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WOMEN IN SPORT LEADERSHIP:
the missing dimension

International evidence for change

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Executive Summary

In 1994 the Brighton Declaration highlighted to Governments the need to increase women’s participation in sport. The Hillary Commission, New Zealand’s government agency for sport at the time, used the recommendations from the Brighton Declaration to develop the Winning Women Charter in 1998. This Charter included specific principles for developing women’s leadership in sport. However, when the Hillary Commission was replaced by Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) in 2002 the Charter was no longer supported.

Seven years on, in 2009, what does our sport leadership landscape look like in New Zealand in terms of gender distinctions? What is the international situation in terms of women in sport leadership roles? What are the implications of a lack of leadership in sport by women? What is the state of women’s sport media coverage and are there successful development programs creating change? This report collates and summarises available literature on women’s involvement in sport in New Zealand and international settings. In doing so, it draws on academic research as well as practitioner reports, policies and position papers from around the world. Specifically highlighted is the position of women in sport leadership roles such as board members, executive decision makers, high performance coaching and their current standing in the media regarding presence and portrayal in sport. In exploring each of these areas, a body of evidence is presented for the sport sector in New Zealand, demonstrating the need for action to increase the involvement of women in sport leadership roles. Strategies to stimulate greater female contribution are needed so that sport organisations in New Zealand might maximise their available talent pool and in doing so create better outcomes for our organised sport system.

Key Messages

• Women comprise approximately 27% of the top leadership (board) positions in New Zealand national sport organisations, as reported by Cockburn, Gray and Thompson (2007) on behalf of the New Zealand Olympic Committee who surveyed 47 national sport organisations.

• Further to this over half of the organisations did not meet the International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines of at least 20% of national sport organisation boards comprising women.

• While there is less known about female contribution to high performance sport, available evidence indicates low levels of involvement by women as high performance directors and coaches in New Zealand and internationally.
• There is a growing body of evidence that indicates women’s contribution in the boardroom and in leadership positions brings an added dimension to the group’s strategic and collaborative capabilities.

• Gains have been made where governments and special interest groups have focused attention on increasing women in leadership positions, invested financial resources, and applied gender equity quotas to the composition of boards.

• The visibility and priority given to the representation of women’s sport in the media is criticised by authors who have investigated the low volume of coverage and sexualised portrayal of women’s sporting endeavours.

• Encouragingly, netball in New Zealand is seen as an international model for women’s sport media coverage and is used as evidence of the commercial potential of the female sport media product.

• There is debate in the literature as to the efficacy of some approaches to leadership development for women in sport. There is strong evidence, however, that supports the success of mentoring as an approach for increasing the contribution of female leadership in sport.

While comprising over half of the population, women are underrepresented in the sporting arena in New Zealand. This missing dimension is evident in playing, coaching, board positions, executive roles and media coverage. This gap in female participation in all facets of sporting life represents a substantial opportunity for growth. The evidence collected from this review of literature indicates that gains can be made in women’s contribution to the leadership of sport with the support of government legislation and policies.
1. Introduction

In 1994 in Brighton, United Kingdom, the first international conference on women and sport was held, organised by the British Sports Council and supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Eighty-two countries were represented by 280 policy and decision makers at both national and international levels. The result of the inaugural conference was the Brighton Declaration, which aimed to improve the status of women in sport and address the imbalances women face in various aspects of sport, including leadership roles (Brighton Declaration, 1994). In 1998, the second conference was held in Windhoek, Namibia and the result of this was the Windhoek Call for Action which included the intent to “build the capacity of women as leaders and decision-makers and ensure that women play meaningful and visible roles in sport at all levels” (Windhoek Call for Action, 1998, p. 3). In 1997, the IOC established targets for women’s membership of National Olympic Committees. These targets stated that women should hold at least 10% of executive decision-making positions in National Olympic Committees by 2001, rising to at least 20% by 2005 (Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, 2004). The Brighton Declaration, Windhoek Call for Action and the IOC targets were catalysts for many countries to engage in research and implement changes to achieve greater involvement by women in the sporting sector. New Zealand was a party to these commitments.

1.1 Report Outline

The purpose of this report is to collate and summarise the body of research evidence pertaining to the involvement of women in sport in New Zealand and international settings. Specifically highlighted is the position of women in sport leadership roles such as board members, executive decision makers, high performance coaching and their current standing in the media regarding the presence and portrayal of women in the media including broadcasting and print journalism. In exploring each of these areas, a body of evidence is presented for the sport sector in New Zealand, demonstrating the need for action to increase the involvement of women in sport leadership roles. Strategies to stimulate greater female contribution are needed so that sport organisations in New Zealand might maximise their available talent pool and in doing so create better outcomes for our organised sport system.

