



Original Research

Cultural Values and Gender Equity on National Olympic Committee Boards

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ABSTRACT

International Journal of Exercise Science 10(6): 857-874, 2017. Women are under-represented in leadership positions throughout sport, and researchers have largely explored organizational, group, and individual antecedents of this phenomenon. The purpose of the current study was to expand on this understanding by investigating the influence of a country's cultural values on the representation of women on National Olympic Committees. Drawing from Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, the authors included five cultural values: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term orientation. Results indicate that women constituted only 19.7 percent of the positions on the boards. Regression analysis, controlling for size of the Olympics program in the country, indicate that cultural values accounted for 41.8 percent of the variance in board gender diversity. Countries with lower power distance, lower masculinity, and lower uncertainty avoidance all had a higher proportion of women on the board. The authors discuss practical and theoretical implications.

KEY WORDS: Olympics, gender, diversity, culture, values

INTRODUCTION

Although there are increased opportunities for women across different occupational settings, a significant body of research shows that there is a scarcity of women in positions of power and authority (41, 50). Consider *Fortune* 500 companies as a specific example: in 2017, women held 19.9 percent of the board seats and just 5.8 percent of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions in American corporations. Similar trends are apparent in European organizations (23), but drop to below 10 percent and 5 percent of female board members in workforces in Asian-Pacific and Latin American regions, respectively (12). Not surprisingly, these patterns are not limited to the corporate setting, as women are under-represented in sport organizations, including as administrators and coaches in intercollegiate athletics (1), commissions for the

Australian Sports Commission (4), and board members of Sport England (65), among other settings (8).

The under-representation of women in leadership positions is important for a number of reasons. From an ethical and social obligation perspective, sport organizations have a responsibility to be inclusive (17). Furthermore, differences in the gender diversity of top management boards affect business ethics (11, 51) and reduce risk-aversion perspectives (13). Top management teams with gender balance signal inclusiveness to internal and external stakeholders, and they arrive at better decisions (21, 55). Not surprisingly given these effects, Burke (7) and Terjesan, Sealy, and Singh (68) found that corporations with gender diversity accomplish better organizational performance. Terjesan et al. (68) and Post and Byron (51) particularly called for further examination of the relationship between board gender diversity and corporate performance from a multi-national perspective.

Given these benefits, a large number of researchers have investigated the reasons for the under-representation of women in leadership positions across macro-, meso-, and micro-levels (8). First, the vast theoretical perspectives of societal factors include work-family conflicts (20) and gendered expectations for women and men at the macro-level (14). More specifically, Shaw and Frisby (60) argued that sport organizations are predominantly male-led, and this dominance of masculinity consistently accounts for the reason for women's under-representation in management positions. Second, the meso-level factors embrace organizational demography (e.g., leadership positions in the International Olympic Committee or IOC), organizational cultures of similarity (64), biased decision-making (5), and prejudice and discrimination (53) at the organizational level. Recognizing the importance of comprehending the practice of gender within organization, Hoeber (30) reflected the post-structural feminism into organizational values to understand gender equity practices within sport organizations. Similarly, Adriaanse and Claringbould (3) argued that women's leadership positions in sport involve production and power relations. Finally, the individual level of analysis encompasses social capital differences (56, 70) and self-limiting behaviors (57), among others.

Though past scholars have demonstrated either individual or institutional perspectives on gender diversity in board composition, there is a general lack of attention to large-scale and multinational approaches. Recognizing a given culture in organizations is an important factor influencing board demography, in her recent review, Burton (8) recommended uncovering the impact of culture on gender equity. Furthermore, by taking a multi-theoretical lens together, it is possible to shed light on the global gender diversity framework (68). The purpose of the current study was, therefore, to expand on this understanding in two ways. First, we investigated the representation of women in the National Olympic Committees (NOCs). Given that much of the gender research is set in North America and Europe (28), the cross-national level of study on the gender equity with a range of countries adds a unique and novel contribution to gender equity in sport research. Second, we drew from Hofstede's (31, 32, 34) cultural dimensions theory to empirically consider the multilevel factors on the representation of women in leadership positions. We anticipated that the cultural dimensions prevalent at the

national level would account for the representation of women in key leadership positions. In the following sections, we offer an overview of Hofstede's theory and present specific hypotheses.

