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Gender Leadership Imbalance in Sport Organizations in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Gender Imbalance in Sport Leadership in Latin America

Monica Yamile Gonzalez Cuevas

The purpose of the study was to examine gender imbalance at the leadership level of sport administration at National Olympic Committees (NOC), National Paralympic Committees (NPC), and National Sport Organizations (NSF) of countries members of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO). Specifically, this study examined how social and human capital, socio-cultural aspects of each country, and power-based discourses affect the advancement of women's careers at the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis.

A total of 12 participants were selected to participate in this study. Participants were all female sport administrators holding the position of president, vice-president, or secretary-general of a NOC, NPC, or NSF representing sport organizations in seven countries. The majority were married, were former athletes, self-described as white, of European descent, and being of middle and upper-class. All 12 participants have undergraduate level degrees and most of them hold master's degrees.

Semi-structured interviews were used to examine how similar experiences defined the careers of women in the sport industry, with thematic analysis and a Feminist Critical approach being used as the primary method for data analysis.

Findings of this investigation show that participation barriers that prevent women's access to sport leadership roles are more prevalent at the meso-level, being influenced by both endemic sexist discourses of the sport culture as a male-dominated industry and by the socio-cultural factors that prevail in the region. Results also revealed that social class and status provide not only women with better education opportunities but also access to advance a career in sport. Thus, lack of training in sport administration and command of the English language are perceived as barriers that primarily affect women minorities. Participants prefer the merits of the female leader instead of filling quotas. Finally, participants perceived that despite the effects of the *machista* culture in most Latin American sport organizations, a generational change is occurring in the leadership of these organizations. The new generation of sport leaders seems to be more empathetic and show more positive attitudes toward women leading sport organizations.

Acknowledgments

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For the Latina women who have bravely carved out a space for themselves in the sport industry and paved the way for future generations. To the women who have learned to break barriers, to navigate this society where Latina women struggle to survive and not be violated. To the women who have put courage as a banner and flag and have shown what they are capable of when you empower yourself.

I will not write specific names because my life is a continuous come and go of people, and those that matter today may not matter to me tomorrow, but they will matter to me the day after tomorrow. But if someone was part of my joys during the time this study was completed, thank you. To my family, to the generation of women in it that, before or after me, broke barriers. And especially all this goes to you Dad, to whom I owe everything.

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List of Abbreviations

FIFA: International Federation of Football Association

INEGI: Mexican National Institute of Statistic and Geography

IOC: International Olympic Committee

IRB: Institutional review Board

LGBTQ+**:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer Community

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association

NOC: National Olympic Committee

NSF: National Sport Federation

NSO: National Sport Organization

PASO: Pan American Sports Organization

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Latin America is a vast territory known for its landscape and its diversified unique

cultural heritage. Latin America encompasses a total of 21 countries, 33 if the Caribbean is

included. All of these countries are under the classification of "developing/ emerging nations" in

comparison to the Northern neighbors of the United States and Canada. Nevertheless, the

treasures of Latin America face a paradox of stagnation and instability, becoming a land full of

contrasts. The correlation between political instability and development is significant among

these countries. This precariousness has also promoted diverse conflicts in the form of coups,

anti-government demonstrations, and even revolutions. Additionally, ethnic fractionalization in

Latin America has had direct outcomes towards affecting countries' instability (Blanco & Grier,

2008). One of the main factors affecting the development in Latin American countries is a

general discontent from the people, a clash of ideologies, and the spread of social agitation.

Thus, Latin America experiences a volatile environment and intervention from foreign countries

like the United States (Romo, 2019). Moreover, high levels of illiteracy along with flaws in the

education systems of the region are prominent, affecting development in other sectors. In the

case of education, in many Latin American countries primary education does not receive the

same priority as higher education, resulting in marginalized groups being unable to learn basic

skills, which would prevent them from being competent enough to be employed (Shixue, 2008).

Altogether, the aforementioned factors affect the stability of the region.

Nevertheless, beyond the social and economic inequality in Latin America, this region

has had outstanding participation of women in politics, some of them even achieving the rank of

head of state. Some examples are Laura Chinchilla, who was the president of Costa Rica from

2010 to 2014, and Michelle Bachelet, who was the president of Chile on two occasions, first from 2006 to 2010 and then from 2014 to 2018 (Skard, 2015). In total, six women have been elected democratically to be president in Latin America, with three more having been interim heads of state (Sihai, 2020). The gradual process that these women constructed required both their empowerment and development in politics along with growth in their societies that allowed them to come to power democratically.

According to Sihai (2020), the wave of female presidents in Latin America is solid proof that female leadership is growing exponentially and it is affecting positively other aspects such as more women participating in politics at all levels, an increase of women in the labor force, and thus narrowing the pay gap that exists along with men's. The democratization in Latin America has helped to improve social inequalities regarding participation in politics and female representation in economic, social, and cultural sectors (Montaño & Rico, 2007). According to Roza and Buvinic (2004), the rise of female leaders in politics in Latin America was possible due to three factors: female human capital, cultural openings, and democratization. These authors suggest that while female leadership in the region remains low, it is expected to grow as people become more open to new trends and ideas about equal practices.

However, inequality in some areas remains visible in the region. For example, during the last decade, the ratio of female CEOs at the 100 biggest companies in Latin America was only 7.3% (Corporate Women Directors International, 2016). Another example is the health sector, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In Latin America, 70% of health personnel are women, meanwhile, the ratio in managerial positions is 1/4 according to the Pan-American Health Organization (2020). These examples demonstrate how the problem of gender imbalance

in leadership permeates almost every sector of life. It is not unique to the sport industry, and it is sustained in the collective unconscious of Latin America-based cultural ideologies.

Latin American societies were built from the independence of European subjugation, based solidly on a theocracy regime where the first form of government during the Spanish colonization was an alliance between the Catholic Church and State (Mallimaci, 2000). Although nowadays all governments in Latin American countries are secular, the influence of Catholic practices is still prevalent. According to the social structure throughout the Catholic Church, women are divinely ordained as inferior to men in both physical and intellectual nature (Bokenkotter, 2005) which could influence the ideas regarding the sex roles of the practitioners of this religion. In addition, throughout the 20th century, many countries in Latin America were governed by different types of dictatorial regimes, including many military governments, which reflected the constant political instability. Nevertheless, despite the social unrest that has hit many countries across the region, women have not been absent in their involvement in politics. This political involvement has contributed to increasing the opportunities for other women to have access to public positions (Fernandez Poncela, 2006). Women as Heads of State in the region show significant progress not only for politics but for a shift in society towards prosperity and growth (Sihai, 2020). Without the outstanding participation of female leaders in Latin American politics, many industries in the region would still remain dominated by men.

Latin America is a region of a rich sport tradition. This sport heritage goes from legendary athletes and teams born in the region, to historical moments hosted on its territory. The role that sport has had on Latin American society represents an immeasurable affection that plays an important role in the national identities of each country (Archetti, 1998; Alabarces, 2009; Elsey & Nadel, 2020). The role of sport in Latin America goes beyond its practice, it is a social

construction that creates connection and meaning in people. It also creates nationalistic ideas, especially on soccer, the most popular sport in the region, where people assume that a "national style of play" is an influential mechanism of masculinity in culture (Archetti, 1998). Nevertheless, sport also represents recession in some areas, where it remains male-biased in practice and management (Archetti, 1998). Female participation in sport has been conditioned not only in Latin America but also in many countries across the world.

Evans and Pfister (2020) defined gender imbalance in sport leadership as "an endemic[1]" issue (p. 332). This definition follows the masculinized discourses that have shaped the world of sport. Adriaanse (2015) examined female participation in leadership roles in National Sport Federations (NSF) from across the world. Results revealed that female sport leaders in NSFs are represented with a mere 19.7% with only four of the 45 countries included in the study showing a female representation above 30% (2015). In the United States, female representation in sports organizations is also low. At the collegiate level, there are only four female athletic directors at Power Five schools.[2] This means, out of 65 universities that are part of the Power Five conferences, only 6% of the top athletic administrators in these universities are females (Baker, 2019).

Modern sport in Latin America evolved much later when compared to the United States and Europe, with female participation being even more relegated. The first male athlete from Latin America at the Olympic Games competed in 1896, while the first female athlete did it in 1948 (Alabarces, 2009). Although sport in Latin America plays an important role in the narrative

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[1] Endemic: common in a particular area or field (Merriam-Webster, 2021).
[2] The Power Five conferences are the five most important NCAA D1 athletic conferences based on American Football. Those are the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Big Ten Conference, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), the Pacific Coast Conference (Pac-12), and the Big 12 Conference. It involves 65 universities.

of their societies, it also highlights areas of exclusion, including gender (Archetti, 1998; Alamillo, 2013; Elsey & Nadel, 2020). In 1941, the Brazilian government approved a law that prohibited women from playing soccer under the argument that practicing this sport could compromise their fertility (Elsey & Nadel, 2020). This legislation, which was introduced by Getulio Vargas, president of Brazil at the time (Werman & Margolis, 2013) was approved by the Ministry of Health and Education, arguing that a woman's first duty was to become a mother, enforcing the necessity to ban them from playing soccer. Finally, the law was revoked in 1979.

But despite women are struggling to be accepted in the world of sport, more recently their presence in major sports events has been significant. An outstanding moment in soccer history took place during the final game of the Men's FIFA World Cup in 2014. The president of the host country, Brazil, Dilma Rousseff met with two other Head of State Christina Fernandez of Argentina and Angela Merkel of Germany. There is a sense of irony behind the encounter of these three women in the VIP section of the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. They were there not only to exchange ideas about the world, but they also were watching the most important match of the most popular sport in the world, a sport that has been traditionally dominated and governed by males.

Although the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) has not done enough to increase the number of women leaders into decision-making roles at the organization, it yet tends to over celebrate when small milestones are reached in terms of gender equity and inclusion. For example, over celebration occurred when female referees debuted at the champions league for the first time in 2020 (Morse, 2020). Of the 37 members of the FIFA Council, only six are women, being Maria Sol Munoz from Ecuador the only Latina (FIFA.com, 2021). But the lack of women representation in higher-level positions, and particularly women

from Latin America, is almost a constant in many international governance sport organizations. In the case of the International Olympic Committee, as of 2020, only two of the 104 members of the IOC are women from Latin America, Laura Chinchilla from Costa Rica, and Maria Colon Ruenes from Cuba (IOC, 2021). In the case of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO), from the 41 National Olympic Committees affiliated to this organization, only six had a woman as president. Of these six women, only Sara Rosario from Puerto Rico is from Latin America. After the Olympic Games in 2021, two more countries in Latin America elected a female president for the first time: Maria Jose Alcala of Mexico and Damaris Young of Panama (Padilla, 2021; Diario Libre, 2021). Hence, female underrepresentation in leadership positions is also reflected at regional governing bodies in Latin America.

Male dominance in sport occurs based on the idea that men are physically stronger than women, with athletic activities serving as a platform for them to showcase their masculinity. Connell (1995) defines sport as a space for men to reproduce hegemonic masculinity, as long as it is exclusively heterosexual and physically dominant to subordinate women. The institutional organization of sport embeds definite social relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination for women (Connell, 1995, p. 54). Even though this idea only takes into consideration the physical features of men, it is the foundation of sport as a social institution and shapes the axis of power in sports institutions, qualifying women as physically inferior therefore unqualified for a leadership position (Burton, 2015).

Historically, women have been underrepresented at the leadership levels of sports organizations. Factors promoting gender imbalance are often based on social factors such as religion, culture, and gender stereotypes, shaping the discourses and attitudes experienced by women in sport organizations and affecting their work relations by legitimizing gender

discrimination and sexual harassment (Adriaanse, 2015; Carmichael Aitchison, 2005). When a woman is looking for a job in the industry, her physical appearance will be judged and opportunities will increase based on her looks. However, at the same time, if the same woman expresses the desire of becoming a mother, her chances will significantly decrease, as recruiters prefer someone who is perceived to be fully committed to the job (Walker & Hindman, 2019).

It is important to highlight that the issue of gender misrepresentation in leadership positions is not only present in Latin America. In fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is the governing body in charge of organizing the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and who oversees all the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) in the world, has been always led by Caucasian cisgender men. Rule number eight of the IOC Mission statement claims that the role of the Olympic Movement is: "To encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women" (IOC, 2021a, p. 17) however, the organization fails to reflect that on its own organizational chart.

As of 2020, Anita DeFrantz, an African American bronze medalist Olympian, is the woman holding the highest leadership position in the organization (IOC, 2021b, para. 2). With the IOC failing to commit to its own diversity mission at its highest level of governance, it is expected that a lack of policies to help gender equity trespasses its continental branches. Although women in Latin America have held leadership positions in sport, the number is limited. In the last two decades, eight women were appointed Ministers of Sport[3] (Lopez de D'Amico, 2016). Sport has an important role in Latin America as a platform that contributes to the development of the region. It plays an important role not only as an economic driver but also as

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[3] The rank of Minister of Sport does not exist in every country around the globe. This Ministry of Sport is the public institution in charge of overseeing the organization and regulation of sport

an important tool that contributes to social integration. It can also be a source for women to gain participation in society and to engage more in leadership positions of the institutions that oversee sports in the region.

Although female underrepresentation in sport leadership is present all over the world and at all levels, it is possible to argue that in Latin America women have to endure many more cultural and social barriers that affect their opportunities to achieve important leadership roles. Gender equality is a fundamental human right (OHCHR, 2021). Therefore, lack of advancement in sport leadership demonstrates a lack of progress in other areas, such as education, economic development, and productivity. It is important to understand the barriers that affect and prevent more women to advance leadership roles in sport. Having a better understanding of what deters women from accessing higher-level positions in sport could eventually help identify strategies that contribute to achieving greater gender balance.

Statement of the Problem

Female underrepresentation in leadership positions is sustained in stereotypes and gendered discourses (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003; Walker & Hindman, 2019). Despite the progress Latin America has had with women leaders in politics, underrepresentation in sports remains alarmingly evident, with little tangible efforts towards the issue. Hartzell and Dixon (2019) examined how some hiring practices in sport organizations might affect women to advance their careers. This investigation showed that male recruiters often have the stereotyped idea that women are less qualified than men for managerial positions. Therefore, men prefer to hire other men. Hartzel and Dixon (2019) suggest that there is an existing prototype of the white male as the successful figure in sport, these men are often labeled as strong and efficient. While female leaders with the same attributes will be judged negatively. During the last decade, more female

students have enrolled in sport management programs in the USA. However, the number of women in senior roles within sports organizations has been minimally affected by these increases, making the aspiring female leader sport administrator remain noticeably underrepresented (Burton & Leberman, 2017). Sports organizations often assume that activities at lower levels of management are more suitable for women while senior positions belong to men. Discourses of masculinity and femininity, along with dominant forms of knowledge, help to develop and reinforce these preconceptions that set a lower standard for women (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003).

Although the topic of gender underrepresentation in sport leadership has been broadly discussed in the United States and Europe by authors like Pfister (2006), Burton (2015), Loggins and Schneider (2015), Hartzell and Dixon (2019), and Walker and Hindman (2019), only a few authors had discussed gender underrepresentation in sport leadership in Latin America (Lopez de D' Amico, 2018; Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly & Nava, 2014; Sotomayor & Torres, 2020). More critically, none of these authors have examined the problem from an empirical point of view. This study explores the experiences that current female sport leaders from a group of selected countries confronted during the career paths to their current positions, focusing especially on which participation barriers they had to overcome and how they maneuvered the challenges encountered.

The contribution of sport in the Latin American region not only can be seen in terms of the impact sport can have on the health and well-being of people, but also in the contribution to social capital in matters of inclusion and community development, education and youth development (Jaitman & Scartascini, 2017). Moreover, examining gender imbalance in the

sport's governance of a given country could serve as a tool to observe the status of gender imbalance in other sectors (Evans & Pfister, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine gender imbalance at the leadership level of sports administration at National Olympic Committees (NOC), National Paralympic Committees (NPC), and National Sport Organizations (NSO) of countries members of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO). Specifically, this study will examine how factors such as social and human capital, socio-cultural aspects of each country, and power-based discourses affect the advancement of women's careers and leadership roles in sport organizations. Consequently, this study poses the following four research questions:

1. How does social capital influence the advancement and security of women's careers in sport leadership positions?

2. How does human capital, such as personal life outside work influence the career paths of women in sport leadership positions?