The review of literature incorporates reports on the effect that the Brighton Declaration (1994), Windhoek Call to Action (1998), and IOC policies, as catalysts for change, have had on policy, funding and research in sport. More generally, the report sets out the issues faced in counties such as England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It also incorporates purposeful initiatives and programmes implemented, in order to stimulate the emergence of women in sport leadership roles. Literature is drawn from government sources, special interest group reports, peak body policy statements, as well as academic sources and empirical evidence in order to understand the issues and project possible solutions.
2. Leadership

There is a growing body of global literature on women’s involvement in the leadership of sport. Although not limited to, this literature is primarily derived from the perspective of western and Commonwealth countries. The literature spans research endeavours by academics (Leberman & Palmer, 2009a, b; Obel, Bruce & Thompson, 2008; Pfister & Radtke, 2009) as well as reports commissioned by government agencies and non profit interest groups (Cockburn, Gray & Thompson, 2007; George Street Research, 2004; Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, 2004.). There is one prevailing message that dominates this literature: that there is an underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, including sport boards, executive decision making positions, and high performance leadership roles (including coaching). This section provides a summary of the percentages of women in sport leadership positions and offers a synthesis of current thinking in terms of barriers and solutions.

2.1 Board, Executive and Management

In the most recent New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation (Human Rights Commission, 2008) a section on sport has been added for the first time in recognition of the place sport holds in the national identity of New Zealand. The figures were drawn from a survey conducted by the New Zealand Olympic Committee (2008) whereby 47 Olympic and Commonwealth sports were surveyed in 2007. The Census report stated that of the 47 national sport organisations surveyed, as a whole 27% of board positions were held by women. Only half of the 47 sports surveyed, met the International Olympic Committee (IOC) guideline for national sport organisations, of 20% female sport board membership (New Zealand Olympic Committee, 2008). A total of 10 boards (21%) were found to have no women among their board membership, one of which was rowing which is recorded as having 55% female participation in the sport (Human Rights Commission, 2008). The Census report expresses alarm at the low rates of female participation in leadership in many facets of New Zealand society. As noted by sport sociologists, sport is indeed a reflection of the society within which we live (Coakly, Hallinan, Jackson & Mewett, 2009). The Census report stated, “the results reveal a worrying report card for women’s equality” (Human Rights Commission, 2008, p. 5). The sport sector is no exception for such concern.

As reported by Cockburn, Gray and Thompson (2007), women in sport was a key issue in the 1990s and this was especially the case for peak bodies in New Zealand sport. In expressing concern at the level of women’s involvement in sport leadership roles around the world, the IOC established a Women and Sport Working Group in 1995 (International Olympic Committee, 2009). Also at the time the New Zealand government agency for sport, the then Hillary Commission undertook research to establish the contribution of women in national policy making and management roles (Murphy, 1994). As a response to this research, a number of gender equity programmes and initiatives were developed and implemented by the Hillary Commission and its key partners (Cockburn, Gray & Thompson, 2007). In recognition of this work, the IOC made an international award to the Hillary
Commission’s Winning Women Programme, “for supporting the development of organisational policies and programmes promoting the involvement of women as leaders and coaches” (Cockburn, Gray & Thompson, 2007, p. 9). The authors go on to note that the Winning Women’s Programme and other initiatives purposefully designed to stimulate women’s involvement in sport were discontinued at the inception of the new government agency for sport and recreation, SPARC. Cockburn, Gray & Thompson observed that “since the restructuring of the national government role in sport (2002), the focus has been on promoting physical activity participation with little attention paid to leadership development in general and women in particular” (p. 9).

Over the past several years however, SPARC has refocused its attention on the development of leadership capability, targeting governance and leadership roles of national sport and recreation organisations in particular (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2006). The recently released strategic plan (2009-2015) continues to focus on governance and leadership capability but does not specifically seek to stimulate women’s involvement in sport (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009a). The Sport and Recreation New Zealand Act 2002 which sets out the functions of SPARC, incorporates the need to target population groups. It calls for the organisation to “encourage participation in physical recreation and sport by Pacific peoples, women, older New Zealanders, and people with disabilities” (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009b). While women as a target group are not specified in the strategic plan (2009-2015), SPARC has undertaken some initiatives to stimulate women’s involvement in sport and recreation such as research funding, the publishing of women’s participation figures, and supporting awards that recognise activities that have grown women’s involvement (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009b).

The New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) has established a Women in Sport Working Group and has been active in undertaking and disseminating research on women’s leadership involvement in New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth Games sports (New Zealand Olympic Committee, 2008). The research conducted by Cockburn, Gray & Thompson (2007) on behalf of the NZOC found that few boards (19%) reflect the gender composition of the sport’s participants and that there are 10 boards (21%) with no women which represents a 6% increase since 1994. In addition, there a few national sport organisations that have national development programmes for women (6%) and 9% of the organisations surveyed had any sub-committees or special groups that focus on women’s policies.