Theoretical Framework

Hofstede's Cultural Values: The concept of culture is broad and has numerous meanings in social studies (10). In organization studies, for instance, culture is widely used to explain a variety of values, principles, and belief systems in which individuals and societies are entrenched, thereby shaping behaviors of both individuals and groups within organizations (46, 58). In a cross-cultural research setting, scholars frequently draw from Hall (29) and Hofstede (31), among others, to describe culture. According to Hall (29), communication is central to culture, such that cultures differ in the use of messages between high and low context continuum. For Hofstede (32), culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category people from others." Hofstede's works have been the most prominently cited and tested to identify different culture types empirically in a multicultural context (63). Though both conceptualizations explicate national cultural differences, we employ Hofstede's (34) work to elaborate on empirical aspects of cultural values, as Hall's model lacks explanatory support (9).

In his early work, Hofstede (31) first developed his theory of culture by drawing from a survey of approximately 88,000 IBM employees from 40 different countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In doing so, Hofstede (31) explained the similarities and differences among human cultures and concluded that organizations are culturally tied. Since then, Hofstede's original four dimensions have been overwhelmingly applied and confirmed in marketing (66), international business (22), psychology (62), and strategic management literature (6), among other contexts. Thus, his works have shown to be efficacious in examining cultural differences and cross-cultural comparisons (44). Finally, while Hofstede initially envisioned four cultural dimensions, he later revised his work to include two more dimensions (32, 35). These include (a) power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) individualism versus collectivism, (d) masculinity versus femininity, (e) long- versus short-term orientation, and (f) indulgence versus restraint. Although indulgence versus restraint is the most currently added dimension that has attracted substantial attention of scholars from cross-cultural research and many other contexts, Hofstede's five cultural dimensions are relatively under-researched in the field of sport management. Thus, we focus on the five cultural values and describe each in the following space.

First, power distance refers to the degree to which resources and influence are concentrated around a select few (31). Countries with a higher power distance (e.g., Malaysia and Guatemala) are more likely to accept hierarchical structures and inequality within a social system. In contrast, countries with a lower power distance (e.g., Austria and Denmark) may promote individuals' participation and equal rights (32). The next dimension is uncertainty avoidance, which is related to how people view uncertainty and subsequently seek to eschew ambiguous situations (31). Since such situations involve aggressive and compulsive personal risks, countries with a stronger uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Greece, Guatemala, and Japan)

tend to create formal rules, laws, and other securities to avoid unknown future around them. On the contrary, countries with a weaker uncertainty avoidance (e.g., the United Kingdom, or UK, and Denmark) are more likely to be tolerant of threatening situations (32).

Third, individualism versus collectivism refers to the strength of bonding, concern for others, and collaboration among people (31). Specifically, countries with individualistic-orientation (e.g., the United States or US, the UK, and Canada) are more likely to value privacy (i.e., the self and immediate families only), whereas countries with collectivistic-orientation (e.g., Ecuador and Indonesia) tend to emphasize relationships among people and take more interests in others' well-being (32). Fourth, masculinity versus femininity refers to the traditional role for women and men (31). Countries with higher masculine traits (e.g., Japan, Austria, and Venezuela) are likely to represent a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, competitiveness, and material reward for success (32). Conversely, countries with lower masculine traits (e.g., Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) value cooperation, quality of life, modesty, and caring for others (32).

Finally, long- versus short-term orientation refers to the degree to which people in a society value tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and the past (35). This dimension is also called the Confucian dynamic, whose ideology influenced the majority of Eastern cultures (e.g., South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Chinese Taipei), and in turn, is often perceived as either Eastern or Western culture. Specifically, countries with higher long-term orientation (e.g., China and Hong Kong) are likely to exhibit a pragmatic future-orientation, dealing with society's search for virtue and perseverance, whereas countries with short-term orientation (e.g., Pakistan and Nigeria) are concerned with establishing the absolute truth, steadiness, and stability (35). Overall, Hofstede's five dimensional cultural values have widely been utilized at the individual, organization and country levels of analysis, which lead to be employed in empirical research (44).