3. How do socio-cultural factors in Latin American societies influence women's representation in sport leadership positions?

4. How do power-based discourses affect the career advancement and life decisions of women in sport leadership positions?

This thesis adds to the limited literature that analyzes the issue of gender underrepresentation in Latin America since only a reduced number of authors have investigated this subject. Results from this investigation provide new insights and a better understanding of how similar experiences define the career path of female sport administrators in the region, their

path to becoming leaders, and which platforms and resources were used to empower them to

become successful in the industry.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study follows the recommendation of Hartzel and Dixon (2019), who approached the following topics using the Multilevel Perspective: social and human capital, the impact of socio-cultural factors of a region, and discourses of power. In order to investigate gender imbalance in sport leadership positions, the review of literature analyzes some of the factors that influence the career advancement of women. These themes are related to the aims of the study, which is to understand why women are underrepresented in National Sport Organizations in Latin America.

Multilevel Perspective on gender underrepresentation and leadership in sport

The Three-Level perspective, also known as "Level of Analysis" or "Multilevel Perspective", is used in social science research to observe and analyze a specific phenomenon from three hierarchic levels: macro-, meso-, and micro- (Blalock, 1979). The discourses that facilitate gender discrimination in the sport industry originate from socio-cultural levels. They are part of the "collective unconscious"[4] and define how both men and women behave in professional matters. The objective of using the Multi-level Perspective is to analyze how gender discourses and biases affect the entire industry down to the individual level. Blalock (1979) defines that the macro-level covers a large extent of characteristics, from national to global aspects that interact with an individual and/or organization. The meso-level describes the characteristics of the community or organization in which the individual interacts. Lastly, the micro-level is defined as the individual characteristics of a person. These include beliefs, perceptions and ideas learned from the family and social context in which the individual was

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[4] Collective unconscious: in psychology, a part of the unconscious mind incorporates patterns of memories, instincts, and experiences to all mankind (Merriam-Webster).

raised or lives (Blalock, 1979). To understand the origins of gender underrepresentation in the sport industry, Hartzell and Dixon (2019), Taylor et al. (2018), Burton (2015), and Cunningham and Sagas (2007) have all approached this issue by using the Three Level Analysis.

Macro-level. This level encompasses how historical and socio-cultural interactions influence the most fundamental values of a given society. Costa (2011) noted the relationship between historical dimensions and social constructions that foster unequal practices towards gender, race, ethnicity, or social class in Latin American countries. Inequality persists over time by legitimizing inequality in social practices, such as subordinating women. The principles that legitimize unequal practices are inherited generationally, even if a group of people (such a family unit) emigrates out of the region (Costa, 2011). Sartore and Cunningham (2007) argued that social and cultural ideologies are mechanisms that legitimize power structures in society. These ideas are accepted and justified in a given society simply because they exist. Therefore, members of a given society embrace the status quo to avoid potential adverse effects (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Hartzell and Dixon (2019) define the macro-level of gender underrepresentation as federal policies, norms, and trends on the labor market and a country's economic development. At this level, gendered discourses originate at institutional levels. Burton (2015) defined the factors that constituted the macro-level as organizational demography, hegemonic masculinities, power influences (or power relations), stakeholder perspectives, and institutionalized perceptions. Taylor et al. (2018) define the macro-level as political climates solidified through institutionalized practices. For Hogue and Lord (2007), effects of gender bias at the macro-level generate conceptual errors such as the "glass ceiling". Discourses such as the barrier of a glass ceiling do not take into consideration the micro-level individual processes of women at a given

organization. At the macro-level, wider historical and societal elements that exist beyond both sport organizations and individuals influence the role of sport (Singer, 2015). Gender inequality operates at an institutional level but is reinforced by the culture of society. Especially in the sport industry, men stand in a privileged position that assumes they should serve as the authority. The lack of female representation in sport leadership originates at sociocultural levels, where the thought that men should be ruling sport has its foundation in the idea that men are physically stronger (Morettini, 2016; Connell, 1995). Socially constructed norms, such as hegemonic masculinity, hinders full equality between men and women by fomenting oppressive practices and allowing the diffusion of discourses of power, which could not only affect women but also marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and racial minorities (Morettini, 2016). Taking into account that macro-level barriers are universal, eradicating them in favor of equality is complex. This would require a modification of laws and policies, which would still be met with resistance given that it is rooted in the culture of a society.

Evans and Pfister (2020) discussed that at the macro-level, evidence shows that gender inequality in sport exists globally. However, its causations may vary depending on the region, having socio-cultural factors rooted in patriarchal ideologies as the common factor. For example, for majoritarian Muslim countries, religion is the main cause women are relegated in sport leadership positions. In other cases, such as countries in the Americas, gender inequality is ingrained in post-colonial practices. In the case of Europe, gender inequality is often rooted in the resistance of current members (both men and women) to change the status quo (Evans & Pfister, 2020).

Meso-level. The level is defined by Hartzell and Dixon (2019) as social norms at the organizational operation and culture of an organization. At the meso-level, it is possible to

perceive how an organization promotes gender bias and how it acts upon discrimination. Taylor *et al.* (2018) highlight how the meso-level reinforces the discourses of the macro-level. At the meso-level of sports organizations, women usually have to conform with the lowest level of responsibilities, most of which are strictly administrative and supportive. At the meso-level, belief systems that allow gender stereotyping could directly affect the career path of a woman (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Shaw and Hoeber (2003) argued that sports organizations often assume that activities at lower levels of management are more suitable for women while senior positions belong to men. Discourses of masculinity and femininity, along with dominant forms of knowledge, help to develop and reinforce these preconceptions that set a lower standard for women (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003). Replacing the original core ideas of an organization based on gender preconceptions with diversity ideas could enhance the opportunities for women looking for a position in the sport industry.

Burton (2015) suggested that although the meso-level of organizational operation in sport allows gendered discourses to affect women, it is at this level where the most feasible opportunity to promote a change exists. This could be possible with the creation of equity policies and other strategies to encourage female participation in the sport industry (Burton, 2015). Of the three levels, it is at the meso-level where there is the most opportunity to implement best practices for gender equality.

Micro-level. Burton (2015), defines the micro-level as individual understandings of gender, including behavior, human and social capital. Hartzell and Dixon (2019) define this level as to how personal influences impact the meso-level. Taylor et al. (2018) explain that at this level, individuals give meaning to their experiences at a given organization based on their own understanding of the policies. Hogue and Lord (2007) suggest that micro-level attitudes are a

psychological process, which in the long run will affect the development of effective and cognitive dynamics on the individual. According to Graham, Belliveau, and Hotchkiss (2016), workplace gender discrimination has deep roots that originate at social and psychological levels, influencing the way the performance of women is perceived. Gender roles are stereotypes that reside deep in the collective unconscious that might be implicit in the way both men and women behave at the workplace, whether dominantly or submissively.

As opposed to the meso-level and macro-level, where gender bias originates from external factors, the micro-level focuses on the internal factors of the individual reflected in their professional careers. The micro-level also includes how the individual interacts and communicates at their organization. Gendered assumptions based on the cultural setting in which a woman was raised affect the perceived barriers and how she will interact with them (Hartzell & Dixon, 2019). Self-limiting behaviors often occur at the micro-level, especially when the discourses of power surrounding women in sport organizations lead them to assume and accept that escalating into a leadership position in a male-dominated industry is infeasible (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Burton, 2015).

Considering the research purpose of this investigation, the Multilevel Approach is appropriate as a theoretical framework since it offers the opportunity to investigate the phenomenon more broadly, encompassing socio-economic, cultural, and historical aspects of the Latin American region and its impact on the role of women in sport at both the institutional and personal levels. Moreover, to understand the interactions of women and their social capital, human capital, and power-based discourses in the context of sports organizations.

Social Capital: Networking and Career Advancement

Networking is defined as an exchange among individuals in an employment or business setting (Investopedia, 2021). In the United States, networking is often defined as the number one skill needed to succeed in the sport industry. Social capital refers to the networks and interpersonal relationships people form in a given organization or industry (Investopedia, 2021). Building connections when pursuing a career in the sport industry could open the door to many opportunities. However, it is perceived differently by men and women. In terms of career advancement, the three levels influence the career path of women differently. For women, networking dynamics are required as a determination of their career path, as opposed to men whose micro-level abilities, such as experience, curriculum, and skills are often enough to access a leadership position. This gives the impression that in the case of women, the future of their careers depends on outside influences at the meso-level, making their own efforts almost irrelevant.

Hanzell and Dixon (2019) argue that the motivations of women in the industry at an entry point are very malleable. Women entering sports could be easily demotivated by persisting meso-level factors such as the workplace environment and being outnumbered by their male counterparts. Although participation barriers are considered to be at the meso- and macro-levels, the way a woman perceives and internalizes them at the micro-level impacts her performance in the company, eventually defining her future in it.

Yang et al. (2019) researched the different approaches used when applying for executive leadership positions and found that women frequently had to confront cultural and political barriers that do not affect their male counterparts. Consequently, women rely more on seeking benefits within their inner circle. Yang et al. (2019) found that while men required high

centrality to qualify for an executive position, women needed to create a circle of contacts, mostly other women, to obtain queues that would help them qualify for a position. Yang et al. (2019) mention that while high centrality affects job placement for men, it happened after their micro-level characteristics (such as experience and background) were considered.

Sports organizations have the tendency of basing their operational practices and internal culture on masculine perceptions, such as dress codes, humor and language, and even networking practices (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Women gather their social capital through their relationships with people at work and networking with people in the industry. Cunningham and Sagas (2004) noted that contrary to women, men in the sport industry accrued more benefits and success from their human capital, such as skills and intellectual abilities. On the contrary, in their research women's success is credited to external factors, such as policies or programs that facilitated their path or even luck. This idea minimizes the qualifications and skills of women, highlighting that for them it is more necessary to invest in social capital to be able to succeed in the industry. Antunovic and Harding (2013) suggest that women have different motivations than men in the sport industry, while preconceived ideologies affect both genders in leadership roles. While men are interested in sport through how they consume it, women are motivated by participation. In these types of settings, sport could be a powerful tool for women to build connections and empower other women. However, networking for women could turn complicated since dominant ideologies about sport set them to believe they have to compete against each other (Antunovic & Harding, 2013, p. 661).

Zdroik and Babiak (2017) researched the experiences of men and women in National Governing Bodies. Results of this investigation showed that women have the perception that there is a "boys' club" culture in sports that implicitly affects their careers by establishing a

network of men that seeks to keep opportunities amongst themselves. Men who participated in this study confirmed having tendencies to establish contact specifically with the people they perceived to benefit their careers, contrary to the women participants who found it more complicated to find people to establish a relationship that could potentially help them in the future. The findings of this study acknowledged the existence of a sense of camaraderie among men in the sport industry, who perceive other men as people they can consume sport with, whether as fans watching an event or teammates/rivals to practice it. For women in the study, the feeling was that they have to compete for opportunities. These ideas that sports should be consumed by communities of men could affect the way women interact with their organizations, facilitating a hostile environment with more pressure for them to succeed.

Human resource practices also affect the diversity of a business and the chances for women to succeed in the industry. Graham et al. (2016); Bossler et al. (2020); and Swanson et al. (2020) analyzed diversity strategies and recruitment practices that have been applied to create a more gender-diverse environment. When it comes to lower representation, differences in both men's and women's preferences of a potential candidate applying for a leadership position tend to limit the possibilities for women to obtain a managerial level (Graham et al., 2016). For example, Loggins and Schneider (2015) noted that white men are usually introduced at an earlier point in their careers to positions that will prepare them to eventually become athletic directors. On the other hand, women and ethnic minority men are encouraged to pursue positions that will only prepare them to reach an administrative assistant position in athletics (Loggins & Schneider, 2015).

Female reliance on social capital is not unique to the sport industry; it is also reflected in politics. Montaño and Rico (2007) noted that 78% of women in parliamentary positions in Latin

America and the Caribbean got the opportunity to run by direct invitation of a political leader, as opposed to their male counterparts who can contend for a position of power by their own account. Montaño and Rico (2007) observed in their report that while women hold a parliamentary position, they are often stimulated towards taking part in socially concerned commissions, rather than being included in more substantial, decision-making discussions. In European organizations, which are dominated by men and have basic gender stereotypes based on the idea that women are expected to take care of a household, women have to use more energy than men while building their careers (Mihalčová et al., 2015). The discrimination resulting from these gender stereotypes not only affects women applying for a position but also affects the different types of remuneration, resulting in a significant wage gap. Mihalčová et al. (2015) affirm that gender stereotypes have an impact on the hiring process of women and their promotion to higher positions since the work done by women is not equally appreciated by their male counterparts.

Cunningham (2007); Koca and Öztürk (2015); and Hartzell and Dixon (2019) found in their research that when male recruiters are hiring for a managerial position in sport management, they prefer to hire men, since gender stereotypes towards women make them pose as less qualified and a higher burden. However, not only male recruiters mistrust women applicants. According to Koca et al. (2009) some women in sports organizations also prefer men for management roles, considering them better qualified for tasks that require them to lead people or to oversee international projects. Paradoxically, while women could also be affected by gender bias by considering women less qualified than men, female leadership can potentially increase female participation. Bossler et al. (2020) found that the number of women in managerial positions tends to be positively correlated with the number of women getting hired

for the same organization. Women tend to integrate a more diverse workforce by being more open to hiring women candidates (Bossler et al., 2020). Potvin et al. (2018) noted that the number of women in board positions tends to increase when there are already women in that given organization´s leadership. Potvin et al. (2018) argue that diversity benefits women, since their representation in leadership is greater outside of taxonomic societies. Along with discrepancies between how men and women apply their social capital, life outside work also plays an important role for women pursuing a role in sport leadership.

Human Capital: Personal Relations and Career Advancement

Human capital refers to characteristics of an individual that could serve as an input within their organization, such as skills, health, education and knowledge (Wright & McMahan, 2011). It could be shaped by gendered patterns within a given society. Gendered patterns are social stereotypes that draw the roles men and women have to fulfill in society, often setting women as mothers and wives before their professional careers. Pfister and Radtke (2006) explored the reasons why sport managers in leadership roles in Germany voluntarily decided to resign from their position before the original date they had planned to leave that role. The purpose of this investigation was to identify gendered patterns affecting the decision making process of a professional in the sport industry by focusing on how men and women deal with power and labor, but especially on how personal aspirations, such as relationship status or parenthood, affect different professional paths (Pfister & Radke, 2006). The findings were that women have to endure gender-specific discrimination that usually involves more emotional reasons in comparison to men. Family or relationship conflicts were more frequent for women as reasons behind the decision to drop out (Pfister & Radke, 2006). Challenges and participation barriers based on gender have been studied in order to comprehend their origins and which potential

strategies can be applied to overcome this issue, with social justice movements such as feminism being one of the biggest mobilization strategies.

Patriarchal ideas expect women to set motherhood as their number one priority. This stereotype might emotionally affect those women committing to a full-time position since feelings of guilt and anxiety might appear when they decide to prioritize their careers. In comparison, their male counterparts experience fewer negative feelings if they commit more time to their career in sports than to their families, since they are supposed to be the breadwinners according to this norm. Taylor et al. (2018) examined how women commissioners in the NCAA Division I experience personal fulfillment, motherhood, and work satisfaction. Results of this investigation showed that women struggle to balance both work and personal responsibilities. Subsequently, women have to regularly negotiate their schedules to fulfill roles in their personal and professional lives (Taylor et al., 2018).