In Australia, the Senate requested an inquiry report from the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee into the status of women in sport and recreation in Australia. Released in 2006, this report identified that women were poorly represented in leadership positions and on boards in sport and recreation. While the inquiry identified barriers to women and girl’s participation in sport and recreation and low levels of media coverage as matters for concern, it also highlighted leadership and governance issues. At the time of the inquiry, the national average of women on national sport organisation boards in Australia was one in seven. Furthermore, women held just 13% of executive officer positions (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). In her report on women’s involvement in sport leadership in the ACT, Oldenhove (2003) reported that women comprised 28% of the positions on peak sport associations.
Stimulated by the first World Conference on Women’s Sport in 1994, and the establishment of the Brighton Declaration, UK Sport and the Women’s Sports Foundation established the UK Coordinating Group on Women and Sport (UKCGWS) in 2001. This group set about developing a Strategic Framework for women and sport. As well as participation and sporting excellence, leadership was identified as an area where women were underrepresented. The authors of the framework noted that the sport sector was not the only sector where women were underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. The authors also noted that the lack of women in these roles was limiting the spectrum of skills available to sport boards and executive committees (UK Sport, 2003).

At the time of the Strategic Framework report, women held 23% of chief executive, sports council and senior board positions within sports organisations. The strategic objectives and targets outlined in this framework with regards to leadership were to “increase the number of women leaders at all levels and in all capacities in sport and physical representation” (UK Sport, 2003, p. 9). It set out a target which was to increase “the number of women on strategic sports boards and committees from 23% to 30%” (UK Sport, 2003, p. 9). In 2006, a progress report was released to analyse the current situation and re-evaluate the targets set by the framework in 2003. In revisiting the target to increase the percentage of women on strategic boards and committees, the report stated that at the end of 2005, the percentage had increased from 23% to 26% but still fell short of the 30% target (UK Sport, 2006). In an effort to increase the numbers of women in leadership roles, a Women and Leadership Development Program was developed by UK Sport together with the British Olympic Association. While this program only began in 2006, the annual women in sport report showed an increase from 26% to 29% of women in leadership roles in sport by the end of 2006 (UK Sport, 2006b).

At a global level, a joint project between the Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy at Loughborough University and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was conducted in 2004. The purpose of the project was to evaluate the impact of the IOC Women and Sport policy with respect to the roles women play on executive committees (Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, 2004). The IOC’s policy established targets “for women to hold at least 10% of executive decision-making positions on National Olympic Committee’s (NOC’s) by December 2001 and rising to at least 20% by December 2005” (Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, 2004, p. 4). The research reported on 146 surveys and 30 interviews from women members of NOC Executive Committees from five different global regions (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania). It also captured data from 89 surveys and 25 interviews with Secretary Generals from these regions. The major finding of the research was that the IOC targets appeared to have had a positive impact on the participation of women in sport leadership roles around the world. The authors concluded that (p. 7):

Perhaps the most obvious point to make is that the introduction of minimum targets has had a clear and positive impact on the proportion of women in NOC Executive Committees. The rapid growth of the numbers of women is such positions, from a very low base, immediately after the announcement of the minimum targets is clear both in numeric terms from the questionnaire data, and also from the observations made by women and the Secretary Generals during the interviews. Thus the target approach can be said to have had success in
raising awareness of gender inequalities, in bringing talented women in to the Olympic family, and of improving Olympic governance by setting an example and providing moral leadership to the world of sport in terms of equity in representation.

2.2 Barriers and Solutions

The Senate inquiry report into the status of women in sport and recreation in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006), noted above, also identified a number of barriers to women holding board or leadership positions. The report highlighted misconceptions that women do not have the skills required for such positions and cited this as an excuse with no evidential grounding. In a more recent report published by the South Australian Premier’s Council for Women, Pocock (2009) stated that women do have the skills and experience but perhaps do not receive the recognition for these or have the networks and connections in sport and recreation in order to obtain these positions. Research undertaken in New Zealand has shown that not only is there an inequality of gender representation in sport leadership roles, but that this environment is also viewed as the male’s domain, creating an ‘unfriendly’ female setting (Cameron, 1996; Leberman & Palmer, 2009b; Shaw, 2006).

Another barrier identified was the difficulty in managing a work-life balance, which can prove more difficult for women than men, with the addition of a family (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). The suggestion to overcome this obstacle, raised by the Senate inquiry, was for boards to reimburse child care out of pocket expenses. Overall, the inquiry found that, “A number of barriers hindering the advancement of women to leadership roles ... included the attitudes and perceptions of the ‘male-dominated’ sports culture, perceptions and expectations of women, and work-life issues” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 79).

In New Zealand, Cockburn, Gray & Thompson (2007) reported that one quarter of the respondents in their survey perceived there to be barriers for women aspiring to sport leadership roles. Interestingly, there were more men who thought this was the case, than women. The barriers identified were as follows:

- Lack of women mentors (57%)
- Career breaks for domestic reasons (49%)
- Lack of women role models/peers (34%)
- Confidence in own ability (34%)
- Lack of childcare (30%); and
- Unconscious discrimination from both males and females (23%).

Cockburn, Gray & Thompson (2007, p. 8).

The Senate inquiry in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) also found that some national sporting organisations were successfully implementing strategies and solutions to increase or maintain a greater number of women on their boards and in leadership positions. One such case was that of Hockey Australia, whose charter outlines that their board must have a minimum representation of 32% from both genders. This specification is particularly relevant to this sport as it comprises both male and female players in approximately equal numbers. The Senate inquiry also
acknowledged initiatives already in place by Federal and State Governments, the Australian Sports Commission and national sport organisations such as the Sport Leadership Grants for Women (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006).