Culture and Sport: Consistent with the aforementioned replications in marketing and strategic management, Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been used in the context of recreation and international sport event tourism. For example, Funk and Bruun (26) validated the use of Hofstede's cultural values, exploring cultural motives and attitudes of participants to attend an international sport event. In a similar vein, Li and his associates (45) examined the usage of cultural values to understand perceptions and behaviors of culturally diverse visitors in parks and recreation. Finally, Forgas-Coll, Palau-Saumell, Sánchez-García, and Callarisa-Fiol (25) studied the cross-national differences in tourists' behavior. These authors found that collectivistic-orientation and uncertainty avoidance explained differences between Europeans' and Americans' behaviors.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are also aligned in the context of sport participation. For example, De Mooij and Hofstede (19) noted that individuals in a lower uncertainty avoidance culture are likely to play more active sports or sport-related activities. Because these people have more positive attitudes toward health and fitness, De Mooij (18) indicated that involvement in sport is correlated with lower uncertainty avoidance. Further, results showed

that the lifestyle is closer to sports in the cultures of lower power distance (18). Lastly, people who are in masculine and collectivistic cultures tend to spend less time on physical activities and active sports (18).

Finally, few researchers have examined the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on sport organizations' policies. Smith and Shilbury (61) investigated the unique culture of Australian national sport organizations by mapping sub-dimensions of local sport culture. Their study neither validated Hofstede's cultural framework directly nor addressed the issues of under-representation of women in sport organizations. In another research, Girginov (27) suggested that the examination of cultural processes exerts a significant influence on individual and organizational behaviors in sport, and by doing so, changes the field of sport management.

As this review illustrates, few sport management scholars have explored cultural differences in sport—whether the marketing of sport, sport participation, or the structure of sport organizations. The scarcity of research in this area is surprising given the global nature of sport (69), thereby representing a space ripe for cross-cultural exploration. Further, some issues within sport, such as the under-representation of women in leadership positions, have drawn worldwide attention (8). As we explore further in the subsequent section, Hofstede's framework could help explain how and under what conditions gender equity is observed.

Hofstede's Cultural Values and Gender Equity on the NOCs Boards: Hofstede's cultural framework provides some explanatory value in understanding the under-representation of women on governing boards outside of sport. We develop hypotheses for each of the cultural dimensions, starting with power distance.

Countries where power distance is high are likely to have an unequal power distribution between women and men (32), while countries with a lower power distance have citizens who are more likely to engage in whistle-blowing (54), thereby signaling a commitment to fairness. In addition, Carrasco et al. (10) found that women were under-represented on boards in countries marked by power imbalances (i.e., high power distance) and a preference for traditional roles of men (i.e., high masculinity). In a related study, Ng and Burke (49) observed that cultural values were predictive of attitudes toward diversity. The authors particularly found that individuals who scored high in masculine traits tended to have less favorable attitudes towards diversity. Finally, Ringov and Zollo (54) observed that masculinity and power distance were associated with poorer social performance among firms in their study, and as social performance might be linked with inclusiveness, the findings inform the current research. Drawing from this work, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Power distance will be negatively related to gender balance on NOC boards.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which people seek to eschew situations in which the outcome is unknown (32). One approach to doing this is to maintain hierarchies and systems that have traditionally been in place. Doing so ensures that the taken-for-granted

customs and assumptions remain entrenched, and new ideas—one that would introduce uncertainty—would remain marginalized. Consistent with this position, Hofstede (32) observed that people in countries high in uncertainty avoidance are more accepting of social inequities, such as gender imbalances, as a way of avoiding uncertain situation. The converse is also true, such that in countries with low uncertainty avoidance, people are more accepting of conditions and practices that are contrary to the norm (32), and gender equity on national boards represents one such practice. Therefore, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: Uncertainty avoidance will be negatively associated with gender balance on NOC boards.

A country's individualistic or collectivistic culture reflects the strength of bonding, concern for others, and collaboration that takes place (31). For example, people living in most Western countries are likely to care about private issues and personal goals (32). This does not reflect a care for issues of fairness in society or within organizations. On the other hand, in countries where a collectivistic-orientation is more prevalent, people are more likely to care for the collective, over the individual. It is possible this translates in sensitivity toward the under-representation of minorities in upper-level positions (59). Given this evidence, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Collectivism will be positively associated with gender equity on NOC boards.

A country's culture surrounding masculinity and femininity is also expected to influence the gender equity on NOCs. A number of authors have suggested that cultural norms surrounding gender influence women's rights in sport (8, 14, 60). Hofstede (31, 34) suggested the same, such that countries that emphasize masculinity are likely to be spaces where men and their activities are prized. On the other hand, when femininity is emphasized, then the roles and activities of women are also likely to be valued. These cultural values are likely to correspond with women's roles in organizations and in decision making roles, such that, as femininity in a culture increases, it is also likely that women will have an increased presence on executive boards. We therefore hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: Masculinity will be negatively associated with gender equity on NOC boards.