Stereotypes based on gender expect women to set their career as a secondary priority, which could be harmful by creating the idea that being married with children is more important than being a woman who can work, negotiate, and become a leader in her field. Pfister (2006); Knoppers and Anthonissen (2007); and Leberman and Palmer (2009) analyzed the role that motherhood plays in sports leaders and how it affects both their professional careers and their personal development. Findings of these investigations showed that men did not perceive that their domestic lives interfere with their work responsibilities and felt satisfied with the time they have available to spend with their children, as opposed to their female counterparts who experienced feelings of stress, guilt, and negligence towards their children for having full-time positions. Additionally, men showed less commitment towards domestic responsibilities as opposed to their female coworkers. Women with children seeking a leadership position in sport

found it challenging to balance the demands of both work and motherhood. Socially, women were expected to prioritize their family over their professional careers. Moreover, they were considered selfish when they chose not to have children in favor of their careers. By prioritizing motherhood, recruiters perceived that hiring a woman is a risk while hiring men is safer (Mihalčová et al., 2015). Generally, gender stereotypes dictate that women should be mothers and housewives, however, motherhood itself is only a hypothetical barrier for those pursuing a career in sport management. In terms of life satisfaction, childless women in leadership positions are not the happiest according to Dixon and Sagas (2013). Mothers who were able to balance motherhood and work had higher levels of satisfaction towards their lives compared to women without children (Dixon & Sagas, 2013). In order to achieve this balance, the support from their organization was vital, in terms of flexible work schedules, provision of childcare facilities, and maternity leave. Allen and Shaw (2009), researching the psychological needs of sport managers, found that only a small sample of women felt that the organization they worked for acknowledged their personal needs, including maternity and family needs. According to Workplace Fairness[5] (2019), women appreciated it more if their workplace offers help with childcare over their partner helping with children. In the same study, men expected their female partners to be the ones taking care of their children. This fact confirms that gender stereotypes indeed affect the expectations that men, in general, have towards women. Stereotypical perceptions of gender affect the experiences of sport managers based on the implicit beliefs that define both femininity and masculinity. Koca and Öztürk (2015) studied what workers in sport organizations were expecting regarding their bosses' attitudes. Male workers expect features such

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[5] Workplace fairness is a non-profit organization that educates and promotes employee rights. It also conducts research on workplace issues.

as "confident" and "strong" while female workers expect their bosses to be "sensible" and "nurturing".

Eradicating well-seeded beliefs that have been part of collectivistic ideas of society is hard, but some measures can be implemented to fight gender discrimination in sport organizations.

Influence of Socio-Cultural Aspects of Latin America in Career Advancement

Sociocultural aspects of a given country, group or society are the theoretical and physical elements that their members use for interaction. It originates at an anthropological level (Gharajedaghi, 2012). Although this investigation focuses on women in Latin America, it is important to highlight that gender inequality is present in almost all the National Sport Organizations around the world. According to Adriaanse (2015), one of the factors promoting this gender inequity is based on social factors such as religion, culture, and stereotypes. Gender roles in Latin America have been shaped by cultural ideas and religion. An example of the influence of religion interfering with the advance of female leadership is Muslim societies. Authors Chin, Henry, and Hong (2009) analyzed how Muslim societies promote a patriarchal influence that sets women at a disadvantage in regard to job positions at any National Olympic Committee or National Sport Organization. Muslim countries are traditionally controlled by men and relegate women to an inferior social position, therefore minimizing job opportunities for them. Chin et al. (2009) found that Muslim men are able to recognize that the dominant role of men is an invisible rule, confirming that their religious ideology learned from home set a mindset of masculinized management features required for a position in the corporate world. Most of the time this segregation begins at home by the division of roles and social expectations between

boys and girls, progressing into the higher educational level. Even though this case only considered Islam, the case of Latin America with Catholicism is similar.

The regional context of Latin America and its relationship with religion has been present in society's interaction with gender. Catholicism is a religion that positions women as inferior to men. In 1 Corinthians 14: 34 and 35, the Bible says:

The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be in submission, as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

In Latin America, the Catholic Church continues to exercise its authority in matters of defining what is publicly acceptable and what is not. According to Saez and Moran Faundes (2018), the fact that the current Pope is from Latin America has strengthened the attachment to the ideas of Catholicism to the region, even though Pope Francis has been characterized for being much more open on issues of inclusion than his predecessors. It is important to mention the role of religion in Latin America because it directly affects the discourses of power that benefit men more than women. Nevertheless, this issue is not unique to either the region nor to Catholicism. It is present in several countries, especially those with collectivistic cultures. The cultural collectivistic development of a given society is influenced by its dominant religious practice. By nurturing interdependence among its members, people tend to develop their sense of self based on the practices ruled by their religious practice. Since this happens at a psychological level, it could happen regardless of the type of belief, doctrine, cult or practice (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).

Investigations on the intersectionality between ethnicity and gender in sport leadership are scarce. Walker and Melton (2015) examined this issue at the U.S. intercollegiate level and

highlighted that discrimination based on race and ethnicity has ethnocultural roots. The origins of gender discrimination in sport administration roles are social and cultural stereotypes. Social ideologies on gendered discourses affect the potential of women searching for jobs in the sport industry. Carmichael Aitchison (2005) suggests that a society influenced by patriarchal culture and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity would assume that women belong to lower levels of leadership in comparison to men. Latin American ideologies are especially resistant to accepting that women could pursue a full-time position instead of a family. Bhattacharjya et al. (2013) investigated female leadership in Latin America and noted that both men and women are taught from an early age that women belong to the household and maternity rather than to the labor force. Lamas (2017) analyzed the multicultural contexts that foster and intensify obstacles for women in Latin America. Lamas (2017) affirms that in Latin America, levels of literacy in Indigenous communities are higher among women. Especially in rural areas, priority is given to preparing girls for motherhood, which jeopardizes their opportunity to have an education.

Intersections of social class and race also play an important role for women in pursuit of a leadership position in Latin America. Having already an implicit disadvantage based on gender, women from racial and ethnic minorities experience one more level of discrimination to endure. A white woman in the sport industry might have more opportunities compared to a woman of color. In the same way, a heterosexual woman has an advantage in comparison to a lesbian. White privilege in sport organizations also affects members of the LGBTQ+ community, echoing Connell's (1995) definition of sport as an activity strictly for heterosexual men. This subject is especially worrisome because it adds another layer of obstacles to women in the industry who are neither white nor heterosexual.

Social stratification in Latin America based on class structure persisted after independence from European societies. The Western perspective has shaped our definitions of gender as the dominant force and it also differentiates economic and social classes. Normative femininity, a notion that originated in the nineteenth century, defined that "white, well-to-do women came to stand as the symbol of ideal motherhood to propagate the race and the nation, thereby preserving Western civilization" (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006, p. 3). The problem with this idea is that international science spread it implicitly as the dominant doctrine. In Latin American societies, minoritarian groups are often excluded from economic and political participation based on their racial and ethnic features (Canache, et al., 2014). Discrimination based on race often triggers self-exclusion (micro-level), promoting an individual to conform to racial biases in order to avoid perceived aggressions (Canache et al., 2014). According to research on social mobility conducted by the Mexican National Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI), people who identify themselves as "dark-skinned" held less-skilled job positions. This study explains this issue as perceived "historically accumulated disadvantage", while white-skinned people have "inherited advantage/benefits" (INEGI, 2016). The results of this study showed that in Mexico, the percentage distribution of those who self-classify as "dark skin" only complete the elementary level of their education, while the percentage distribution of those who identify themselves as "light / white skin " have easy access to higher levels of education. This study used the term "self-classification" to indicate that each participant self-identified in a table of eleven values, with 1 being the darkest skin and 11 being the lightest skin. In this same study, those who self-classify on the "clear/white skin" values of the table, also indicated that they hold positions such as director, manager, or official, while those on the dark-skinned side self-classified as support workers or agricultural sector (INEGI, 2016). By defining white privilege as

an "inherited advantage", this study is acknowledging the influence of the European ideals that have remained historically in the roots of Latin American societies after the Postcolonial period, where the native and black societies remained subjugated even after gaining independence from Europe. This indicates that in addition to considering the discourses of power in relation to gender biases, the case of Latin America also has to consider the role of the intersectionality of social class and race as barriers to participation where the skills, knowledge, and attributes of a person become almost irrelevant, allowing the social class to define his/her role in society.

It is important to analyze the role of the historical and socio-cultural factors of a region to understand the gender biases at the macro, and, meso-level. Dosal et al. (2017) analyzed gender equity in Mexican sports entities and found that the foundation of discriminatory practices towards women in Mexican sports administration is only a reflection of society in general. As a social institution, sport can potentially serve as a channel of inclusion and diversity. Singer (2015) noted that socio-cultural legitimation entails the positive and negative factors of a particular society that influence the behaviors of both groups and individuals within them through sociocultural theories at the macro-level, administrative at the meso-level, and psychological at the micro-level.

Power-based Discourses and Career Advancement

A discourse of power is a social construct used to designate levels of power based on cultural and social attributes, often assimilated during upbringing (Karlberg, 2005). Discourses of power influence how people interact, being predominantly dominated by Western-liberal societies. For women, ideological gender bias based on socio-cultural forms of patriarchal domination tend to manifest unconsciously, by self-limiting their behavior (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Brown and Light (2012) suggest that early experiences from childhood

affect how both men and women behave at work, creating a gender barrier based on the influence of a patriarchal culture[6]. Factors such as corporate practices and policies (meso-level) favor male dominance in sport organizations by systematically suppressing women. Adriaanse (2015) argues that men in sport organizations tend to limit the participation and opinions of female board members, in some cases influencing the decision of women to resign earlier than planned. Carmichael Aitchison (2005) notes that material and cultural factors shape the discourses and attitudes experienced by women in sport organizations, affecting their work relations by legitimizing gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Hegemonic masculinity is the concept that idealizes heterosexual men as dominant in society (Morettini, 2016). Connell (1995) argues that the idea of centralized masculinity in social sciences has its origins in the Nineteenth Century, preventing women from participating in decision-making roles. Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p. 77). Burton (2015); Adriaanse (2015); Chen and Henry (2012); and Hartzell and Dixon (2019) suggest that ideologies of hegemonic masculinities in the collective unconscious affect the perception of performance based on gender, meaning that ideologies based on gender roles and other stereotyped concepts affect subconsciously those in the power of hiring people.

A discourse of power often encompasses sexist ideas. Taylor et al. (2018) analyzed how sexism in sport organizations could lead women to leave their positions. Merriam-Webster (2020) defines sexism as prejudicial ideas and discriminatory practices based on sex roles. With

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[6] Patriarchal culture refers to a social construct organized according to the principles of Patriarchy. Patriarchy is defined as a "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line" (Merriam-Webster).

sport being a male-dominated industry, women tend to endure sexism at every level. Swanson et al. (2020) analyzed how sexist ideas affect the sport industry. Instead of focusing on the intellectual attributes, experience, and credentials of potential job candidates, recruiters tend to allow gendered discourses to affect the way a candidate is perceived, setting women at a disadvantage (Swanson et al., 2020). These preconceived ideas affect the perception of both men and women, setting stereotypes that allow them to accept certain situations or behaviors.

Sexist ideas could even judge the physical appearance of a woman as a decisive factor in her career in sports. Walker and Hindman (2019) explain the factors that affect women looking to escalate into leadership positions and how gender stereotypes in society affect the sport industry. Embedded sexism and power discourses in sport organizations could even result in managers evaluating performance based on gender, leading women to believe they need to prove their trustworthiness to be recognized. Walker and Hindman (2019) found that women in sport organizations tend to manage the way they could be perceived by others by consciously thinking about their demeanor. This could include the way they interact with others, their body language, and how they dress, considering that these factors could impact in both positive and negative ways their career (Walker & Hindman, 2019). These stereotypes often identify women only as good-looking partners of athletes, assuming they must have sex appeal and look attractive for the media. At the same time, the sport industry would not find it easy to hire married women with children, since it is assumed that work will not be their priority (Walker & Hindman, 2019). These misconceptions could be discouraging for young women interested in pursuing a career in the sport industry, with the erroneous assumption that looking good would be more beneficial than having a degree, skills, and experience.

Ideologies of patriarchal hierarchy manifest unconsciously on women promoting self-limiting behaviors. At the micro-level, this self-limiting behavior might prompt women to conform to lower duties in sports administration (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Adriaanse (2015) argues that power discourses in sport organizations are social constructions, unnatural, and should not be acknowledged as institutional constructions (meso-level) or individual issues (micro-level). Therefore, power discourses must be challenged and transmuted (Adriaanse, 2015). Self-limiting behaviors based on masculine and feminine stereotypes affect the way women behave at work, making them submissive and pre-conditioned to obey male figures, even at their same level. Hartzel and Dixon (2019) noted the existence of an ideal "prototype of white male" as the expected successful figure in sport leadership, who is often labeled with adjectives such as "strong" and "efficient" while a female leader with the same attitudes would be qualified as "bitch" or "battle-ax" (Hartzel & Dixon, 2019). Hovden (2010) identified the dominant discourses affecting gender imbalance in sports organizations and its relationship with power relations more generally. Hovden argues that the concept of an "ideal" leader is not androgynous; it completely distinguishes feminine and masculine characteristics, giving more value to masculine ones (2010). This idea not only harms women; it affects non-cisgender men. However, the results of Hovden's (2010) research show that the younger generation is aware of power discourses and their effects. This generation is more willing to defy and challenge these discourses by replacing them with diversity. Educating on discrimination is an efficient way to prevent situations in which women can be potentially affected by these types of practices. A woman who is not aware of her rights may easily conform to sexist practices at her workplace, while a woman who is prepared may be empowered enough to know how to act for herself.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender imbalance in sport leadership at National Olympic Committees (NOC), National Paralympic Committees (NPC), and National Sport Federations (NSF) of selected countries who are members of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO). From the 41 countries that are members of PASO, this study targeted a selected number of Latin American countries. The main factors examined are social capital, human capital, culture, and power-based discourses affecting the advancement of women's careers and leadership roles in sport organizations.

This study uses the qualitative interview method to inquire into the nature and interactions that the sample population experienced in sport leadership. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that qualitative research has its philosophical roots in symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction theory is the social science that analyzes how society interacts with both a natural environment and the reciprocal interpretations or values given to symbols in such an environment (Aksan et al. 2009). Qualitative research is flexible, emergent, and the primary instruments of data collection are the interactions between the researcher and the participants. Qualitative research is inductive, comprehensive, and holistic, with the goal of engaging in understanding a phenomenon and its influence on people's lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, qualitative research is the most appropriate method instead of a quantitative approach since the purpose is to obtain meaningful in-depth experiences of Latina women in the sport industry, rather than numerical data that could perhaps yield statistical results without inquiring comprehensively of the individual factors that affected the career advancement of the participants.

While discussing issues of gender imbalance, this study positions itself using a feminist approach. Cook and Fonow (1986) divide the elements of feminist research into gender and women as the central point of research, the significance of awareness, ethical concerns, women as knowledge producers, and power balance and initiatives towards social chance through female empowerment. Therefore, by using a feminist research approach, the aim is to create awareness towards the participants' efforts and challenges to obtain a leadership position, and for them to be celebrated as groundbreaking women in an industry where power discourses and patriarchy set them on secondary roles. Critical feminist research seeks for a change in the system to eradicate and prevent social inequalities; it is also change-oriented and advocates for equal opportunities (Martin, 2002). Critical feminist research takes into account the role of intersections and discrimination, principally ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation. The goal of feminism is to challenge the instruments of hierarchy to offer more opportunities for segregated groups (Martin, 2002). It is important to take into consideration that feminist research does not signify that we are conducting research from a female point of view. Feminist research means that the purpose is to inquire into gender inequality issues.

Researcher Positionality

The author's positionality as a researcher is based on the ideas of liberal feminism. Awareness of the sports field being a male-dominated industry was present when the author chose to become involved in sports as well as study for a career related to sports, and then pursue a job in the sport industry. Over the years, a good amount of the literature has presented "sport" as an activity created for men to showcase their masculinity and strength, designed only for them as both participants and spectators (Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Antunovic & Harding, 2013). The author has had awareness of the participant barriers that exist in the sport industry from a

young age. Therefore, in this study, the author's goal was to communicate the challenges women faced when they wanted to not only build a career in the sport industry but also when they wanted to advance and reach a leadership position in the same industry.

In terms of epistemology, feminist theory, more specifically liberal feminism, sustained this research investigation. Liberal feminism has predominated as the theoretical approach in research on gender equity in sport governance, especially at the macro-level (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Feminism from a liberal perspective opposes gender roles and other traditional/cultural ideas that separate the aptitudes of men and women (Ogletree et al., 2017). Liberal feminism opposes violence against women inflicted with the purpose of oppression, defends women's personal autonomy and access to options (such as education and work), and seeks the abolition of patriarchal laws and policies that restrict women's rights (Baehr, 2021). The author reflects on her own experiences that helped to construct her feminist perspective, particularly considering that patriarchal oppression, which is implicit in Mexican society, has played a significant role in influencing her feminist perspective. The author's upbringing happened at a conservative Catholic household in Guadalajara, Mexico. Her childhood was heavily influenced by gender roles and sexism, where she was expected to act as a caregiver rather than a breadwinner. Even though the author's family followed traditional gendered roles and attitudes, they never opposed her practicing soccer, a sport that in Mexico is considered primarily a male sport. However, her family objected when she decided to pursue a career path as a sports administrator.