Significantly, submissions to the Senate inquiry called for an increase in funding of least AU$1 million, greater than double the 2005/2006 overall allocation of AU$400,000, in order to make a real difference (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). As a result of recommendation 12 from the Senate inquiry, whereby the Australian Sports Commission provides skills training in areas of leadership, communication skills and successful team building, the funding has increased, albeit not as drastically as recommended. In 2009, AU$500,000 in Sport Leadership Grants and Scholarships is available to women to pursue training and development in coaching, officiating, governance, media and communications, and management (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). This is an increase of $100,000 since 2006.

Mandatory quotas to force sport organisations to appoint more women to their boards via legislation, has been proposed within several reports (e.g., Commonwealth of Australia, 2006; UK Sport, 2006a). However, this can give rise to sentiments as noted within the Senate inquiry via the follow submission:

..I would never like to think that I had been given a role or a job because I was a female. I would want to be given a job because I personally felt I was the best person for the job. That does not necessarily sit for every female out there who feels confident. It depends on the situation. It depends on the broader context that you are talking about, and I think it has to be very well managed if you are going to do it, so that we do not end up in a situation where we have the naysayers saying, she was only ever given a job because she is female (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 84).

Interestingly, the Labor Senators had the view that, “the Australian Sports Commission and NSOs should adopt the provision in Hockey Australia’s constitution that provides that no one gender shall constitute less than 35 per cent of a board’s elected membership by January 2008” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 90).

Overall, in terms of solutions for advancing the participation of women in sport leadership positions, the committee found that, “It is in the interests of boards to set targets for greater gender equality as this will increase the pool of talented personnel available” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 89). The inquiry also concluded that strategies therefore need to be developed by governments and sport organisations to increase the involvement of women in leadership roles. These strategies could include:

- The imposition of quotas or targets in relation to the proportion of women on boards.
- Rewarding sporting organisations that meet a self-imposed system of increasing the representation of women on boards.
- Amending the constitutions of sporting organisations to enshrine the rights and representations of their members, male and female.
- Encouragement of national sport organisations to support women as leaders through the use of leadership training, and conference participation.
• Providing networking opportunities for women working in the sport and recreation industry.
• Providing practical professional development opportunities which better equip women to discharge their duties.
• Providing mentoring and/or apprenticeship programs for women administrators and board members.
• Providing role models for women aspiring to work in the industry.
• Addressing work-life issues, including work and family responsibilities.

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 89-90)

Oldenhove (2003) noted that some State Government’s in Australia have mandated that Government boards must be 50% male and 50% female. In Norway, Government legislation mandated in 2003, that women must comprise 40% of the director positions on publically listed companies. This led to a dramatic increase of female directors from 6%, six years previous, to 37% in 2008 (Human Rights Commission, 2008, p. 8). As explained in the New Zealand Human Rights Commission report (2008), the quota law was sponsored by a Conservative trade and industry secretary and former businessman, Ansgar Gabrielsen. Gabrielsen’s focus was on outcomes for business and he considered that more diverse boards, involving more women was of paramount importance for wealth generation. Quoted in the Human Rights Commission report (2008, p. 9), Gabrielsen stated:

I could not see why, after 25 to 30 years of having an equal ratio of women and men in universities and with having so many educated women with experience, there were so few of them on boards ... From my time in the business world, I saw how board members were picked, they come from the same small circle of people. They go hunting and fishing together. They’re buddies.

In New Zealand, a concerted effort made by successive governments, to increase the number of women on government appointed boards has led to a much higher proportion of female directors within the public sector (42% for State Sector Statutory Bodies; 34.07% for Crown Companies), than that recorded in the private sector (for NZSX 8.65%) (Human Rights Commission, 2008). There is a small but growing body of evidence that has demonstrated the positive impact of board diversity, including the contribution of women (Carson, Mosley, & Boynar, 2004; Daily & Dalton, 2003; Medd, 2008; Siciliano, 1996). Daily & Dalton (2003) considered that the addition of women in the boardroom can significantly enhance board deliberations. They asserted that, “Women’s communication styles tend to be more participative and process-orientated. These stylistic differences may enhance director’s decision-making processes by encouraging the board to consider a wider range of strategic options” (p. 8). A study by Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald (2009), investigating the development of board strategic capability in New Zealand national sport organisations found that greater collaboration between the CEO and board enhanced strategic function. The growing evidence on women’s contribution in the boardroom indicates greater collaborative skills are likely to come from female directors (Daily & Dalton, 2003; van der Walt & Ingley, 2003). Ferkins (2007) also found greater collaboration between New Zealand national and regional sporting codes, enhanced national board strategic function. It would appear, women are well placed to lead a collaborative approach such as was found within the restructuring process for Tennis New Zealand (Ferkins, 2007).
Oldenhove (2003) in explaining the need for a critical mass of female influence on boards used the example of one national sport organisation in Australia. Following amalgamation, the national body constituted that “of the eight board members, at least 3 must be of one gender and that the position of President and Vice President must be of separate genders” (p. 5). Oldenhove also noted that this constitutional requirement is “permeating to state level organisations and is being adopted” (p. 5). She went on to state that this example represents a “clear systemic response to the issue”. Oldenhove argued that in order to have “any cultural effect on boards and committees there is a level above tokenism that needs to be achieved:

- 10% of representation is tokenism
- 20% of representation means a voice is present
- 30% of representation means a voice or position will be heard, and
- 40% of representation brings about real influence and involvement.”