Lastly, Hofstede (35) considered long- versus short-term orientation as the extent to which people in a society value tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and the past. Although he argued that this dimension is more concerned with economic growth and the time orientation of cultures rather than Confucianism, values at this dimension are based on teachings of Confucius (35). Along these lines, Huat (39) observed that long-term oriented countries may advocate for ethical virtue, morality, social consciousness, and benevolence. All of these characteristics are likely associated with a more equitable view toward gender relations and women's role in the workplace. On the other hand, countries with a short term orientation are

likely to emphasize absolute truth, personal steadiness and stability, and respect for tradition (35). However, based on the key elements of Confucius' teaching, these characteristics are likely to reflect an endorsement of the status quo (i.e., power imbalance), and thereby reify men's dominant roles in society and in organizations (36). Though Hofstede and Bond (36) suggested that long-term oriented countries might be in the midrange of masculinity versus femininity, long-term orientation is "still present in countries with a Confucian heritage" (35). Considering such Confucian values, the last hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 5: A long-term orientation will be negatively associated with gender equity on NOC boards.

METHODS

Data Sources

We collected data from two archival data sources. Data concerning the NOCs were gathered from <https://www.olympic.org/national-olympic-committees>. This site contains a link to every country's NOC, as well as a list and accompanying picture of the NOC membership. For this study, we collected the total number of NOC members, the number of women, and the number of men. We both collected data on a subset of NOCs, and after agreement on the coding scheme was developed, the lead author collected the remainder of the data. The final list included information from 207 NOCs. Gender diversity on the NOC was reflective of the percent of women on the board.

We then collected the countries' cultural values by drawing from Hofstede's publications (34, 37) and his personal website: <http://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/dimension-data-matrix2127>. Drawing from his considerable research across contexts, Hofstede provides data concerning the cultural values for a number of countries around the world, though not all. Scores for each dimension range from 1 (lowest possible score) to 100 (highest possible score). Higher cultural value scores are reflective of greater power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation, respectively. Specifically, cultural value scores are based on mean scores per country or region measured by *Hofstede's Values Survey Modules (VSMs)*, which include six versions since its first edition in 1980 (38). Of these six versions, a *VSM80*, *VSM81*, and *VSM82* were developed by Hofstede based on his original IBM survey from 40 countries, covering the initial four dimensions. Next, a *VSM94*, an extended version of the earlier versions, is with a 26-item questionnaire, including Bond's *Chinese Value Survey* from 23 countries (36), whereas a *VSM08* is a revised version with a 34-item questionnaire from 81 countries based on Minkov's (48) study (37). While the *VSM94* covered five dimensions to compare values of people from two or more countries or regions (33), the *VSM08* included seven dimensions to compare values and sentiments of similar respondents from two or more countries, or on occasion, regions within countries. Lastly, a *VSM2013* is the most up-to-date version, which was developed by Hofstede and his colleagues, who officially added the sixth dimension in the present version. The *VSM2013* consists of a 30-item questionnaire from 76 countries (38). These *VSMs* and data are freely available for research purposes from Hofstede's website and publications to compare cultural

values between nations, or sometimes regions. The *VSM2013* contains the revised dimension of long- versus short-term orientation, extending the number of countries from 23 to 93, and thus, the formulas that are used to calculate indices of national culture from the latest version are presented in the following (38):

$$\text{Power distance} = 35(m07 - m02) + 25(m20 - m23) + C(pd)$$

$$\text{Uncertainty avoidance} = 40(m18 - m15) + 25(m21 - m24) + C(ua)$$

$$\text{Individualism versus collectivism} = 35(m04 - m01) + 35(m09 - m06) + C(ic)$$

$$\text{Masculinity versus femininity} = 35(m05 - m03) + 35(m08 - m10) + C(mf)$$

$$\text{Long- or short-term orientation} = 40(m13 - m14) + 25(m19 - m22) + C(ls)$$

Finally, given that organizational size can influence its operations and diversity outcomes (15, 16), we included two measures to reflect the size of the Olympic program in the country. These included the size of the NOC, using the aforementioned data related to NOCs, and the number of Olympians at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The latter was determined through archival data obtained through the following website: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/sports/olympics/summer-olympics/participating-nations.html>.