The author grew a passion for soccer and learned from her father. As a former youth soccer player, the author grew an interest in developing a professional career in sport management. One of the reasons the author chose to study in the United States was due to the

lack of sport management programs available in her home country. This has been a predominant theme in the interviews conducted in this investigation; the lack of academic programs available in Latin America to become a sports administrator.

After graduating from an undergraduate program in sport management, the author had the opportunity to work for several sport organizations in project management and game-day operations at the Saint Louis Football Club in Missouri[7]: The Caribbean Series[8] in 2018 and the Pan-American Games[9] in 2019. Throughout her experience, it was not unusual for the author to find herself in work meetings with only two or three women and 10 or more men. At the sport organizations the author had worked for, all of her supervisors were men while most of the women held mostly clerical duties. The author was also a first-hand witness of several misogynist behaviors from her male coworkers, such as sexist vocabulary and gender misconceptions.

Along with gender-equal access to participation, the author is also interested in understanding how people of color, diverse ethnicities, and different cultural backgrounds construct their careers in sport, particularly in an industry where mainly white cis-gender men hold leadership positions. But along with being a woman, a lens that influences the author's research, she is a Latina woman. Therefore, she is an ethnic minority, which also adds up to the challenges that this category could imply.

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[7] St. Louis FC is a professional soccer team based in Fenton, Missouri. It is affiliated to the USL Championship League. (*Saint Louis FC Home | usl championship.com.* 2021)

[8] The Caribbean World Series is a yearly professional baseball championship for professional teams from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico and Venezuela. (*Serie del Caribe, LMB*, 2021).

[9] The Pan-American Games is a continental sport event among the nations of the Americas. It takes place every four years (Panamsports.org, 2018)

Beginning with her undergraduate degree in sport management at Lindenwood University in Missouri, the author has been in several college classrooms where she only had one or two female classmates. Along with being part of the female minority group, she was often the only foreign student in the class. The author often felt she needed to justify why she deserved to be in her position working in sports, even though on some occasions she has demonstrated having higher qualifications than her male counterparts, in terms of education and experience.

Regarding the committee for this master's thesis, each member provided adequate feedback based on their expertise and own experience. The chair of the committee, who is a Latino man living in the United States, could understand not only the nuances of the sport industry in Latin America but also its culture. Two other members of the committee, who are white women, could relate to the existing barriers based on gender. Feedback from each of them helped this investigation to mitigate possible biases the author could have, such as jumping to conclusions such as "all Latinxs[10] experience discrimination" or "all women in the sport industry experience barriers". In addition, the diversity of this committee has also helped the author to self-reflect and identify possible biases she might have that are rooted in her own experiences. For example, the author, as a white Latina Woman, has to acknowledge the privilege this category entailed in Latin societies, which makes her more aware of the barriers of participation that other non-white Latina women might experience in sport among her own culture.

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[10] The term Latinx is a gender-neutral label for the Latino community. It emerged with the purpose to include intersectionalities of sexual orientation and identities (Salinas & Lozano, 2017).

Participants

In this study, the selection criteria for participants was to be a female holding the position of president, vice-president, or secretary-general of a National Olympic Committee (NOC), National Paralympic Committees, or a National Sport Federations in a country within the Latin American region. Considering that Latin America is not a region that can be described strictly in geographical terms (Bravo et al., 2016), this study used the Pan American Sport Organization (PASO) as the sample population. From the 41 countries that are members of PASO, this study took into consideration only Spanish-speaking countries because these countries show similar cultural backgrounds such as language, religion, and colonial history. In Latin America, Hispanic-America encompasses those countries where the official language is Spanish. This excludes Brazil, which is a Portuguese-speaking country (Lopez et al., 2021). Therefore, the countries from which the participants were invited to participate in the study included: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

After identifying which countries were going to be included, a list of potential participants was identified through the website of each NOC that is part of PASO and also met the criteria previously described. Therefore, purposeful and snowball sampling was used to obtain the sample in this study. In purposeful sampling, participants are selected based on certain characteristics they possess, and their potential relation to the aim of the investigation (Coyne, 1997). For this investigation, purposeful sampling was used to recruit female directives for the specific countries and positions previously described. A list of potential participants was created

based on the information on the NOCs, NPCs and NSFs websites that describes the board of

directors in each of these organizations that are part of PASO. Once potential participants were

identified, the Pan-American Organization facilitated their contact information. Snowball

sampling occurred when some of the first participants recommended other potential contacts. In

qualitative research, snowball sampling is applied when participants are recruited following the

recommendation of initial sample subjects, as long as they qualify within the characteristics and

it stops until data saturation is achieved (Naderifar et al., 2017). Participants were also sought

through personal contacts the author and her advisor had within the Pan-American Sports

Organization.

Qualitative research often uses a relatively small number of participants in order to focus

on the depth of the responses. A population size of 12 participants was considered for this

investigation. Considering a hypothetical response rate of 20%, it was estimated a total of 60

invitation letters to be sent to women that qualified for the study. However, as participants began

confirming, only 17 invitations were sent. In this study, data saturation was achieved after the

eighth interview, since the answers to specific themes among the participants concurred. For

example, all of them agreed on having experienced a negative episode regarding sexism or

discrimination based on gender during her leadership position in the sport organization they

work for. Also, all of them agreed that the culture of Latin American society influenced these

attitudes subconsciously, even though participants were from different countries. All the data

until this point seems to converge on similar themes. However, in this study four more

interviews were conducted to confirm what already data seems to suggest until that point. Strauss

and Corbin (1998) identified the saturation point not as a fix point but instead they see

"saturation as a matter of degree" (cited in Saunders et al., 2018). Therefore, saturation is seen as

an ongoing work in progress where adding a few more interviews not only makes data richer but also it confirms that new themes will not emerge (Jason and Whitford, 2014 cited in Saunders 2018). So, a final sample of 12 participants was used for this study. The countries of the 12 participants are Argentina (n=1), Bolivia (n=1), Chile (n=3), Ecuador (n=1), Mexico (n=3), Paraguay (n=2) and Peru (n=1) (See Appendix A, Table 1).

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were used to examine how similar experiences defined the careers of women in the sport industry, with thematic analysis used as the primary method for data analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed the questions to be flexible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) which meant that instead of strictly asking all the questions on the list, more questions or comments would be discussed during the conversation. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) defined the three main features of semi-structured interviews as formal, guided, and flexible. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) suggested that one of the benefits of semi-structured interviews was that they gave the participant the freedom to express their own experiences and opinions. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were used to analyze the phenomenon and draw a conclusion.

The protocol for the semi-structured interviews was developed based on the four main themes discussed in the review of the literature (Interview Protocol, Appendix E). These four themes were identified following the recommendation of Hartzel and Dixon (2019), who used the multilevel perspective to inquire into female underrepresentation in sport organizations. As described in the literature review, the multilevel perspective consists of observing and analyzing a certain phenomenon from three hierarchical levels: macro- (influence of historical and socio-cultural interactions in society, meso- (organizations and its social norms), and micro- (personal

and individual understandings) (Blalock, 1979). From the eight core questions of the interview, the first two inquired into both social aspects (networking and personal relationships) and human capital (personal life outside work). Question one inquires into how networking (social capital) influenced career advancement. The second question inquires specifically about human capital, asking about mentors or role models in the career of each participant. Question three inquires into social capital, more specifically how the roles of motherhood and relationships could affect the careers of the participants. Question four inquires into power-based discourses, more specifically how their careers in sport leadership have been different in comparison to their male counterparts. Questions five and six inquire into both cultural aspects of Latin American societies and power-based discourses, by asking about how socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic identification have played a role in the careers of the participants. Question eight inquires into how the participants perceived their experiences in sport leadership as being different from their female counterparts who work in other nations such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Australia, or New Zealand that show more advanced sport systems. The last two questions encouraged participants to share advice to women from their respective countries aiming to pursue a career in sport leadership and to share any experience or thought related to their careers that were not asked during the interview.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher's affiliation with the Pan-American Organizing Committee of Lima in 2019 helped to get the approach to potential participants, by using the network she built from her experience working there. Participants in this study were contacted via email. After the first contact with each participant, a letter of participation indicating the purpose of the study and a

copy of the protocol with the questions to be included in the semi-structured interview were sent to all participants (Appendices D and F). Each participant proposed the date and time that better accommodated their schedule. Interviews took place from July to October of 2021.

All interviews were conducted and recorded from Zoom and then transcribed using the software Amberscript. All interviews were conducted in the Spanish language. While interviewing from a critical feminist standpoint, the researcher had to maintain awareness of the impact the data collected could have, especially with some sensitive themes being discussed. For that, the researcher has to protect the integrity of the participants by keeping their identities confidential. The researcher also needs to know when and where to stop during the interview process in order to avoid any discomfort that arises from discussing sensitive issues. In qualitative research from a critical feminist standpoint, the researcher establishes a bond with the participant, where both can recognize each other as equals within their womanhood, regardless of the differences between them in terms of age or nationality (Hesse-Biber, 2006). In this study, the author had to find similarities that would make her relatable with the participants. In this case, the researcher and participants were both Latino women and both work in the sport industry. Therefore, both have similar challenges to overcome.

The average duration of each interview was approximately 38 minutes (See Appendix B, Table 2). Each transcript was then revised to make sure the text downloaded from the software was coherent with the audio. Once transcribed and translated from Spanish to English, the coding process began. Thematic analysis, which consists of a deductive interpretation of the data collected based on the predefined themes of the investigation (Medelyan, 2020) was then conducted. Thematic coding and thematic analyzes go hand-in-hand (Medelyan, 2020). This process was deductive with a predefined set of themes that helped to code and identify themes.

The set of code frames remained flexible depending on the results. To guarantee accuracy and reliability, the process of qualitative coding has to be consistent, descriptive, and avoid commonalities (Medelyan, 2020). For this study, codes have the purpose of identifying both the negative and positive experiences of the participants with their positions in sport leadership. In this case, the predefined themes were social capital, human capital, socio-cultural aspects of each country, and power-based discourses. Each transcript was carefully revised to identify patterns across all the interviews. The themes mentioned repeatedly were coded until saturation was achieved.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Findings of this study present insights of the participants' experiences in regard to gender imbalance in a sample of 12 female sport administrators of 12 sport organizations (i.e., NOCs,

NPCs and Sport Federations) in Latin America. Participants were all female sport administrators with 4 to 12 years of experience, representing sport organizations in seven countries, the majority were married, and they self-described as white of European descent. One participant described herself as mestizo and one declined to specify her ethnicity. As for their educational background, all 12 participants have undergraduate level degrees. Most of them have master's degrees in sport management as well master's degrees in other areas. One of the participants holds a PhD. Most participants mentioned being of middle and upper-class citizens, while a few declined to answer this question.

The following six themes were commonly found in the data collected from the 12 interviews: (a) effects of "*machista*" attitudes in sport organizations in Latin America, (b) prevalence of former athletes in sport leadership roles, (c) prevalence of women of white/European descent in leadership roles, (d) preference for qualified leaders over imposing quotas, (e) lack of specific training for personnel working in sports in Latin America, (f) generational change towards some attitudes that affect balance.

Machismo

Machismo was one of the major themes discussed by participants when I inquired about their experience as sport leaders in a sport organization in Latin America. Merriam-Webster defines machismo as "strong or exaggerated sense of masculine pride; exhilarating sense of power of strength" (2021, p. 1). Felitti and Rizzotti (2016) state that, while there is not a literal translation from the term machismo from Spanish to English, it can be translated as sexism or male chauvinism. Machismo is a term widely common in Latin American societies, used mainly to define everyday attitudes and ideas that affect gender roles. Quiñones and Resnick (1996) define machismo as attitudes expressed in both public and private behaviors of people in Latin

America that could affect their interactions and how people treat them. In this sense, the sport industry has a very marked sense of male dominance, which ends up relegating women as outsiders in both practices and administration. Added to that, machismo attitudes subconsciously expect women to be relegated to the tasks of being a housewife, mother, and wife, far from a job in leadership.

At one point, all 12 participants mentioned that *machismo* has had an impact on their careers. Particularly, participants expressed being aware that implicit *machista* behavior in the sport industry and their careers was a reflection of the culture of their countries. While some participants did not recall a specific episode in which they experienced discrimination based on gender, all of them were able to highlight the existence of certain privileges that their male counterparts have.

Although having the necessary qualifications required for the positions, several participants perceived themselves as "lucky", or had a stroke of luck to get the position of leader. When inquiring about the awareness of different treatments that participants received in their roles in comparison to their male counterparts, for three participants it was easier to identify some discrepancies since they had relatives who were currently or previously leaders at the same federations. Participant 2 is the daughter of a former president at the same sport federation, Participant 9 is the vice-president of her sport federation while her husband presides, and Participant 8 became the vice-president of her federation following her brother's term. These three participants affirmed noticing a different treatment than the one their male relatives received, from being taken less seriously, being ignored, and even to the point of being accused of nepotism by receiving the position thanks to their relationship with their male relatives.

Sport organizations often based their environment, which includes operational practices and communication within members of the organization, on masculine conceptuality (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Participant 10 recalled being subject to verbal violence during her first period working at the sport federation she now presides over. She could perceive she was subject to psychological abuse, which included insults, denigrating her actions, and male co-workers treating her with arrogance. Participant 10 was told that the field she was in was "only for men" and that if she wanted to work there, she had to "accept" the treatment she was receiving (Zdroik & Babiak, 2017). Her colleagues made it clear to her that the aggressive attitudes of which she was a victim applied to all members of the federation regardless of their gender, even though she does not recall testifying any of these attitudes. Conversely, male members who aggressed her were friendly among themselves. Eventually, Participant 10 decided to leave the federation since it was affecting her mental health. What Participant 10 revealed in this interview is consistent with what Pfister and Radke (2006) described in their study, arguing that gender-specific aggressions towards women usually affect their mental health more in comparison to men. Years later, she was asked to come back and eventually became the president of the federation. For her, returning by request to the federation where she was mistreated before was an empowering experience, however, she recognized that she required years of psychological therapy to overcome her first term working at the federation.

Participant 11 recalled feeling intimidated as the only woman on the directory of the federation where she is now vice-president. Participant 11 recognized that when she started working at the federation, she was encouraged by her male bosses to have some "immature attitudes" such as "bragging" about being the only female in the office. She acknowledged feeling intimidated against other potential females being hired since that would be direct

competition against her. She also realized that one of the reasons why men were resistant towards hiring women was because they perceived that women did not like that specific sport, therefore, they would not have any knowledge about it. The stereotypical attitudes in terms of gender that the participant experienced not only made her normalize being the only woman, but also made her believe that any woman who entered the federation could be a threat to her position. In addition, the participant defined it as "stressful" and "demoralizing" her former partner's rejection towards her working in sports, recalling how episodes of unjustified jealousy for her being surrounded by male athletes had a significant toll on her mental health. Before being hired at her sport federation, both her former partner and family did not have any negative attitudes against her work life, attitudes that changed radically once she got involved in sports. Nowadays she recognizes that the fact of being the only woman in a leadership role at the directory was a problem rather than a privilege. Now that she vice-presides over the federation, she has committed to hiring women to make sure the federation has a gender balance:

> "I realized that it was a gender issue and not a lack of knowledge [among women]. There is a lot of talent in both men and women. Also, something I realized is that we are all malleable, we all can train, learn and adapt. I did not know a lot about this sport before joining the federation, so now I am not afraid to hire women who do not understand it, even those who do not like it. If I need, for example, an accountant, I will look for someone who is a good accountant, I do not care if she likes this [sport] or not. Because it is a misconception [in sports] that everyone working in it has to be fans and know-all about it." (Participant 11)

As Sartore and Cunningham (2007) argued on implicit socio-cultural sexist attitudes, Participant 8 shared without going into the depth that her husband has had *machista* attitudes

towards her, and that part of her country's idiosyncrasy conditioned her to normalize it. Sexist misconceptions that unconsciously separate women from certain sports can become as trivial as the idea that a woman cannot be in the same room as a male athlete. While contending for the presidency of the federation, Participant 10 was told that her being elected was wrong since she was not allowed to enter the locker room of male athletes. When she asked why the answer she received was "because they might be naked". Two other participants had a similar experience; Participant 3 was requested not to travel on the same bus as the male athletes of her organization, since "that could be awkward for both her and them". Participant 11, the vice-president of her federation, was once forbidden from entering the hotel rooms where the male athletes were staying. While the team was competing at a major international event, Participant 11 needed to be present at a press interview of one of her athletes. Since the interview was going to take place at the athlete's hotel room, her male counterparts threatened her with being fired if she did not obey the instructions. To avoid further attrition, Participant 11 desisted.