(Oldenhove, 2003, p. 5).

2.3 High Performance

There is little known about the female contribution to high performance sport. Available evidence indicates there are fewer women in high performance positions (such as high performance directors and coaches) than on boards or in chief executive positions in sport in New Zealand and internationally. The 2007 survey commissioned by the NZOC (Cockburn, Gray & Thompson, 2007), found that men are more likely than women to be paid to coach and manage both men’s and women’s teams. In addition, two thirds of all staff working with women’s teams are men. Women comprise just 29% of women’s team coaches and 8% of men’s teams across all coaching levels.

High performance coaching in Australia is recognised as a male domain (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). The Australian Sports Commission reported that 13% of elite coaches in Australia were female (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). Some sporting codes are better represented by women than others across all coaching levels, for example, Hockey Australia recorded that 45% of their accredited coaches were female in 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). However, this gender equality in the coaching does not continue through to the high performance level which is very much dominated by males. The barriers to high performance coaching identified, were similar to those barriers to entry into leadership positions for women noted earlier.

The UK Strategy Framework for Women and Sport (UK Sport, 2003) stated that in the Sydney Olympics in 2000, only 8% of all coaches and 4% of teams managers were women in the British team. According to the progress report in 2005 (UK Sport, 2006a), this increased for the 2004 Olympics where 10% of all coaches were women and 39% of athletes were women. The Women’s Sports Foundation (WSF) begun offering a two year program at the start of 2005, entitled Women in Coaching – London. This program was to enable 70 women to be trained as coaches providing them with skills and qualifications to progress in their sports through the avenue of coaching and leadership roles. Similarly, Sport Scotland launched a coaching program in 2006 to develop women in coaching roles and aims to help 50 female coaches each year for a three year period (Sportscotland, 2009).
In Scotland where the population is 52% female, only 24% of all coaches were recorded as being female in a report commissioned by Sportscotland in 2004 (George Street Research, 2004). This figure decreased at the elite level, where 10% of Olympic coaches were female, in 2004. The results of this report prompted Sportscotland to work with the UK Women’s Sports Foundation to produce the UK strategy for women and sport (Sportscotland, 2009). This strategy was used by Sportscotland to develop a Women, Girls and Sport Strategy in 2006 and was integrated into the Single Equity Scheme in 2007. From here a pilot programme was established to increase the number of coaches working above level one. The program is in its infancy and results are yet to be published on its success (Sportscotland, 2009).

In 1972, the US congress passed a piece of legislation known as “Title IX”. Title IX established that no person shall be discriminated against or excluded from participation or benefits from any program which received Federal funding on the basis of gender (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2008). Title IX became the catalyst for change. As reported by the Women’s Sports Foundation (2008), while there has been change, it has been a slow process. According to The State of Women’s Sports Report (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2008), 36 years on there have been some major gains, particularly in stimulating girls participation in sport and in creating the women’s sport consumer market. In high performance coaching within the university system, females hold 42.8% of head coaching positions in College female teams but only 2% of male teams (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2008). Progress is slow, according to the report, as there are no penalties for non compliance and reporting is infrequent.

3. Visibility and Priority – The Media

The visibility and priority given to the representation of women’s sport in the media is criticised by authors who have investigated the low volume of coverage and sexualised portrayal of women’s sporting endeavours (Bernstein, 2002; Bruce, 1998). Encouragingly, Netball in New Zealand is seen as an international model for women’s sport media coverage and is used as evidence of the commercial potential of the female sport media product (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). The significance of the media in shaping people’s perceptions and understanding of sport is emphasised and there is no real agreement as to whether women’s media coverage has made any significant gains over the past ten years.

3.1 Awareness and Acceptance

Mr John Mangos of Sky News said on Sunrise 3 August 2006 ‘there’s no way to say this nicely without sounding sexist, but the fact of the matter is blokes hit the ball further, kick the ball harder, go in harder, it’s better to watch, end of story’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2006, p. 97). Mangos’ statement is representative of a prevailing attitude by some that the spectacle of women’s sport does not compare favourably to that of the male sporting spectacle (Commonwealth of
Australia, 2006; Bruce, 2009). This perspective is one of the many challenges faced by women’s sport in the endeavour to attract media interest (Bruce, 1998, 2009; Henley, 2004). Another common concern expressed in reports investigating the media coverage of women in sport (see Commonwealth of Australia, 2006; Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2008c) is that exemplified by Karrie Webb in Australia. As the most successful Australian golfer, Karrie has won seven major championships, yet the golf segment of newspapers and television reports was found to be dominated by Greg Norman who has won only two, (Smith in Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). Smith (2006) goes on to argue that Webb has not been acknowledged as Australia’s greatest golfer due to her gender. In an article in the Melbourne Age on 26 August 2006, Baum expressed the following sentiments: “Women’s soccer is a joke. People walked across the street in order not to watch it in Adelaide last week. Women’s cricket is not much better. Netball is OK, sometimes, when there is nothing else” (Baum, 2006, p. 1). This statement was made by Baum in order to argue against mandatory media quotas for women’s sport and demonstrates the strong view taken by some media writers toward the case for more female media coverage.

