athletics and tennis.<sup>12</sup> In Scotland research on what girls and women want from sport, when they want it and how they want it is limited. Answers to such questions suggest that how and what is researched needs greater discussion with all stakeholders in Scottish sport to ensure that more diverse voices are heard.

## **SWOT Analysis**

The following SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is a summary of the key issues in gender equality; sport is used as a device to highlight pressure points and encourage further research, discussion and consideration of the culture of sporting structures and practices in the Scottish context.

### **Strengths**

- The UK Equality Act (2010) provides a legal framework to protect and promote the rights of individuals. New measures were introduced including the requirement of public bodies to report on employment information to include the number and characteristics of staff and those bodies with more than 250 staff to publish gender pay gap information.
- In 2012 the Scottish Government introduced specific equalities duties regulation for named public authorities which include sportscotland. These include a duty to report on equality outcomes and progress, to gather and use employment information, to assess and review policies and practices using the impact assessment model.
- The UK Sports Council which includes Scotland re-launched their equality standard for sport in 2012.
- The Scotland Act 2016 adds ‘Equalities’ to the major devolved powers that sit with the Scottish Parliament. A recent example of these powers is the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018.
- The Sydney Scoreboard is a global index for women in sport leadership and is an initiative from the 2010 IWG World Conference on Women and Sport<sup>13</sup>. Data via sportscotland is available on the IWG website for the periods ending 2011 and 2014 when the SGBs’ reporting increased from 42 to 57 with 17 of those boards reporting all male members.

### **Weaknesses**

- Perpetuating gender stereotypes in sport is often dominated by discourses of masculinity which can act as barriers to some who, for example, hide their authentic gender and sexual identities for fear of bullying or exclusion.
- Versions of femininity mainstreamed in social and cultural practices in sport amplify narrow scripts of acceptable versions of body type, age, sexual orientation, social class and ethnicity.

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<sup>12</sup> Department for Culture Media and Sport (2011) Adult Participation in Sport, Analysis of the Taking Part Survey

<sup>13</sup> <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/>

- Categorising gender as a women's issue – it is a societal issue. Adding girls and women to the sports mix does not adequately address their physical, emotional, biological, economic, social and psychological needs.
- Access to space for sport and other physical activity is dominated by boys' and men's sport which visually normalises sport as a masculine domain. Research is needed to address this issue.
- Gender-based programmes are underfunded and under-resourced to take micro level changes to macro level changes.

### **Opportunities**

- Sport sits in a unique position in society and could contribute to addressing wider issues of safety and harassment which continue to target girls and women in public places.
- Gender equitable investing in sport provides the landscape to shift from first order to second order change.
- Gender lens investing is a deliberate approach to funding and investment which incorporates gender factors into analysis and decision making. For example, working with a council to ensure there is good lighting at public sports facilities could be critical to encouraging more girls and women to attend later classes or training sessions.
- Regular monitoring, analysis and reporting of sports boards should be undertaken in Scotland by an organisation like Scottish Women in Sport (SWIS) to build on the work which has been started at sportscotland.
- Since 2015, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals place a strong emphasis on gender equality, and sport can use this framework to encourage access and participation.
- Gender balanced representation at decision making levels is an important target for sports organisations to achieve and monitoring this function is important (see strengths).

### **Threats**

- Using a deficit model in gender equality which suggests that women need to be fixed, rather than systems and structures need to be re-engineered to be inclusive. Women and girls should not be the sole changemakers for transforming discriminatory systems, not should they be criticised for campaigning for equality.
- Equality rhetoric and its supporting optics which focus on 'first woman – job done' perpetuates organisational cultures which 'look away' from discrimination, harassment and abuse.
- Governance is responsible for ensuring sustainable transparent practices in recruitment and board appointments, so inequality is addressed.
- The old boys' network (which includes old girls too) fosters nepotism and limits open and transparent recruitment to decision making positions.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of gender on sport is unquestionable. But how that impact is understood and explained is gaining more visibility in the Scottish context. Perpetuating gender stereotypes in sport are often dominated by narratives of masculinity which sustain barriers to participation at every level from the boardroom to the playing field. The role of intersectionality as an approach to identifying how social

categories can connect to create discrimination and disadvantage offers insights into people's lives and their multi-dimensional relationships with sport. Scottish sport has an opportunity to draw on the fragmented networks of expertise in gender and sport to push for research that asks different questions, new questions while continuing to collect data to enable comparisons.

Gender is an integral part of our identity as individuals, athletes, coaches, spectators, parents and citizens. The complexities of gender and society are reflected in sport and provide opportunities to lead on issues of shared community space, equitable investing, elite pathways and more broadly the social benefits of sport and other physical activity.

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