Ideas of implicit *machismo* affect the interactions women have in their daily lives at their workplace. The instances mentioned above are examples of microaggressions or situations in which the participants linked to these attitudes.

Former Athletes

Of the 12 participants, nine were former professional athletes, who even represented their countries at Olympic Games, Pan-American Games, and other international competitions. Six of those nine were presidents or vice-presidents of the federation of the sport they practiced. One of them, Participant 6, got to be both athlete and president of her federation simultaneously since at the time of the elections, there was no impediment for an athlete to postulate.

Participants were inquired about whether being a professional former athlete represented an advantage, a recommendation, or even a requirement for aspiring sport leaders. Answers vary. Some believe that it does not represent a benefit other than the networking built inside the federation and/or the national committee. If the position required elections for the board, being a former athlete gave them the possibility of having enough acquaintances willing to vote for them inside the federation. Those who were chosen through direct election rather than voting, consider that being a recognized and successful former athlete in the sport puts them in the sights of being considered to lead the federation:

"The federation called me directly asking me to take charge of the Olympic team, and right after the Games, I was invited to stay in the management area. They wanted me to develop all that from scratch. And when the time to hold elections for the board of directors came, they simply asked me to take the helm of the boat since there was no one else that could compete for it." (Participant 7)

In regards to the 3 participants who were not former professional athletes, they got access to their organizations by directly applying for a work vacancy; Participant 3 in event management, Participant 11 as social communications manager, and Participant 12 as a psychologist. From those original positions, they eventually gained promotion to the roles of presidents or vice-presidents. It is important to mention that only 5 Participants, including the 3 non-athletes, work full time in the position and have a salary. The others are in the position voluntarily and do not receive an economical remuneration from it.

Several participants agreed that although it is not a requirement, being a former athlete allows them to understand how the federation/sport functions from within. For participants

involved with the federation of the sport they formerly practiced, managing potential conflicts of interest was an important theme. In general, former athletes highlighted the sense of empathy that they had towards the current athletes of their federations, and how they were able to attend to specific issues they perceived needed to be solved from the days they were athletes. Participant 6 noted from her experience that athletes tend to approach female leaders over male leaders to make specific requests. Participant 6 mentioned a specific episode in which an athlete expressed the need of taking "time off" to focus on his mental health since he was feeling burned out. When discussing the matter with the members of her federation, men disregard the matter as a serious issue.

Participant 7, who competed in the Olympic games in Barcelona in 1992, said that being a former athlete is not indispensable for aiming at a leadership position at a federation or committee. She stated that although it provides the candidate experience of the general environment at the federation, it is not an essential requirement. According to Participant 7, regardless of being a former athlete, a potential leader requires two things: one, having general knowledge of the sport, and two, passion and love for the sport, whether the position is remunerated or not.

> This is done "for the love of art". It requires passion and the desire to help… desire to leave a legacy in some way. But general knowledge of the sport is of vital importance. No one is going to vote for a person who does not know the sport. Anyone can enter the federation by having an acquaintance inside or even by being the parent of one of the athletes. (Participant 7)

Participant 10 is a former professional athlete who was part of her country's Taekwondo national team. However, that is not the sport of the federation she currently leads, and her social

capital accrued as an athlete had no relation to her actual position. When I inquired about whether former athletes have higher chances to earn a leadership role at a sports federation, she answered that in her case it did not affect her at all. She entered her current federation by applying for a vacant job.

> In reality, I started from the bottom and that was the work culture that my sport [as an athlete] taught me. I learned that [in order] to know how to command, you first have to know how to obey and you have to start from the bottom. (Participant 10)

Although several participants concluded that being a former athlete helps the leader have more empathy and understanding towards the athlete's needs, they perceived that this could be different from their male counterparts. As an example, Participant 1 suggested that female former athletes postulating for a position at the federation have clear and defined ideas of specific issues they want to solve, as opposed to male former athletes who sought the position as a personal achievement. Participants 4, 6, and 9 also commented that men contending for a leadership position in sports have personal motives. They perceive that some men consider that becoming president of a sports organization represents the pinnacle of a successful career. According to these participants, men leaders tended to focus their success directly on results, such as winning medals and championships. Unlike women who have general well-being objectives towards athletes and the sports community, where before reaching a result, the stability of the athletes is taken into account and the creation of stable projects that guarantee the proper functioning of the federation in the future. While male former athletes are not necessarily bad leaders, their female counterpart participants do perceive more hedonistically "the need of being powerful" (Participant 1). The majority of the participants agreed that other than being a

former athlete, it is necessary to prepare more women into being sport managers and to being leaders.

Prevalence of White Women over Women of Color in Sport Leadership

Participants for this study were selected based on their position as leaders, therefore, it was unknown their race/ethnicity before the selection process. While it was not a selection criterion for participants, the majority of the participants self-identified as white. Hence, they mentioned that color, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were not a barrier for them to earn their position. Of twelve participants, 10 of them identified as "white/from European descent". One of them defined herself as "mestizo[11]" and one more declined to specify her race/ethnicity. Along with race and ethnicity, social class or economic status could represent a potential advantage that white women have over ethnically marginalized groups.

Critical feminism not only seeks to analyze and challenge gender imbalance, it also focuses in power imbalance resulted from intersections of race and ethnicity. For that, it was important to inquire on the matter. When I inquired into whether race or ethnicity is a determinant factor for women in pursuit of a leadership position in sports, some participants correlated being white/of European descent in Latin America with having a stable economic status. Some participants chose to not elaborate further on the advantage of being "white", but some did agree that although they did not perceive discrimination based on color/ethnicity, they were aware that it was possibly "harder" for women of color in their countries to achieve a position like the one the participant holds.

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[11] Mestizo: In the Americas, descendants from the union of white europeans and Indigenous/Native people. (Diccionario del Español en México, 2021)

I have lived in the United States, and in there [discrimination based on] race is a strong

issue with everything happening with the [social] movements and all the protests… But if

you see them at the sports level, there are a lot of athletes of color, leaders of color,

coaches of color… Here in my country, [there are] no protests or anything. So, the

socioeconomic level does affect. And if we talk about races, our Indigenous communities

live in an extremely precarious situation. And that is where it all connects. (Participant 9)

Participant 5 perceives that race or ethnicity is neither an advantage nor an obstacle for

women in pursuit of a career in sport leadership. When I inquired about it, she pointed out that

the majority of female leaders in sport are former athletes, a theme previously discussed in this

study. According to Participant 5, some of the biggest sport feats in history were achieved by

athletes of color or from a minority ethnicity, which opens the door for them to eventually

become leaders.

Any woman who has been a successful athlete should have the personality, the ability to

be resilient, [the ability] to tolerate frustration, the ability to get ahead, no matter her

origins'. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 considered that using race or ethnicity as a barrier to achieving a leadership

position in the sport field is "an excuse" and that any person could pursue a leadership position if

they committed to acquiring the necessary skills for the role. Participant 5 highlighted that in the

case of Latin America, the problem of gender imbalance in leadership positions is related to the

lack of preparation. Nevertheless, she affirmed that the NOC of her country is "a little bit elitist"

in comparison to sport federations that have more diversity. When inquired on the differences

she perceives her federation has in comparison to its counterparts in the United States or Europe,

Participant 5 says that any person who knows how to build proper social capital can succeed

regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity: "Our society is very *machista* and less advanced in terms

of equity. But it is not impossible, so I do not believe there is discrimination, it is knowing how

to knock the right doors" (Participant 5).

As previously discussed, only five of the 12 participants work full-time and earn a salary

at their position. The remaining seven attend their position voluntarily and do not receive any

financial compensation from it. Some participants have had to contribute money from their

pocket to their organization. Therefore, it is necessary to have a primary source of income.

Having another source of income becomes necessary to be a sport leader; therefore, money

becomes an implicit barrier. Along with having a primary source of income, some participants

highlighted that belonging to a higher socioeconomic group could represent an advantage for

women in pursuit of a leadership position: "Not only does it help to solve the economic part, you

can dedicate the time you need to this role [management], it also implies that you have access to

certain contacts that help you open doors" (Participant 7).

Participant 1 pointed out that race and ethnicity is not necessarily a barrier for women in

sport leadership. However, women with high socioeconomic status could have privileged access

to certain tools that would facilitate their career advancement, including a better social and

human capital in comparison to women from a lower class. As the president of the Paralympic

Committee of her country, Participant 1 commented that along with socioeconomic status,

having a disability is an immense barrier for any person in pursuit of a career in sport leadership,

unless this person was a heralded former Paralympic athlete:

> I have seen it because I spend a lot of time with disabled people. If they competed before
>
> then they could apply for a position later, the majority of them do so. But for them,

finding a job, in general, is hard. Our society is simply not compatible with them. It is

something that our government authorities do not understand. If we talk about their

inclusion in the labor market, their inclusion in daily life… We have them completely

isolated. (Participant 1)

In regards to belonging to a high socioeconomic status, some participants highlighted that

access to education represents a factor. When I inquired about race and ethnicity being a

potential barrier for women in sport leadership, Participant 6 noted that the problem resides in

the access to education, which in the case of Latin America, could be much easier for someone

from a higher social class:

I believe that the barrier falls on education. I think it is neither about gender nor race; it is

a theme of access to certain schools. Then [Education] becomes a filter. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 pointed out that one of the privileges that education gives to people from a

higher social class is the access to learn English. For Participant 6, being able to communicate in

English is a mandatory requirement for any woman in pursuit of a leadership position in sports,

regardless of nationality. Participant 11 concurred with this. When Participant 11 was questioned

about whether she perceived there was a barrier based on ethnicity and/or social position, she

noted that there is a barrier based on education and level of preparation, rather than color or

ethnicity:

It is an unconscious problem, a cultural problem. For example, when I needed to hire a

community manager fluent in both English and Spanish, 100% of the prospects that

applied for the position were "fresas[12]" who graduated from private schools. That is

actually a privilege, [having] the privilege of studying at a private school that gave them

that level of English. (Participant 11).

Qualification vs. Equity

In the literature review, Hartzell and Dixon (2019); Singer (2015), and Hogue and Lord

(2007) mentioned the implementation of policies for gender balance (such as quotas) as a

potential measure in favor of gender balance in sport leadership. Nevertheless, Participants 1, 3,

4, 5, 6, and 12 expressed concern towards these types of policies, since they perceived that

having qualified people who are capable of fulfilling the demands of the role is more important

than creating a more diverse committee. Some participants worried that, to comply with those

regulations, sport organizations could be hiring women for positions they are not prepared for.

This theme relates to the lack of training available specifically for sport management in Latin

America, which will be discussed below. Participants commented that it is better to open more

educational resources for women aiming to sport leadership roles. Some participants were

adamant about their preference of a status quo that is slowly opening more opportunities for

women, rather than giving unprepared people positions of power only to fulfill diversity quotas.

According to some participants, imposing mandatory gender quotas could be

counterproductive. Participant 6 said: "It is not about quantity, it is about quality. Regardless [of

gender] you want to make sure that whoever gets in, has the skills needed for the position."

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[12] Fresa: In Mexican vernacular, expression used to define a person from a high privileged class.
(Diccionario del Español en México, 2021)

Then, Participant 5 said, "We have to be careful with that because when gender quotas are implemented and the people designated are not adequate for the position, that could play against us [the NOC]." At the same time, Participant 5 recognized that, in some cases, imposing mandatory quotas served the purpose of increasing female participation, which could have been harder if done organically:

> I feel like, for women to participate, the only way to start was to impose it. Only by making it mandatory. That is what our NOC did with quotas in the directory, that is what Thomas Bach did by demanding Muslim countries to include women [Athletes] in their delegations, even if they were not classified. It has to be a mandate. (Participant 5)

> For that, they consider it more convenient to create better sources of preparation for

women, including sport management programs and certifications. Participants consider that potential leaders need to have a clear reason for why they want to be involved and to be aware of what they can contribute as leaders of the organization. Participant 1 said:

> [Women] have to study and try to find the means to familiarize with the needs [of the organization] to have a clear "why" to be its leader. They need to have a clear objective and to know what they are looking for, and what could be their contribution.

> Participants mentioned being aware of corruption issues persistent in Latin American

societies, which have permeated sport leadership. For participants, rather than achieving gender balance, it is important to ensure that those interested in a leadership position in a sports committee or federation are trustworthy and have a clean record. For the participants, maintaining a transparent organization free of "scandals" linked to the issue of corruption is important.

Lack of Sport Management Specific Training in Latin America

From inquiring about whether being a former athlete represents an advantage for potential leaders, several participants agreed that rather than that, preparation and capacity truly define whether a sport leader is efficient. Since most of the participants are now in the position of both hiring staff and electing potential leaders for their federations, they perceived their countries do not have enough academic or professional training that would prepare them for the role. Due to this lack of opportunities, most sport managers in Latin America seek to study extracurricular courses, earn certifications, or even complete degrees in foreign countries to fulfill the demands of the position. The sport industry is multidisciplinary, people aiming to work in sport have to be functional in a myriad of duties, from financial activities, event management, communications, being able to act upon risk and liability, and more.

Several participants highlighted the need for creating Sport Management training programs for Latin America. Sport Management as a college degree is a relatively new option. In the United States, the first university offering a sport management degree at the undergraduate level was Ohio University in 1996 (AECOM, 2008). Today, most sport management programs are business oriented with a core of administration courses that focus on skills applied to the sport industry, such as sport law, sport facility management, and sport event planning (Bartlett, 2020). Sport management degree programs in college in Latin America are almost non-existent; with the majority of the training available being short certificate diplomas.

Participants 1, 4, and 7 majored in physical education, intending to focus their careers on sports. Participants 6 and 9 majored in languages, intending to be English teachers. Participant 2 studied school administration with the aim of being a kindergarten teacher while coaching the

sport of her federation. Participant 3 studied event management aiming to work for major international sport events. Participant 5 majored in Economics. Participant 8 studied architecture. Participant 10 in business administration. Participant 11 majored in communication science. Participant 12 majored in psychology and trained to be a therapist for people with disabilities. Almost all participants had postgraduate degrees specialized in sport management, obtained in the United States or Europe since the lack of available programs in their countries. Three more specialized in sport administration from online programs from foreign universities. The majority of the participants have pursued post-education degrees to prepare for their current positions as sport leaders, such as coaching/refereeing and sport management. Participants 3, 6, and 12 obtained academic certifications on disabilities to comply with their current position at the Paralympic Committee.

In regards to what participants perceived as necessary skills needed to be a sport leader, they mentioned the importance of language, specifically English, since the position requires direct involvement with the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, or the International Federations of their specific sport. While younger generations have more access to bilingual education, some participants recognize that not being able to speak English is an important element to take into consideration, especially if considering that social position or being part of a minority group could be a barrier.

Participant 1 was adamant about the urgency of the creation of sport leadership training available in her country, rather than implementing specific policies for gender balance, such as quotas. Several other participants agreed that implementing more educational tools on sport

management is better than imposing a system that would sit women in decision-making positions without having the skills, knowledge, and competencies.

Generational Change

While discussing important themes that included the implicit *machismo* of Latin America affecting female leaders in sport, the majority of participants perceived what they called a "generational change" in regards to equality. Participants consider that new generations are more open to inclusion in regards to gender, sexual orientation, or race/ethnicity. There is a significant attitude shift among younger generations, who not only acknowledge inequalities but also are willing to act upon them.

But this transition has not been quick and is not near to being completed. For example, Participant 7 shared how the efforts at her NOC towards gender balance have helped to normalize female leaders, while the status quo was that men and the few women on board opposed it since they consider women inadequate for the industry. Eventually, as the number of women grew, people began to congratulate them, which annoyed Participant 7: "If a woman achieving a leadership position is celebrated, it means it is not normalized".

When inquiring on the status quo of gender imbalance, the majority of participants have positive views towards the future, since they can perceive from their perspective of leaders that more women have been interested in joining the federations and committees. Parallel to this, they perceive that younger men are more open to accepting and promoting female participation. In regards to the age group of the participants, older participants consider that although gender balance in sport leadership is important, it is not an urgent theme that needs to be solved.