With such attitudes still prevailing in Australia, there is a real concern for the future of women’s sport media coverage in that country (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). In other western countries, studies on the quantity of coverage (Bernstein, 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1999) suggest that there has been a variation in the level of coverage of women’s sport over the past thirty years. Overall figures across countries vary between 2% to approximately 15% of the media coverage attributed to women’s sport with major events, such as Olympic Games reported to increase the volume of coverage for women. The following provides a range of examples of the quantity of coverage in relation to New Zealand’s figures:

- Key findings from a study in the United Kingdom in 1998, found that 90.2% of sports-related programmes on BBC1 covered men’s events, and 6.7% were devoted to women’s sports (Bernstein, 2002).

- In terms of press coverage in the United Kingdom, 99.5% of sports-related articles in the Sun covered men’s sport and 88.5% of sports-related articles in The Times covered men’s sport; and 10.9% were on women’s (Bernstein, 2002).

- In a study ten years later, print media in the United Kingdom was at 2% in the national papers for women’s sport (Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2008).

- In the United States, researchers at Vanderbilt University found that men received 82% of sports coverage and women received 11% (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2009).

- During the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, 29.3% of the articles in Belgian, French, Danish and Italian newspapers were reported to be on women’s sports (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2009).

- In Australian, women’s sports coverage in the print media is reported to have increased from 2% to 10.7% in 1996 (Phillips, 1996).
• In New Zealand, between 1982 and 2002, studies have shown an average of 80% male sports media coverage and 10% female sports coverage (Bruce, 2009).

• Also in New Zealand, a study conducted on the volume of female sporting images in the press during the 2008 Beijing Olympics found that of 432 photographs of Olympic athletes from all countries, 65% were of men, 34.3% were women (0.7% were mixed) (Leberman & Palmer, 2009).

Bernstein (2002) studied the media coverage of Marion Jones and Anna Kournikova, and concluded that although the volume of coverage had increased, so too had the number of “sexualized images” (p. 426), considered inappropriate by the author. Marion Jones for instance received an enormous amount of media coverage, however her declaration she would win gold gave her a reputation for being arrogant (Bernstein, 2002). Her assertiveness and boastfulness, would have been admired from a male, yet resulted in Jones being labelled arrogant (Bernstein, 2002). In the US media, Jones was not the most photographed athlete, but Amy Acuff a high jumper, tall, blonde, and a part-time model who wore revealing outfits was (Mackay, 1999). Henderson (2000) noted that women’s tennis receives a similar level of media coverage to their male counterparts, but questions the type of coverage received. According to Bernstein (2002) during Wimbledon in 2000 for every picture of Lindsay Davenport, a women’s singles finalist, there were 20 pictures of Anna Kournikova, yet to win a major singles title, in the British newspapers.

While the available literature on women’s sports media coverage reports an overall sense of disappointment at the lack of progress over the past three decades, there have been some success stories. The Australian Senate inquiry report stated the following (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 105):

In New Zealand netball is, as it is in Australia, a popular sport amongst women. As in Australia, there is a national netball league and a national team. Ten years ago, the code received similar levels of media coverage in both countries. Today however, the sports share diverging fortunes, as netball in New Zealand has become a top-ranking sport behind Rugby Union. The coverage of the sport is so good that Australian captain Liz Ellis was able to follow the Australian league results by reading the New Zealand papers.

Similarly, netball in the United Kingdom has recently signed a deal with Sky Sport for coverage of its game. The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation noted, that “Sky Sports has proven that women’s team sports do have a place in this multi-sports channel landscape” (2008, p. 8). Another example in the United Kingdom is the women’s FA Cup final, now regularly televised and achieving 1.5 million viewers on the BBC in 2008. In the view of the Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (2008, p. 8), “This interest has helped reassure decision makers in television that there is mileage in expanding their coverage and making a long-term commitment to the women’s game”.

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An explanation of the media success story for netball in New Zealand was offered in the Senate inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). “It is likely that many factors influenced the process by which netball has become widely watched and widely reported in New Zealand” (p. 107). In her submission, Margaret Henley (a New Zealand sports media researcher) argued that the breakthrough came about because of an initial broadcasting opportunity, and netball’s leadership who saw televised coverage as a priority for the game and critical to the success of netball. Henley reported that:

Within this Executive body there was a small group of farsighted women ... who correctly assessed that if the sport didn’t fight for a greater share from the broadcaster and demand greater respect for the value of the game, that it would be forever locked within a paternalistic relationship with the broadcaster and the sport would not flourish in the future (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 107).