Statistical Analysis

We computed means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all variables. The hypotheses were tested through a hierarchical regression analysis, with the two measures of size entered in the first step. The second step included the five cultural values variables, and the percent of women on the NOC boards served as the dependent variable. As complete data were available for 56 countries, we increased the alpha level to .10 (43, 67). Even though all assumptions regarding the multivariate analysis were statistically satisfied, due to a small sample size, we used robust standard errors. By doing so, the coefficients can be estimated, minimizing minor problems (47).

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations are available in Table 1, and the cultural values and the proportion of NOC gender equity for each country included in the analysis are shown in Table 2. Results show that the average NOC included 16 members, and approximately 20 percent of the members were women. A one-sample *t*-test showed that the proportion of women was significantly less than the 50 percent mark that would conceptually represent the greatest gender equity, $t(55) = -19.34, p < 0.01$. Further analyses showed that 5.4 percent ($n = 3$) of all 56 NOCs included no women on the board, 17.9 percent ($n = 10$) included less than 10 percent women on the NOC. Finally, analysis of the bivariate correlations showed that gender equity on NOCs is significantly associated with lower power distance ($r = -0.47$), lower uncertainty avoidance ($r = -0.45$), higher individualism ($r = 0.37$), and lower masculinity ($r = -0.35$).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations.

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Number of NOC members	15.77	7.02	---							
2. Number 2016 Olympians	149.89	145.17	.19	---						
3. Power distance	57.82	20.20	.17	-.16	---					
4. Uncertainty avoidance	69.18	22.80	-.08	-.10	.28*	---				
5. Individualism-collectivism	47.30	23.58	-.16	.44**	-.63**	-.27*	---			
6. Masculinity-femininity	49.16	21.15	.15	.22	.22	.03	-.00	---		
7. Long-term orientation	49.89	22.48	.20	.12	.01	-.07	.17	.05	---	
8. Percent women NOC members	.20	.12	-.10	.09	-.47**	-.45**	.37**	-.35**	-.05	---

Notes: $|r| \geq .20$, $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. NOC = National Olympic Committee. Higher cultural value scores are reflective of greater power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and long-term orientation, respectively.

Table 2. Cultural values and NOC gender equity, by country.

Country	Power distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism-Collectivism	Masculinity-Femininity	Long-term Orientation	NOC Gender Diversity
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20	9.09
Australia	38	90	61	51	21	38.46
Austria	11	55	79	70	60	23.08
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47	5.88
Belgium	65	75	54	94	82	18.75
Brazil	69	38	49	76	44	16.67
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69	12.5
Canada	39	80	52	48	36	36.84
Chile	63	23	28	86	31	25
China	80	20	66	30	87	25.81
Colombia	67	13	64	80	13	8.33
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58	21.05
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	70	0
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35	44.44
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20	12.5
Estonia	40	60	30	60	82	30
Finland	33	63	26	59	38	36.36
France	68	71	43	86	63	14.29
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	20
Great Britain	35	89	66	35	51	25
Greece	60	35	57	112	45	0
Hong Kong,China	68	25	57	29	61	14.29
Hungary	46	80	88	82	58	14.29
India	77	48	56	40	51	3.57

Italy	50	76	70	75	61	15
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	6.25
Latvia	44	70	9	63	69	43.75
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82	25
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	64	18.18
Malta	56	59	47	96	47	15.38
Mexico	81	30	69	82	24	25
Morocco	70	46	53	68	14	10
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67	11.11
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	33	40
Norway	31	69	8	50	35	40
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	50	19.23
Peru	64	16	42	87	25	30.77
Philippines	94	32	64	44	27	23.08
Poland	68	60	64	93	38	13.33
Portugal	63	27	31	104	28	21.43
Republic of Korea	60	18	39	85	100	22.73
Romania	90	30	42	90	52	31.58
Russian Federation	93	39	36	95	81	12
Serbia	86	25	43	92	52	11.76
Singapore	74	20	48	8	72	27.78
Slovakia	104	52	110	51	77	9.09
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49	13.64
Spain	57	51	42	86	48	16.67
Swaziland	34	68	70	58	74	27.27
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	38.46
Thailand	64	20	34	64	32	4.17
Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	13	18.18
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46	33.33
United States	40	91	62	46	26	32.14
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	26	0
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16	18.18

Notes: NOC Gender Diversity = percentage

Hypothesis Tests

We used hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypotheses, and results are presented in Table 3. The controls accounted for 2.2 percent of the variance, which was not significant ($p = 0.50$). The block of cultural values accounted for 41.8 percent unique variance ($p < 0.01$).