Participant 8 has positive insight towards the future. She perceived that she encountered discrimination when making her path towards a leadership role, which was possible to maneuver thanks to her status as a former athlete and the aid of her social capital. But she could perceive that newer generations are challenging these barriers, not only in terms of gender, also for race and sexual orientation:

> We were taught to resist, to move on, to keep ourselves quiet, and sadly we internalized those behaviors as normal. But young people are not doing that anymore, they are able to see things differently and to act upon them. (Participant 8)

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The results from this investigation will be discussed from two separate perspectives; first,

the four main themes of the research questions (Social capital, human capital, socio-cultural

aspects of Latin America, and power-based discourses) and second, the three-level model

(micro-, meso- and macro- level). The purpose of this investigation is to understand the factors

affecting the underrepresentation of female leaders in sport organizations in Latin America,

specifically Sport Federations, National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and National Paralympic

Committees (NPCs). This investigation focused on the experiences that led women to leadership

positions at the Latin American countries members of the Pan-American Sport Organization.

Social Capital: Networking and Career Advancement

Participants were asked how professional relations and networking affected their paths

towards their sports leadership positions. When applying for leadership positions, women relied

more on their social capital rather than their human capital (Yang et al. 2019). As previously

discussed, the majority of the participants were former professional athletes, with six being

presidents or vice-presidents of the federation of the sport they played. This allowed them to be

more familiarized with the organization before contending for a leadership position. Some were

directly chosen for the position while others had to postulate and be voted for. The participants

made it clear that the best way to protect their work was by showing positive outcomes as a

result of their micro-level aptitudes, such as their management skills. For that, preparation is

strictly necessary, by continuing to update their knowledge about sports administration and

innovation strategies, to maintain a work ethic clean of scandals and corruption, to have the

ability to keep up with the trends at the macro-level, such as globalization, and to have the ability to communicate within their meso-level community, worthily representing their sport and their country to the rest of the world.

Social capital at the micro-level refers to individuals interacting with their environment. These interactions link into social circles and therefore upgrade to the meso-level once these relationships form group structures. Some participants benefit from having strong social capital at the micro- and meso-levels. For example, three participants have relatives who were formerly presidents of the federations they now preside over. While these participants expressed being aware that they earned their position by their merit and had to content to be elected, they are aware that having that direct network at the federation was also useful for them. It also allowed them to get involved in lower duties to earn experience before seriously considering applying. Participant 9 is married to the president, while she holds the position of vice-president. While she is well known within the meso-level sports community for her sport in her country as multiple times national champion, coach and referee, her husband did play an important role in her election as his vice-president. Participant 9 is aware that, without her husband in the position of president, it would be harder, almost impossible for her to aim for a position at the federation board. Participant 9 highlighted that her case, in which she became vice-president while her husband presides, is very common in her country. She has noticed that all the women she knows in leadership roles have a direct relationship with a male who is already holding a leadership position at a given organization.

> From what I see, the majority of women [in leadership], are part of a team with their
> spouse who is already in a high rank position, where she enters as his support. In some

other cases is a brother, but the space has to be directly handed to her rather than achieved [by own merit]. (Participant 9)

Participant 9 recalls that she is aware of a few cases of women who earned their leadership roles without the aid of an acquaintance or personal relation, but when I inquired about it, she answered that she did not know the career path of those exceptions nor how they earned their role. Although Participant 9 left clear that this situation is normal in her country, it is not a general case in Latin America. Other participants were able to access a leadership role by other means such as direct invite from their NOCs or by winning the board's elections.

Participant 2 became the president of her national sport federation following a term by her father. In her personal experience, two factors played negatively against her. First, some people did not believe she could be a good leader and defied both her and her father for nepotism. Second, she perceived a difference between how people treated her father and how she was treated for being a woman. Participant 2 considered that she earned the position by her own merit thanks to her micro-level aptitudes, due to her preparation and experience within the sport. As a former athlete, she won the national championship of her sport on multiple occasions, along with earning several international medals as a member of the country's national team. Along with being an outstanding athlete, the participant took the necessary time to prepare in order to be qualified for the position of president. This participant found it necessary to be constantly taking courses and accreditations in order to be perceived as "prepared" and to "justify" her position as the daughter of a former president. Participant 2 said: "It was complicated. I did not have the unconditional support that my father had during his term. We [her country] are immersed in a *machista* society". What participant 2 mentioned about the need of women of constantly keeping

themselves prepared in other to be perceives as worthy of the position, goes in accordance with what Mihalčová et al. (2015) noted in their study, that contrary to men, women have to work harder and to invest more energy on enhancing their human capital.

Participant 8 also has relatives linked to the sport federation she currently leads. After winning several national and international championships as an athlete, Participant 8 retired and started a full-time career as an architect. Eventually, her brother invited her to become the vice-president of her federation, which he presided over. She recognized that her family played an important role in the access she got to the federation, since her father was also linked to the NOC of her country, but she pressured herself on earning the necessary qualifications needed to be an optimal leader, such as taking certifications and studying a masters in sport management, all while continuing holding her job as an architect and raising her children. Participant 8 recognized that without the aid of her family, it would have been "almost impossible" for her to earn the position.

Participant 1, who is a known former athlete in her country, was first postulated for a position at the executive committee of her NOC. She started as an alternate member, where she started earning the confidence of the other members and "accrued knowledge". After leading several internal projects for the NOC, she was approached to postulate for the first president of the NPC of her country. In her experience, she considered that her efficiency in her previous work at the NOC weighed more than her acquaintances in order to get her votes. When she inquired about how she perceived discrimination in her position, she mentioned that she felt more relegated within the political movement that moves parallel with the National Paralympic movement of her country. Participant 1 has to deal with the political interests that link the

government with the Paralympic movement. When I inquired about how her social capital influenced her path towards her leadership role, Participant 1 perceived that her personality played an important role. "Maybe I was lucky, I believe I am an agreeable person and that's how I got the esteem of those who trusted in me the responsibility of the National Paralympic Committee" (Participant 1).

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 4 was also named president of the first-ever National Paralympic Committee of her country. In this case, the creation of the NPC was an "improvised" allocation of the Federal Government once the country was selected to host the Pan-American Games. Without an existing NPC, the project began from zero with a low budget allocated, which prompted the participant to raise funds from the account in both public and private institutions. Participant 4, who was a former athlete with experience as a coach, did not have any previous knowledge about Paralympic sports, so she had to use her social capital accrued as a former professional athlete to build a team that could get the project afloat. Following her retirement, she became the chair of the physical education department at a private college in her country while directing various programs promoting adapted sports, inspired by her brother who was born with a disability. Participant 4 recognized that, rather than helping her be elected, her network of contacts has helped to deliver the expected results to function optimally under the guidelines of the Paralympic movement. It was due to her strong influence towards helping disabled people that the NOC appointed her president of the NPC: "As part of my journey [to become president of the NPC] I had to educate a lot of people on the needs of the disable, the infrastructure needed for them, and the lack of resources" (Participant 4).

As noted by Yang et al. (2019) in industries with strong gendered assumptions that privileges men, such as sport, women have to rely on the people they know and inner circle to advance to a leadership position. Participant 5, an acclaimed former athlete, earned her position as president of her federation by direct invitation of the president of her country's NOC. Before that, she served as treasurer for her sport federation. She considers that having an important network is necessary for any woman aiming for a position as a sports federation. Participant 6 was elected president of her federation while being an active athlete since there was no rule preventing athletes to postulate. For her personal experience, managing any potential conflict of interests was important. For that, she needed to be clear of her objectives as the president, which included measures that prioritized the physical and psychological well-being of the athletes before the sporting results. Participant 6's mother was also the president of her federation, which helped her to familiarize herself with the organization from a managing point. In terms of her social capital, her mother's previous mandate as president of the federation did not stir any sort of comments among the board, as opposed to participant 2.

Participant 10 worked previously as an administrator for the federation where she is currently the president. As previously discussed, her first experience at the federation was negative and pushed her to resign. What she experienced during her first term goes in accordance with the studies from Zdroik and Babiak (2017) and Evans & Pfister (2020) who argued that sport organizations build their core operational practices based on hegemonic masculinity ideals, which builds a perceived sense of a "boys' club" culture that excludes women from interacting and participating within the organization, making them feel relegated. Participant 10 was approached years later by the same organization to come back, since the people she worked with before her resignation believed she had the necessary skills to lead a renewed board.

Participant 11 explicitly answered that she did not use any social capital to aid her in earning her position at the federation. Participant 11 is one of the 3 participants who were not former professional athletes. Originally, she was in charge of the communications department before being nominated for the presidency. Since she did not have any acquaintances before entering the federation, she perceives that her network did not benefit her to become president, other than earning the votes to win the election. Instead, she considers that it was her relationships with the members of the federation that put her on the job. She said that it was her "good job and professionalism" that made her win. Participants 3 and 10 began constructing their networking in the sport industry by volunteering for sport events. In the case of participant 3, she signed voluntarily for Pan-American level events and other international sport championships hosted at her country to start earning the experience and knowledge necessary to apply for a full-time position within her sport federation. Participant 3 currently has contacts all over the world with the sport she currently leads and has been an influential voice in the organizing committee of the last international event hosted in her home country. When inquired into the networking dynamics of her organization, Participant 3 commented that people invite women to social events or even to work meetings based on their physical appearance: "They judge if you are beautiful or ugly. That plays in your favor because, if you are pretty, people would involve you more". This theme was discussed by Walker and Hindman (2019) who argued that women's appearance is often judged and a cause of their career advancement in the sport industry.

Participant 12, who is the president of the Paralympic Committee of her country, is aware of the power that contains her role. Similar to participant 1, this role is highly competitive for political reasons, since the Paralympic Committee of her country has strong ties with the federal

government and other public and private institutions. When inquired about the role that her

social capital played for her earning the role, she denied being benefit from it other than those

who voted for her, to whom she had to prove she was adequate for the role:

> I do not perceive that my network brought me the power of earning my position. It is a
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> matter of generating alliances. You can have a thousand contacts but if you do not count
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> with the vote of those whose vote weighs the most, you will not make it. (Participant 12)

Participant 12, who was not a former athlete before becoming the president of the NPC of

her country, got first involved as a therapist for the athletes aiming to compete at the Special

Olympics. After being nominated for the presidency, she had to collide with both the government

of her country and the committee. This helped her earn the necessary trust to compete for the

position, but also to allow her to act freely during her mandate. As discussed in the literature

review, women tend to have a strong reliance on their social capital at the micro-level (by

enhancing their communication skills) and meso-level (by building networks within their sport

communities and/or acquaintances) in order to achieve leadership positions, as opposed to men

who are able to earn the position by their own account (Montaño & Rico, 2007). This goes in

accordance with the experience faced by the participants, who along with their position as former

athletes, needed to hold direct support of their networking to earn and maintain their position.

Human Capital: Personal Relations and Career Advancement

In regards to human capital, the most common theme discussed by the participants was

the effect that motherhood and marital status have on their role as sport leaders. Other themes

discussed were professional careers parallel to their role as sport leaders and education. The

participants made it clear the need to feel capable in their role, above all to keep their knowledge

and training updated so that their management is efficient. At the micro and meso-levels, the human capital of the participants is mainly affected by the balance of motherhood and family combined with their work with their role as leaders in sport.

Eighth of the twelve participants are mothers. Three more have decided not to have children since it does not collate with their professional career and personal goals. One participant does desire to be a mother in the future but perceives her role at the sport organization she works at as the main reason she has been delaying having children. Participants who are mothers agreed that the international calendars that govern their sport (including Olympic, Paralympic, and other international and national events) play an important role in the personal plans they have with their family, which could go from vacations to full school terms for their children being relocated.

Participant 11 expressed her desire of being a mother, but her work at the federation has been so far the principal reason why she has not gotten pregnant yet. This participant perceives her job as "time consuming" and requires her to be available 24/7.

That [motherhood] is something I have delayed because of work. At first, I told myself, "maybe after Tokyo [2020]". But now I say "Maybe after Paris [2024]", because if I get pregnant now, I could not balance the demands of my work. It is a demanding industry, and I cannot get pregnant right now. (Participant 11)

This testimony from participant 11 resonates with Pfister (2006), Knoppers and Anthonissen (2007), and Leberman and Palmer (2009) in regards to how motherhood and the demands of the sport industry might being perceived as incompatible for some women, due to the requirements of the career. However, some of the participants commented that as long as they counted with the necessary support, balancing motherhood and their professional career was

viable. Nevertheless, to optimally balance the role of a mother and a career in sport leadership, women have to count on economic stability, which in the majority of the cases requires a primary source of income and support from their spouse. For some participants, having generational wealth has also helped them solve their expenses.

Considering that the majority of leadership positions in sport federations are free of remuneration, participants have to have a source of income. And in the case of mothers, they also need the necessary aid to balance family time, work, and their duties at their federation. Participant 7 for example, waited until her children were in high school to fully commit as a leader of the federation she now presides. When inquired if she perceived motherhood could represent a barrier for her involvement in sport leadership, she perceives it was not the case, however, it was important to have a sustainable economic position to maintain the needs of her family. For that, she has to rely on both hers and her husband's salaries: "Having resolved the economic part, I was able to participate at the federation".

Before committing to the federation, Participant 7 worked as a coach at a school owned by her family, which allowed her to continue practicing and competing in her sport. Similarly, Participants 2, 8, and 9 consider maintaining their children in the sport of the federation they practice and preside as a "strategy" to "keep them entertained" while they fulfill their duties. As a psychologist working at a physical rehabilitation center for people with disabilities, participant 12 became involved with the Paralympic Committee of her country to help her patients with social inclusion. However, it was complicated for her as a mother to balance both her work and her duties at the committee. At the beginning of her professional career, 70% of the money she earned went to housekeeping and childcare expenses. This was very frustrating for her: "I leave my children with the nanny while I go to work to make money to pay the nanny, so I asked

myself many times, why am I still doing this?" (Participant 12). Access to public childcare

(sponsored by the government) in Participant 7's country is a complicated bureaucratic process.

To qualify for free childcare, one of the requirements is to substantiate that the child's family has

a per capita income that does not exceed the extreme poverty line (Secretaria del Bienestar,

2018).

Nevertheless, according to the World Bank, lack of access to affordable childcare in this

country is the principal participation barrier for women in the labor market (2020). 41% of

women who completed the secondary education level and 32% of women who completed a

university degree chose to end their professional careers and focus on motherhood due to the

lack of reliable childcare offers (World Bank Group, 2020).

Participant 6 expressed her wishes of not being a mother since both her husband and her

feel fulfilled without children:

I never considered it in my life as something essential for my personal growth, I think

that the responsibility of being a mother is not meant to happen to me, and thank God I

found a partner who does think the same way. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 "always knew" that she does not want to be a mother, however, due to the

pressure this topic has within her family and acquaintances, she tends to use her job and her

position as president of her sport federation to justify her decision.

Participants who were mothers conceded on one theme: support from both their families

and their spouse was necessary for them to efficiently balance their duties at their federations or

committees. As discussed per Allen and Shaw (2009), women working in sport tend to feel that

their organizations do not acknowledge the demands of motherhood. Therefore, it is expected for

them to be fully available to their job and not to their family. Participant 5 recalled that beyond

motherhood representing a barrier to her studies and profession, it did motivate her to retire as a professional athlete. She continued competing professionally until her third child was born. As a full-time economist with her own company and serving as president of her federation during her spare time, her five children had to get used to the absence of their mother repeatedly, for which the support of her husband was of vital help. Despite of the feelings of guilt that could be generated, Participant 5 was always clear with her children about her professional responsibilities, especially for her daughters, to whom she wanted to teach by her example that a woman can have multiple roles:

My children knew their mom had to go, they knew I was not going to be available all the time since I was doing both competing and working. I might feel guilty sometimes but nowadays they are functional adults, so I guess we did a good job. (Participant 5)

When participant 10 informed the board of her federation that she was expecting her first child, they reacted with surprise and concern:

I remember when I told them [her co-board members at the federation] that I was pregnant, their reaction was to tell me: "Oh no, now we are going to have to replace you! What are we going to do now? Who is going to take your position?", and I laughed and said, "Why would you have to replace me? I did not say I am leaving, I said I am pregnant". They were livid. But I stayed firm and kept repeating, "I am going to be a mother, period. You do not have to replace me, period. I will not lose my position, period. (Participant 10)

But the negative reactions came also from her family, who believed the demands of her job and motherhood were incompatible. Participant 10 recognizes the importance of working on her mental health to keep her on board with her federation. After previous negative experiences

in the sport industry, she highlighted the need for constant psychological therapy to help her in the position. Williams et al. (2010) argued that women working at industries labeled as "masculine" tend to endure repetitive and acute micro-aggressions and bullying. For participant 10, maintaining good self-esteem and self-value has given her the resilience to face the challenges of her position.