To conclude, Bernstein (2002) offers a sound rationale as to why the media should remain a central focus for any discussion on women and sport, and especially in terms of women’s involvement in sport leadership roles. Bernstein considered that the mass media, as an essential feature of contemporary society, “preserve, transmit and create important cultural information” (2002, p. 416). She noted that a central assumption within the study of the media, is that “how members of society see themselves, how they are viewed and even treated by others, is determined to a great extent by their media representation” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 416).

### 3.2 Sporting, Business and Media Networks

Established traditions, power dynamics and more advanced business and media networks held by men are the primary considerations explored in relation to the challenge to improve female sports media coverage (Bruce, 1998; Henley, 2004; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). The Senate report in Australia identified that tradition and longevity of existing male sports proved advantageous for the coverage of men’s sport (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). Consumer loyalty, which is known to be passed down through families within the Australian Football League, is an example of this institutionalisation (Coakley, Hallinan, Jackson & Mewett, 2009). Much like any new sport attempting to enter this crowded market, women’s sport competes against decades of tradition within sport organisations that have established business models and a history of longevity (Coakley, et al., 2009).

In New Zealand, as with other nations, an often cited consideration is the notion that the sports media is reported by men (Wensing, & Bruce, 2003). Authors argue that regardless of gender or political persuasion, journalists are more likely to report on something of interest to them, thus a team of sport journalists dominated by men are more likely to report on male dominated sports (Tuggle & Owen, 1999). The Senate report in Australia offered the notion that women’s sport is “trapped in cycles of neglect, poor funding, poor infrastructure and low levels of interest” as a rationale for low levels of media coverage (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 103).
In light of these obstacles, the Senate report recommended that “the Australian Government provide financial support, to be administered by the Australian Sports Commission, for initiatives that provide specific opportunities for greater ongoing coverage of women’s sport” (Australian 2006, p. 104). The committee asserted that the Australian Sports Commission should administer funding of up to AUS$3 million per annum, and that the initiative be reviewed after three years. Further to this, the Senate report saw the need for funding to be made available to athletes and sports administrators for the purpose of training to better understand and utilise media opportunities.

In the United Kingdom, a key issue addressed by the UK Strategy Framework for Women and Sport (UK Sport, 2003) was that of lack of media coverage for elite female athletes. The framework did not set out targets for increasing media coverage of women’s sports, however the Women’s Sports Foundation began a ‘Campaign for Coverage’ in 2003. This was to both highlight the inequalities in the current media coverage at the time and to attempt to raise the profile of women’s sports and in turn increase the media attention it receives. This campaign resulted in the BBC carrying out qualitative research into how women view sports coverage. A comprehensive package of women’s football during the Euro 2005 women’s football matches that England played in was also aired. The BBC found that viewing figures for Euro 2005 were strong, with over three million viewers tuning in for England vs. Sweden (15.2% audience share).

In conclusion, Coakely et al., (2009) made the following statement in their recently published book: “The single most dramatic change in sport over the past two generations is the increase in participation among girls and women” (p. 246). They consider there to be five interrelated factors for this dramatic increase in female participation in sport:

- New participation opportunities for girls and women in team and individual sports
- Government legislation mandating equal rights at local and national levels
- The global women’s rights movement encouraging change in female roles in society
- The health and fitness movement encouraging greater awareness of the need for physical activity
- Increased media coverage of women in sport

It would appear the efforts made by those in sport organisation, government organisations and women’s lobby groups have indeed made significant gains. The holistic approach to future reform via sporting, business, and media networks is captured by the following submission made to the Senate report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 80):

The ability to effect change should not rest with just a few women’s sport agencies or individual activists. The authority to increase women’s participation and status in sport rests largely with the people who control the national and state organisations as well as the clubs. ... men dominate management and executive positions and the traditional constraints that cause women and other minority groups to be marginalised in sport are part and parcel of the historical development of sporting culture. These leaders determine the agenda, the budget, allocation of resources and the prioritising of program initiatives. Different attitudes to gender relations must be developed in order to challenge and shift the traditional views that have caused discrimination against women in sport.
4. Development Pathways

The evidence base and available literature on mentoring, support, and training and development for women, suggests that affirmative steps are being undertaken to provide opportunities and pathways for women. Initiatives such as leadership training programs, coaching scholarships, the purposeful creation of networks and the development of networking skills have all been part of women’s sport leadership development. Less readily available, is research on the outcomes and impact of such programs.

According to Oldenhove’s (2003), a number of special programs have been established and conducted in Australia in an effort to increase women’s participation in sport leadership and coaching roles. These programs include:

- Women’s sport leadership training programs and workshops,
- Mentoring programs,
- Coaching scholarships; and
- Women’s coaching workshops.