Results indicate that power distance was negatively associated with gender equity ($\beta = -0.22$, $p = 0.08$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. Hypotheses 2 and 4 were both supported, as uncertainty avoidance was negatively associated with gender equity ($\beta = -0.35$, $p = 0.01$), as was masculinity ($\beta = -0.30$, $p = 0.01$). However, Hypothesis 3 was not supported, as individualism was not associated with gender equity ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.38$). Finally, long-term orientation was not associated with gender equity ($\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.41$), thereby rejecting Hypothesis 5.

Table 3. Results of hierarchical regression analysis predicting gender equity on NOC boards.

Item	Model 1	Model 2
Number of NOC members	-0.12 (0.002)	-0.02 (0.002)
Number 2016 Olympians	0.12 (0.001)	0.05 (0.001)
Power distance		-0.22+ (0.001)
Uncertainty avoidance		-0.35** (0.001)
Individualism-collectivism		0.12 (0.001)
Masculinity-femininity		-0.29** (0.001)
Long-term orientation		-0.09 (0.001)
R^2	0.02	0.42
ΔR^2	-0.01	.033
F	0.7	9.05***

Notes: + $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$. NOC = National Olympic Committee. Robust standard errors in parentheses. N = 56.

We then computed additional analyses to examine equality of the regression coefficients. Results indicate the strength of the regression coefficients did not significantly differ, all F 's < 0.14, all p 's > 0.87.

DISCUSSION

Gender diversity in top management teams are associated with a bevy of positive outcomes, including ethical behavior, improved decision making, and overall performance, among other benefits (11, 21, 51, 68). Despite the value associated with gender diversity, most sport organizations fail in this domain (8), leading some to suggest that gender inequalities are institutionalized and deeply engrained into the fabric of sport and sport organizations (14). Consequently, better understanding factors associated with gender equity in sport remains a priority for scholars and practitioners, alike. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to contribute to address this need by examining gender equity on NOC boards, with a particular focus on a country's cultural values. In interpreting the results, the reader should remain mindful that, because of the small sample, we relaxed to 0.10 in order to increase power of the tests (43, 67).

Results indicate that gender inequality is the norm on NOC boards. Women represented just 19.7 percent of the board members across all countries. Further analyses showed that approximately one in six boards had less than 10 percent women membership, and 5.4 percent of all boards had no women. These findings mirror recent research focusing on national sport organizations around the world, where women held roughly 19.7 percent of board positions (2). Recall that NOCs are the primary Olympic governing bodies, and in most countries, they help to set the agenda for sport policy and delivery. While NOC's focus on high performance sports, many will also set policies related to (a) sport delivered at the grassroots levels, (b) the

development of coaches and athletes; and (c) sport research and development; among other activities (40). Having few women involved in these important decisions necessarily means that women's voices are not being heard, decision making capabilities are not being realized, and ultimately, the promotion of girls' and women's sport is likely thwarted.

Drawing from Hofstede's (31, 32, 34) cultural dimensions theory, we were also interested in investigating how cultural values influenced this diversity. Consistent with three of our hypotheses, we observed low scores in power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity norms were all associated with greater gender diversity on the NOC boards. Recall that power distance refers to the degree to which resources and influence are concentrated around a select few (31). In a similar way, countries that embrace norms of masculinity privilege men and traditional forms of masculinity. In both cases, these power holders are wealthy men who exert considerable influence (32). People who are privileged are unlikely to relinquish said benefits; thus, it is not surprising that in countries with high power distance and high in masculinity, key decision making positions, such as NOC boards, are primarily held by men.

Uncertainty avoidance was also negatively related to gender equity on NOC boards. This cultural dimension refers to the degree to which people eschew situations in which the outcome is ambiguous (32). As men have traditionally held key leadership positions in sport (8), it is possible that diversifying boards could be associated with an unknown—that is, with uncertainty. Women, after all, have historically been excluded from these roles, so their influence on decision making, governing processes, and board outcomes might be unclear. If this is the case, then people who seek to avoid uncertainty are likely to reject diversity, including gender equity on boards. On the other hand, for those who are more comfortable with ambiguity or take it as a given in life, gender diversity is likely to be normal and embraced.