Participant 8 shared how comments on her body as an athlete have had an impact on some measures that she has taken now as vice-president of the federation of her sport, to prevent that type of comment from affecting the new generations. A prodigious athlete, Participant 8 shared how frustrating it was that instead of recognizing her sport achievements, which included being a national champion on multiple occasions, her family was worried about her developing a "non-feminine" body if she continued exercising at that level. At a certain point, her family opposed her to continue even when she was representing her country at international events because "she was developing wide shoulders". Nowadays as the vice-president, Participant 8 is worried that this perception continues towards the younger athletes, including her daughter. She has noticed that talented female young athletes tend to retire earlier due to body image issues and the fear of developing huge muscles. As the vice-president, Participant 8 has spent time talking with coaches and parents asking them to avoid making comments that would discourage girls from continuing in the sport, however, there has been a lot of resistance. She has also spoken with athletes about it and noticed a more serious concern: some girls have developed certain behaviors such as eating disorders and dietary restrictions based mostly on image rather than performance. Participant 8 was asked if her brother, who was previously the president of her federation, noticed these themes before, and she answered that he did not, and she suggested that there are two reasons for it: first, is not the type of issue a man would pay attention to, and

second, an athlete with those struggles would not feel comfortable talking about it with a male coach/leader.

Participant 1 expressed never being interested in getting married or having children. For her, her life priorities were set on becoming a successful athlete and then on her duties as physical education teacher and president of a Paralympic Committee. For her, being an athlete was used as a "screen" to justify to her family her choice of not following the conventional Latin American path for women: to be a mother. For her, her duties as the leader of the Paralympic movement of her country go beyond sport, she has used her position to aid people with disabilities, by negotiating with the federal government money to improve the infrastructure of public buildings to make them accessible to disabled personnel. For her, that is her real legacy.

At the micro-level, participants of this study shared how personal decisions in regards to their human capital affect their career path and role as sports leaders. Those who are mothers were able to identify how that has affected their work and daily lives. Nevertheless, some participants were able to assert that choosing between not being mothers has also affected their lives, especially in regards to society. At the meso and macro-level, participants assisted that the malleability of the sport industry could affect their personal lives. Nevertheless, they feel it is rewarding and a source of personal satisfaction when they perceive that their environment supports them and they have the necessary support to be effective in their work projects.

Influence of Socio-Cultural Aspects of Latin America in Career Advancement

As aforementioned, all participants perceived *machista* attitudes of their countries have had an impact on their career in the sport industry. When asked about how they perceived the socio-cultural factors of their countries affected their path towards a role in sport leadership, some participants were able to go back to their upbringing. Sexist/*machista* ideas could rule the

expected traits a woman must look like (Connell, 1995). Some participants shared how they perceive *machista* stereotypes about female appearance or female adequate jobs affected their performance as athletes and how it influenced them as current sport leaders. Participant 1 shared how as a kid, she preferred to wear more "masculine" outfits, such as shorts instead of dresses, which her family highly opposed since it was frowned upon by the neighbors. So, she chose to use the practice of her sport as an excuse to justify her clothing preferences. Her family was also against her practicing sports, so she chose to study physical education in college so no one could forbid her from both practicing sports and wearing the clothes she wanted:

> It was not well seen for girls to practice any physical activity, so my parents forbid me from playing sports, they would ground me every time I got out to play. So after high school, I chose physical education as my degree so neither my family nor the neighbors would tell me anything about me playing my sport, they kept criticizing, but at least they could not forbid it. (Participant 1)

Participant 4 had a similar experience, her family opposed her studying a degree in physical education, since they considered it was not "a serious career choice" and it was too "masculine": "That was my first challenge when I finished high school, I told my parents I wanted to study physical education and they told me I was crazy, that only stupid people study that career". This participant, who shared during her interview that her father was a man with several *machista* behaviors and attitudes, highlighted the importance of changing these perceptions to younger generations, to prevent them from correlating a specific career or the practice of a sport to gendered assumptions. In this specific case, Participant 4 mentioned that both her family and the town where she grew up had negative attitudes towards girls practicing sports or wearing athletic wear, similarly to participant 1 even though they are from two different

countries in Latin America. Despite being aware of sexism in Latin American cultures, some participants mentioned having experienced gender-based barriers in international events or working for sport federations in Europe. Nevertheless, some participants mentioned that sexist attitudes at their federation could be linked to the sport itself rather than the place/country where they are located.

Before becoming the president of her federation, Participant 10 worked at the International Olympic Committee in Switzerland and then for a sport federation in Germany. From her perception and personal experience, sexism in sports is not only a problem in Latin America. As the only female and only non-European person at the board she worked at in Germany, she was instructed to act as a waitress and keep the coffee cups of her board members full during work meetings. Also, she was often interrupted and was never allowed to actively participate in these meetings. Demotivated, she decided to return to her country of origin, where she knew she was also going to receive mistreatment, but at least "I already know what to expect from *machismo* in my country" (Participant 10).

Participants 10 and 11 conceded that sexist attitudes in the sport of their federation are based on both the *machismo* of their countries and the sport itself and that it would not be much different if they were in Europe, the United States, or Canada. In the case of this sport, the case is repeated where the most implicit barrier to participation is made by the economic level of the participant, beyond gender. Participant 11 shared how several sport organizations in her country often publicly affirm their intentions on committing towards diversity, even by launching marketing campaigns focused on that matter. However, those good intentions are depleted by the reality of a country that is significantly stratified. As aforementioned before, when Participant 11 has to hire people for her federation, the majority of applicants that fulfill the requirements,

which require applicants having a masters' degree and being proficient in English, are white. Participant 11 shared how in a certain way, she feels how failing to her compromise towards diversity is beyond her scope. So, it is not only a sociocultural issue but is also a matter of class, ethnicity, and race. As discussed per INEGI (2016), in Mexico, a higher percentage of people who self-identifies as light or white-skinned have completed a college education degree, in comparison with those who identify themselves as dark-skinned who mostly only finished the elementary level.

As aforementioned before when discussing if women from a higher social class have an implicit advantage in Latin America, it was discussed how access to higher education plays an important role and in the case of many countries across the region, access to higher education is highly correlated with the highest social-economic groups (World Bank Group, 2020). This study took into consideration different countries that are categorized as Hispanic Latin America, which have racially heterogeneous populations. The demographics and ethnic composition of each country vary. For example, some of the countries have more people of African descent, while in others this percentage is less than 10%, but they have a huge number of mestizo and Creole people. In the case of Mexico, the ethnic duality is more visible, even though the majority of the population is mestizo. The social divide between whites and Indigenous people is very evident. Hipolito (2020) argues that racism is a taboo topic in Mexico. With a generalized assumption that everybody in Mexico is a mestizo, society tends to believe that discrimination happens based on social class rather than on race. Hipolito (2020) asserts that this discourse is less confrontative but ignores the voices of the Indigenous population, who often live lives of social and economic marginalization.

When inquired if socioeconomic status could represent a barrier for women in pursuit of a career in sport leadership, participant 1 agreed that is the case in her country. She added how women from both European/white descent and women from a high social status have the adequate social capital needed to access a leadership role. As the president of the Paralympic Committee in her country, she perceives that gender barriers are present all over the globe and not only in Latin America. However, some countries are more advanced than others, such as Canada and the United States where women have accessed leadership roles earlier than Latin America. Participant 1 perceives that in comparison to some Muslim societies, the idiosyncrasy in Latin America "has more respect" and better opportunities for women in sport.

Participant 2 perceived that her country currently has a "social boom" where women are getting more involved in politics and business leadership. However, it is not the case of sport, where the number of women in decision-making roles is very low. She mentioned how important it is that in order to become a sports leader, it is necessary to have a primary source of income. As mentioned above, the majority of these positions are voluntary and not remunerated. Therefore, Participant 2 mentioned how being a woman from a lower social class could represent a barrier for aiming for a leadership role at a sports federation.

Participant 7 shared how she became the president of her federation at the same moment that the World Sailing, the Governing body affiliated to the IOC, began enforcing a global initiative to boost the number of women occupying managerial and technical positions internationally. Due to this initiative, Participant 7 has seen the number of women in leadership positions increasing significantly around the world. Originally sailing, the sport that the participant oversees has been founded over *machista* tendencies, which include the ancient superstition that women on a boat bring bad luck. Nevertheless, her sport is considered "elite" in

her country, often related as a leisure activity for people from the upper class. In consequence, the number of athletes competing in this sport is very limited in Latin America as opposed to some European countries, where the practice of this activity is more popular. In the case of this sport, the most implicit barrier to participation is made by the economic level of the participant, beyond gender or ethnicity. When asked about the matter, Participant 5 said she did not perceive that race and ethnicity could be barriers, however, she acknowledged the need of being academically prepared for anyone, regardless of gender, in pursuit of a role. As aforementioned, Participant 5 did not believe there is stigmatization in terms of social class, color, or race. But at the same time, she recognizes that the NOC of her country is "a little bit elitist". When requested to elaborate further on that statement, she explained that, at Pan-American level, the majority of women she knows in leadership roles are brown-skinned women from the Caribbean. Participant 8 commented that Latino women have internalized the sexist discourses of society. She perceived that women in her country have adapted to their micro-level being submissive and apathetic. Participant 8 made clear that her number one motivation as a vice-president of her federation was to use the practice of sport as a social tool to implement permanent effects on the youth of her country, such as discipline, values, and physical health. For her, that is more important than winning championships. One of the major obstacles of many sport federations in her country is the lack of funding. At Tokyo 2020, only five athletes represented her country, including two from the discipline Participant 8 oversees:

> We are a poor country, I understand that. There are many other priorities for the government before athletes. I have struggled on finding ways to collaborate [with the government] to be able to send athletes to represent us with dignity.

But at the same time, she believed that investing in sports is necessary not to win competitions, but to teach children discipline and values, which has motivated her over the years to continue with her duties as a physical educator, coach, and federation vice-president.

> It has been difficult to go ahead without funding and with minimum support. But sports help children to develop their brain and their bodies. It keeps them healthy and on a good track. That is why I encourage parents to keep involving them, it is not about winning championships. (Participant 8).

At the micro-level, some participants were able to identify how the socio-cultural aspects of their countries have influenced their career advance in sport leadership. Some of these factors happened during their upbringing, from comments about their physical appearance and their outfit choices by family members and other members of their social environment. Participants mentioned some sexist discourses that they internalized and played a role in how they interacted within their human and social capital.

Regarding the meso- and macro-levels, it is important to take into account that participants spoke in regards to their country individually, and even though all the participants belong to the region that is collectively known as Latin America, socio-cultural factors vary depending on each country. They could also vary within a country, as some participants highlighted that their experiences were shaped by growing in urban areas and how different things could be in more rural areas. Participants with international experience mention how some sexist discourses related to the sports are endemic from the industry and could be experienced even in countries such as the United States or in Europe, highlighting that some of these discourses lay on a macro level rather than uniquely in Latin American societies. Adriaanse (2015) notes that the cultural aspects from a country, including religion and gender stereotypes,

affect NSFs not only in Latin America but across the world. Also, the intersections of gender with race, social class and sexual orientation are present globally, while the variant comes from the factors that cause them. In the case of the sport industry, Connell (1995) argues that part of the reasons why women and minority men have to work harder to advance to any leadership role lays on the fact that the core of many sport organizations was built over the ideal that white cis-gender men are the ones meant to lead.

Power-based Discourses and Career Advancement

Discourses of power are primarily modeled by Western social dynamics, defining how society associates the role of leaders and its interactions with others (Karlberg, 2005). For participants in this study, discourses of power influenced exclusionary practices. In some cases, microaggressions went from separation from certain spaces based on their gender, intimidation, and accusations of nepotism.

With men being the dominant group in sport settings, women often felt exposed to a hostile environment that pushed them to walk away from their position (Taylor et al. 2018). In some cases, this resignation comes abruptly by succumbing to the pressure of the organization (Adriaanse, 2015). Among the 12 participants in this study, there was one case in which sexist dynamics within an organization prompted a participant to resign from her first role in sport leadership. That was the case of Participant 10 on her first term working at her federation. And despite the psychological mistreatment she suffered, she returned because they assured her that the federation was willing to change its wrongful practices:

> I was not scared of the bad words, however, I did not like the environment and the DNA
> of the federation. And when I first quit, they were like "we knew it, we knew you will not
> handle this. And I never thought I would eventually come back, but I always had the

feeling that I meant to do things that have a transcendence and impact. And when they called me back to the federation, they told me they wanted me back because I am not a person who accepts money bribes, I do not spend money on sex servers, and I do not do "work meetings" where everyone gets drunk. And that was what they needed now, that gave me hope and willingness to go back. (Participant 10)

Participant 2 perceived that one of the reasons why her country has a low number of women in sport leadership positions is because men in power resist opening doors and create opportunities since they do not perceive a direct benefit to themselves in changing the status quo by including a more diverse committee. Nevertheless, she perceives that women in her country are not actively "fighting" to get involved in leadership positions in sports, so the apathy from both men and women will remain the same until women decide to empower themselves and get more involved. The number of women in leadership positions can positively influence the inclusion and hiring of more women in that organization (Bossler et al, 2020). Participant 2 perceives a "lack of interest" towards implementing diversity in the sport industry in her country, which would open opportunities to get more involved not only for women, but also from men from minority groups. At the same time, this issue persists since no one has challenged it.

"[The issue] might be the lack of interest from men. Sometimes we have [women] with talent… gifts. And in addition, there is the need for them to contribute what they can do with their abilities, but those opportunities are not opened to them and they are not made known by those in charge." (Participant 2)

All participants perceived their experience as a leader as different in comparison to their male counterparts. These differences varied from personal life situations, such as the impact that maternity had on their careers, to the treatment they received at work, such as finding resistance

from people at their federations refusing to follow indications from a female leader. Participants with relatives linked to their federation or NOC, expressed being aware of possible accusations of nepotism. When I inquired further about these perceptions, participants commented on the need to "justify" their position with their actions and even with the results of the athletes. When asked about it, Participants 1, 4, and 6 shared that they could perceive that female leaders are less likely to get involved in corrupt practices.

> I think that women have a little more sensitivity in that aspect. Those of us who have been athletes know how sport operates. We could see from another point of view how sport is wrongfully handled and how it should be handled. With issues such as corruption, conflict of interest, and ignoring the needs of athletes. I think that women have a little more sensitivity in that aspect. (Participant 4)

Discourses of power in sport leadership that favor male dominance prompt some women to unconsciously self-limit themselves at the micro-level. Participant 3 mentioned that even in her leadership role, she often struggles to communicate with the men at their organization. Participant 3 shared how on some occasions, her position of leadership does not guarantee that her instructions will be followed, for which she must search for a man to be her intermediary:

> I have had issues with some coworkers who are openly *machistas*. There is someone in here who dislikes that I have a hierarchical position and refuses to accept any order that I give him. And that has directly affected certain administrative processes because if he ignores me when I give him an important task, then I need to look for a man who would repeat the same instructions to him. And sometimes I feel helpless about it. (Participant 3)

Similar to Participant 3, Participant 1 struggled to make the staff at her federation follow her commands as their president. According to her, and due to the political weight that her position had at the federal government, some people view her position as a "puppet ruler" (regardless of gender) who was only assigned to fulfill the guidelines of the International Paralympic Committee. At times with tied hands, Participant 1 found herself often avoiding confrontations and tensions with members of other federations and the NPC to prevent any attrition. Her principal concern was that if she makes one misstep that upsets certain people it could affect the flow of money that is given to her NPC, which is directly invested in wheelchairs and other specially adapted equipment.