While these programs have been in place for 10-15 years, prior to Oldenhove’s (2003) report, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not show any growth in women’s participation in leadership and coaching roles. The national data on non-playing involvement of women from 1993 to 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001) shows a decline in both coaching and committee/administration roles for women. The data captured by the ABS encompasses all levels of involvement by women and is therefore not specific to top leadership; the concern of the present report. Nonetheless, this type of outcome is alarming. In response, Oldenhove (2003) made the point that, “Whilst special measure programs are a legitimate means of empowering and providing skills to women it does not address the systemic impediments that women continue to face” (p. 4). In elaborating, Oldenhove asserts that:

These programs also have an underlying assumption that somehow women are deficit in their skills and attributes and they require ‘training’ before they can assume leadership positions. This assumption needs to be reconsidered as it reinforces a ‘victim’ mentality where the onus is on women to solve the issues facing women. It also assumes that men have the requisite skills that women do not (p. 4).

In New Zealand, the authors of a text summarising research on women in sport and the advances made, noted that, “We are well into the 21st century but still need to lean heavily on a liberal feminist agenda to achieve recognition and progress for women’s sport” (Obel, Bruce and Thompson, 2008, p. x). They go on to say, “Our struggle shows that much remains outstanding, much remains to be achieved in terms of equitable levels of respect and support for women’s sport” (p. x).
4.1 Mentoring and Support

The Coaching Association of Canada (2001) highlighted the benefits of mentoring programs, for the mentor, protégé and sport organisation. There is much evidence to support these assertions from the general literature on the success of mentoring programs within organisations (Scandura, 1997; Wickman & Sjodin, 1997). In a study on the strategic capability of national sport organisations in New Zealand, Ferkins (2007) identified the importance of a mentoring approach for developing regional board capability, irrespective of gender. Ferkins engaged Wendy Baker from the New Zealand Mentoring Centre to assist in the mentor training of national board members. The notion of national board members mentoring regional board members was supported by Ferkins in her study. There are many types of mentoring programs available and indeed interpretations of the concept of mentoring. The Coaching Association of Canada advocated a similar style to that endorsed by Ferkins (2007), known as facilitated mentoring. In an article in the Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching, the Coaching Association of Canada (2001, p. 2), recommended the following aspects to be included in a mentoring program:

- a strategically planned mentoring program design
- facilitated matching of mentors and protégés
- developmental training for both mentors and protégés
- a no-fault termination clause
- a formalized career development plan and tracking system
- a coordinator, whose primary role is to implement the program, match the pairs, and then monitor progress, counsel, and evaluate.

4.2 Training and Development

In a joint effort, UK Sport and the British Olympic Association developed a program targeted at women in sport who showed both the skills and the desire to seek leadership and executive decision making roles. In 2006, the Women and Leadership Development Program was launched, with 15 women participating over a three year period. The program included such components as:

- Training days and workshops, including one international experience per year
- Mentor support and networking
- Creation of a personal development plan
- Effective communication and influencing skills
- National and international sport structures
- Women’s sport development
- Sports Law
- Sponsorship and marketing
- Good management practice
- Application and / or nomination skills

(UK Sports, 2006b, p.22)
The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) in identifying the need and the role women can play in the non-for-profit sporting sector in leadership positions have established a leadership program. The program is aimed at developing professional skills in women and providing network opportunities. CAAWS (2008) also created a resource, *Women on Boards: A Guide to Getting on Board* to encourage and develop women in leadership and board roles. This document includes information about how to get on a board; how to navigate the boardroom; and ways in which one could act as a mentor or provide opportunities to other women who might seek similar roles.

Sportscotland initiated a pilot programme to develop female coaches above level 1, in 2007 and in 2008, a women’s coaching development programme was developed. This programme aimed at training 30 coaches per year over a three year period, in the sports of gymnastics, netball, hockey, tennis and swimming (Sportscotland, 2009). To date, progress and results of this programme have not been published. The outcomes of this and other such programs need to be tracked and their efficacy investigated.
5. Conclusion

The collation, review, summary and analysis of international literature on women’s involvement in sport leadership roles has provided an evidence base that demonstrates the need to create change in the New Zealand sporting landscape in relation to gender distinctions. This report has focused on three key areas of women’s involvement in sport: leadership, visibility and priority, and development pathways.

While making up over half of the population, women are underrepresented in the sporting arena in New Zealand. This missing dimension is evident in playing, coaching, board positions, executive roles and media coverage. This gap in female participation in all facets of sporting life represents a substantial opportunity for growth. The evidence collected from this review of literature indicates that gains can be made in women’s contribution to the leadership of sport with the support of government legislation and policies.

There is still much we don’t know about the role of women in sport leadership. In particular there is a lack of understanding as to the implications of this missing dimension for our society and for the success of our sporting organisations. There are very few studies on women in high performance leadership roles such as high performance directors and coaches. What we do know is that there are low levels of female participation in sport leadership roles which needs to be redressed.

The following quote from the Australian Olympic Committee in its submission to the Senate inquiry in Australia acknowledges the work to date and sets a poignant tone for future endeavours:

> it has been important to acknowledge the support of men in providing opportunities, opening doors ... and standing beside women as they work towards leadership positions. The most successful outcomes are the result of cooperative partnerships, men and women working together as equals, providing diversity of skill sets and effectiveness of organisational leadership (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006, p. 81).
6. References