Interestingly, two cultural values were not associated with NOC board gender diversity: individual-collectivism and long- versus short-term orientation. We hypothesized that collectivistic countries would be positively associated with the gender equity on NOC boards because such countries represent a moral sensitivity towards the issues of fairness in society while individualism is based on self-interest (31). Conversely, individualism held a significant, positive bivariate correlation with gender equity on the NOC boards, but was not significant in the multivariate analyses. The results of the study support Carrasco et al.'s (10) work, such that individualism versus collectivism was not related to the proportion of women on boards. Also, the result of positive correlation is perhaps because promoting gender balance could be based on individual merit (10); in this case, people from individualistic countries along with low power distance cultures, such as the US, Australia, and the UK, might challenge against inequalities and gender norms. On the other hand, collectivistic countries associated with high power distance cultures might conform to hegemonic authority (31). However, according to Hofstede (35), such relationships are more likely to be applicable to wealthier countries, not differences in cultures. This corresponds to our findings, showing that Australia, Canada, and

the US, which have high individualism and lower power distance cultures were ranked above average percentage of the NOC gender diversity, among other wealthier countries.

Nonetheless, it is more important to note that Northern European countries (e.g., Denmark, Latvia, Norway, and Sweden) that have feminine cultures exhibit the highest NOC gender diversity. In particular, Denmark and Sweden stand out with lower power distance, lower uncertainty avoidance, and feminine cultures in terms of the NOC gender diversity. It echoes our findings that masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance have a greater impact on the NOC gender diversity.

Lastly, the long- versus short-term orientation focuses on fulfilling the social obligations of the past. While there is some evidence this orientation is associated with ethical virtues and benevolence (39), though Hofstede and Bond (36) argued that long-term orientation is related to fast economic growth, these characteristics are based on principles of Confucius' teaching that influenced most East Asian countries (e.g., South Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Japan). Although the result was not significant, with regard to East Asian countries, our findings indicated that the NOC gender equity in South Korea and China was above average, but not in Hong Kong and Japan. This is consistent with Hofstede and Bond's (36) argument that long-term orientation is in the midrange of masculinity. Consequently, as Hofstede suggested (35), long-term orientation is also found in Eastern and Central Europe, this perspective is evidently not associated with gender diversity on NOC boards. These findings suggest that the other three cultural values are more important predictors of gender equity in this context.

There are several implications of the study. First, results show that women continue to be under-represented in key leadership positions in international sport. The IOC, as the primary governing body for the Olympic movement, has the opportunity—and we submit, obligation—to take steps to ensure accountability from NOCs in the area of diversity. As a step in this direction, in March 2017, the IOC formed the Gender Equality Working Group, which is an entity charged with created action-oriented mandates for change (42). This is an encouraging first step. Second, while the results are instructive, some might question the managerial implications, especially when considering that cultural values are embedded at the national level. We counter this position by noting that all organizations can ensure gender equity, even in spaces where cultural values would potentially constrain women's opportunities. In fact, researchers have shown that pro-diversity efforts are most positively received when engendered by organizations located in locales not otherwise known for being diverse (52).

Despite the strengths of the study, there are potential limitations. First, because we relied on multiple archival sources that were ultimately merged together, we were not able to have complete data for all NOCs. The countries for which we do have complete data are geographically and culturally diverse, so we are less concerned with biases in those domains. Nevertheless, the smaller sample could be a limitation. Related to this point, our small sample size also meant that we relaxed the alpha to 0.10. Such an approach is statistically justified (43,

67), and we provided the exact *p*-values in reporting the results. Nevertheless, this is a higher *p*-value than used in other statistical analyses with larger samples.

Finally, we see several avenues for future research. First, more work is needed to understand that factors influencing gender equity on NOC boards. Given the benefit of the multilevel theorizing (8), researchers will likely find value in examining individual, organizational, and societal factors. In addition, managers are likely persuaded of diversity's benefits when linked with effective processes and outcomes (24). Lastly, sport management researchers have failed to empirically test Hofstede's cultural values. For example, his sixth dimension (i.e., indulgence versus restraint) explains humans' desire for enjoyment and involvement in sport activities, which may offer a concrete foundation for examining the relationship between this single dimension and gender diversity activities in sport organizations. Thus, future researchers should consider exploring the potential links among gender diversity and athlete development, innovation, entrepreneurial activities, and performance at national and international levels.

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