At the micro-level, some participants were able to identify how personal experiences and the way they internalized them affected their interactions as sport leaders. At the meso and macro-level, through the testimonies of the participants of this study is possible to reaffirm that sexist dynamics endemic of masculinized industries, such as sport, affect the daily interactions women in sport leadership have, prompting women to often feel they have to swim against the current to keep the job at their organization. This goes in accordance with the finding from Brown and light (2012) study, who argued that experiences internalized during someone's upbringing shape the way a person behaves at work, often shaped by gendered assumptions that favor male superiority. Along with shaping a glass ceiling for women, this environment based on hegemonic masculinity facilitates microaggressions against women (Carmichael Aitchison, 2005) as it happened with some participants.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

As a critical feminist researcher, it was important to create a bond of trust with the participants. By using a feminist positionally, the purpose was to have open conversations woman to woman to understand a common issue between the author and the participants. Considering the complexity of the themes discussed, the author became an ally with the participants. In depth interviews from a feminist perspective are issue-oriented with the intention of obtaining from the participants first hand experiences that could respond the research questions (Hesse-Biber, 2006). During the interview process, the author allowed herself to let the participants know where she could identify with some experiences they shared and how she felt relatable to some issues in regards to sexism in Latin America and sexism in the sport industry.

As previously mentioned, studies on gender imbalance in sport leadership in Latin America are limited. Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly and Nava (2014) examined this issue from a qualitative perspective, and while their study offers new insights in regards to how gendered discourses and socio-cultural factors affect men and women differently, it only covered Mexico. Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly and Nava (2014) recommend in their investigation that imposing gender equity policies in Mexican sport organizations could help balance gender participation and representation in both athletes and managerial roles. While in this master's thesis, the athlete's participation was not investigated, results of this study differ from the findings of Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly and Nava (2014). In this study participants noted that they do not consider equity policies (i.e., establishing gender quotas for certain leadership roles) as beneficial for women. Although in practical terms this could create a fast track way for women

to reach a leadership role in a sport organization, participants in this study believe they rather see women reaching a leadership role through their own merits. More importantly, they believe women need to demonstrate they have the right skills and capabilities before they reach any leadership and decision making roles. Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly and Nava (2014) noted that Mexico has to develop and open more educational opportunities that would prepare women who aim for leadership roles in sport. Findings in this study reaffirms that idea, and it expands to other Latin American countries along with Mexico.

Using a Feminist Critical Approach become important in order to advance the body of literature of gender balance in sport. The feminist critical approach challenges harmful hegemonic biases that affect the advance of women. The experiences of participants recollected in this study serve as a testimony of harmful practices that lay on *machista* endemic attitudes common in many in Latin American society. However, findings in this study reveal that the problem does not only lie on gender, it also embodies an elitist culture that fails on providing the same opportunities not only for other minority groups but also for women (and perhaps men too) from lower social class. Participants' testimonies demand a change on the matter. However, as previously mentioned, participants in this study believe this change should not come based on gender quotas, instead change will come with the growth of more educational opportunities that would be available to everyone regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity.

Through this study, the comprehension of gender misrepresentation issues that affect sports leadership in Latin America enhances the existing literature. Although there is an evident issue in the region there is room for improvement towards more diversity in sport organizations. Lopez de D'Amico (2018) argues that women's misrepresentation in leadership positions in

sport organizations in Latin America is a matter of human rights since the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) qualifies sport as a fundamental right for everyone regardless of gender. Lopez de D´Amico argues that although there are existing efforts to foment the participation of Latin American women in sport organizations, there is still a long way to go that requires more pressure from other organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to accelerate the implementation of gender equity policies in sport in Latin America.

Findings of this investigation shows that participation barriers that could prevent women from Latin America to be more present in sport leadership are most prevalent at the meso-level, being influenced by both endemic sexist discourses of the sport culture as a male dominated industry and by the socio-cultural factors of the region. Nevertheless, some participants were able to identify that sexist discourses could be also prevalent in sports leadership at the macro-level, as they are aware of instances of discrimination and exclusion present in other regions of the world, such as the United States and Europe. At a micro-level, having relatives and acquaintances at the federation allowed some participants to construct the networking necessary for them to get involved at the leadership level of their federation/committee. In regards to potential participation barriers women could have at the micro-level, results showed that some women have internalized behaviors that exclude themselves from certain scenarios, especially those where gender roles are well defined. Nevertheless, some participants have defied such assumptions, not without encountering certain levels of attrition among their social circle and relatives. Awareness of the need to prioritize their mental health and their values above their role as sport administrators is a prominent attribute among participants.

At the meso-level, some participants benefited from their previous involvement with the organization whether as former athletes or workers. In some cases, the participants were able to use their position as sport leaders to have some level of influence at certain political movements in their countries or at the government bodies of the international sport federation of the sport they lead. Lastly, at the macro-level, some participants were able to confirm that generalized hegemonic masculinities and other gendered assumptions compelling to their sport could affect the social capital of women in it. Once these barriers are crossed and a woman can incorporate into a sport organization, the influence of socio-cultural factors of each society could influence the interactions of women within the sport industry. For participants, a support system at the core of their human capital is important to help them cope with the challenges and negative experiences that could be experienced as a result of sexism in the sport industry. This support system is mainly based on the support of their families, along with having a secured source of income that could allow them to commit to their duty as a leader without having to worry about their finances and their family life (especially motherhood). Internal strength on a psychological and emotional level is the pillar of his leadership ability and withstand the unpredictable nature of the sport industry.

A change in the matter could begin by educating the stakeholders involved, especially women, on how to act upon gender imbalance in sport organizations. By having a foundation of knowledge where these organizations educate their employees about what sexism is, how to identify it, and how to proceed when situations involving the issue present, the practices that enforce gender balance could solidify making the workplace more impenetrable to discrimination. It is expected that the results of this study provide new insights and a better

understanding of how similar experiences define the career path of female sport administrators in Latin America, what they did to become leaders, and which platforms and resources were used to empower them to become successful in the industry. This study contributes to the literature by providing information of the barriers that preclude the advancement of female sport administrators to senior levels, and the conditions that might contribute to advancing women's careers in sport in Latin America.

Future Research Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this study, these are recommendations for further research. First, for a greater breadth of data, the quantitative or mixed methodology could yield statistical results and allow the inclusion of more participants through surveys. In the case of this study, the qualitative methodology was used to analyze in-depth the experiences of the participants. By integrating a mixed methodology, it would be possible to collect data in the form of surveys to obtain numerical data that can provide statistician information on the issue of gender imbalance to follow up with an in-depth analysis using the qualitative approach.

Second, investigations on gender imbalance in sport leadership in Latin America must include women of color or from minority ethnic groups. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight that all participants were of white ethnicity, which was not deliberate. This creates a limitation, to understanding how issues regarding race or color discrimination influence women's careers. Therefore, it would be recommended to first identify and invite women of color. As presented in this study, the majority of female leaders in the region are of white and European descent. It would be important to compare the experiences of minority women and comprehend intersections between race and gender. For example, if women from the Caribbean and Brazil are included, it would be possible to obtain a more ethnically diverse data set, since the African

descent population in these countries is greater than in the countries chosen for this study, where the majority of the population is from mestizo and white and European descent. This investigation focused on Latin America; however, it was reduced to Spanish-speaking countries. Adding Brazil and other non-Spanish speaking countries of the Caribbean could not only add to the discussion in terms of race but also could provide new insights of barriers for women aspiring to climb the professional ladder in sport administration. There are some notable cases from women from these regions, such as Nicole Hoevertsz from Aruba who is the Vice-President of the IOC (IOC, 2021c), or Adriana Behar from Brazil, a former member of the Women's Commission from the IOC (Barsetti, 2012).

Lastly, it is recommended to make a larger comparative study that would include all the countries members of the Pan-American Sport Organization (PASO). This data set would include Canada and the United States, two countries that have shown a significant progress in female sport leadership. By adding these countries, this could provide more information on the effect of the sociocultural differences that affect women in the sport industry. With the aforementioned recommendations, the literature gap could be narrowed, and more empirical studies could be developed aimed to understand female representation in sport leadership in Latin America.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Participants position

Participant	Country[13]	NOC-P	NOC-VP	NPC-P	NSF-P	NSF-VP
1	A			X		
2	C					X
3	F		X			
4	E			X		
5	D				X	
6	D				X	
7	D				X	
8	G					X
9	A				X	
10	B				X	
11	B					X
12	B			X		

NOC-P: National Olympic Committee President; **NOC-P:** National Olympic Committee Vice-President; **NPC-P:** National Olympic Committee President: **NSF-P:** National Sport Federation President: **NS-VP:** National Sport Federation Vice-president

[13] Participants for this study are from the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru.

Appendix B

Table 2

Date and length of the study interviews

Participant	Date	Length of the interview
1	September 13, 2021	40:53
2	September 1, 2021	31:13
3	July 28, 2021	49:11
4	August 11, 2021	30:29
5	August 6, 2021	30:23
6	August 9, 2021	32:27
7	October 14, 2021	27:36
8	August 24, 2021	38:06
9	August 7, 2021	52:28
10	August 13, 2021	49:03
11	August 10, 2021	33:19
12	September 28, 2021	35:58

Appendix C

Invitation Letter in English

Dear Participant:

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project to investigate female leadership in sports organizations in Latin America. This research project is part of the master's thesis of Yamile Gonzalez Cuevas, a graduate student in the College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences at West Virginia University. The project is being directed by Dr. Gonzalo Bravo, associate professor at the same University. By participating in this study, you will help us understand more about the gender imbalance in sports leadership in Latin America.

West Virginia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has acknowledged this study on file. Your involvement in this project will be kept as confidential as legally possible. All data will be reported in the aggregate, and your name will never be shared. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue at any time. We estimate it will take approximately 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Please indicate above if you are interested on participating:

- Yes
- No

If you're interested in participating, please contact Dr. Gonzalo Bravo at gonzalo.bravo@mail.wvu.edu or Yamile Gonzalez myg0004@mix.wvu.edu to accommodate and schedule an interview date.

Thank you very much for your time. Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact Dr. Gonzalo Bravo at gonzalo.bravo@mail.wvu.edu or with Yamile Gonzalez Cuevas a myg0004@mix.wvu.edu.

Sincerely

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Appendix D

Invitation Letter in Spanish

Estimado participante:

Esta carta es una solicitud para que participe en un proyecto de investigación cuyo propósito es indagar sobre el liderazgo femenino en organizaciones deportivas de América Latina. Este proyecto de investigación es parte de la tesis de maestría de Yamile Gonzalez Cuevas, alumna de posgrado en la Facultad de Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte de West Virginia University. El proyecto está siendo dirigido por el Dr. Gonzalo Bravo, profesor asociado en la misma facultad. Al participar en este estudio, nos ayudará a entender más sobre el desequilibrio de género en el liderazgo deportivo en América Latina.

La Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad de West Virginia (IRB) ha reconocido por escrito el presente estudio. Su participación en este proyecto se mantendrá tan confidencial como sea legalmente posible. Todos los datos serán reportados en conjunto, y su nombre nunca será compartido. Para participar usted debe ser mayor de 18 años. Su participación es completamente voluntaria y puede interrumpirla en cualquier momento. Estimamos que las entrevistas tomarán aproximadamente 40 minutos.

Por favor indique si está interesada en participar

- Si
- No

Muchas gracias por tu tiempo. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre esta carta o el proyecto de investigación, no dude en comunicarse con el Dr. Gonzalo Bravo a gonzalo.bravo@mail.wvu.edu o Yamile Gonzalez Cuevas a myg0004@mix.wvu.edu.

Atentamente

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Appendix E

Interview Protocol in English

Gender imbalance in sport leadership in Latin America
Protocol semi- structured interview

1. Basic information (for example, age, marital status, children, etc.)

2. What is your educational background?

3. Could you tell me something about your social position, and the ethnic and racial group that you belong and identify with? (for example, are you a middle class / upper class person, of European descent; with African roots; or Indigenous background, etc.)

4. What is your current position as a sports leader at your organization?

(**NOTE:** Questions 1 to 4 will be sent on an email after the invitation has been accepted by the participant. This will allow researchers to customize and personalize some of the questions included in this protocol).

5. Do you think that your network of contacts (professional and personal) has influenced your advancement as a sports leader?

    a. What kinds of collaboration opportunities did you have with other sport professionals and leaders as you progressed in your career?

6. Have you had any female role models or mentors throughout your career?

    a. Who were they? At what point(s) in your career were female role models/mentors most instrumental? How specifically did they support you? Could you share an example?

7. How did _____ influence the advancement of your position as a sport leader?

(**NOTE:** For question 7, the blank space will include something(s) about the educational/professional background answered in questions 1-3 above.)

8. Do you think that your role as _____ has influenced your career as a sport leader? (For example, being a mother, wife, caretaker, etc.)

9. Do you think your career path has been different (easier or harder) in comparison to your male counterparts?

   a. Could you share one example?

   b. Regarding your social status, do you think it has played a role in your journey towards the advancement (or stagnation) in your career as a sport leader? Could you share one example?

   c. Regarding the racial and ethnic group you belong to and identify, do you think they have played a role in your journey towards advancement (or stagnation) in your career as a sport leader? Could you give an example?

10. Do you think that your status as a sports leader is a milestone in your country?

11. What are the challenges faced by women pursuing a career as a sports leader in your country that women from other parts of the world (e.g. North America, Europe, Australia, etc.) are unlikely to encounter?

12. What is your advice for women in your country who want to pursue a career in sport leadership?

13. Is there anything else related to your work or career as sport leader that you would like to share?

Appendix F

Interview Protocol in Spanish

Desequilibrio de Género en el Liderazgo Deportivo en América Latina
Protocolo Entrevista Semiestructurada

1. Información básica (por ejemplo, edad, estado civil, hijos, etc.).

2. ¿Cuál es su formación académica?

3. ¿Podría decirme algo acerca de su posición social, grupo étnico y grupo racial al que

    pertenece y se identifica? (por ejemplo, es usted una persona de clase media/clase alta,

    descendiente de europeos; con raíces africanas; o de pueblos indígenas, etc.)

4. ¿Cuál es su puesto actual como dirigente y líder deportivo?

(**NOTA:** las preguntas 1 a 4 se enviarán por correo electrónico una vez que la participante haya
aceptado la invitación. Esto permitirá a los investigadores personalizar algunas de las preguntas
que se incluyen en este protocolo)

5. ¿Cree usted que su red de contactos (profesionales y personales) ha influido en su

    ascenso como dirigente y líder deportivo?

    a. ¿Qué tipo de oportunidades de colaboración tuvo usted con otros profesionales y

        dirigentes deportivos a medida que avanzaba en su carrera?

6. ¿Ha tenido usted modelos o mentoras femeninas a lo largo de su vida, y especialmente en

    el mundo del deporte?

    a. ¿Quiénes fueron? ¿En qué punto (s) de su carrera profesional fueron estos

        modelos/mentores femeninos decisivos? ¿En qué medida la apoyaron? ¿Podría

        compartir un ejemplo?

7. ¿Cómo _____ influyó en el avance y posicionamiento como dirigente y

    líder deportivo?

(**NOTA:** Para la pregunta 7, en el espacio en blanco se incluirá algo de la formación educacional/profesional que fue respondido en las preguntas 1-3)

8. ¿Cree usted que su rol de _____ impacta su posición como dirigente y líder deportivo? (Por ejemplo, el rol de ser madre, esposa, cuidar a los hijos a padres, etc.)

9. ¿Cree usted que su trayectoria profesional como líder deportivo ha sido diferente (ya sea más fluida o con mayores dificultades) en comparación con sus homólogos masculinos?

    a. ¿Podría compartir un ejemplo?

    b. Con respecto a su posición social, ¿cree usted que ha jugado algún papel en su avance (o impedimento) como dirigente y líder deportivo? ¿Podría darnos un ejemplo?

    c. Con respecto al grupo racial y étnico al cual usted pertenece y se identifica ¿cree usted que eso ha jugado algún papel en su avance (o impedimento) como dirigente y líder deportivo? ¿Podría darnos un ejemplo?

10. ¿Considera usted que su posición como dirigente y líder deportivo constituye un hito en su país?

11. ¿Cuáles son los desafíos que enfrentan las mujeres en busca de una carrera como dirigente deportivo en su país que mujeres de otras partes del mundo (por ejemplo, en América del Norte, Europa, Australia, etc.) no enfrentarían?

12. ¿Qué consejo les daría a aquellas mujeres que quieren iniciar una carrera como dirigente deportivo en su país?

13. ¿Existe algo más relacionado con su trabajo y carrera como líder deportivo que le gustaría compartir?

Appendix G

Table 3

Summary of categories, themes, findings and levels

Category	Theme	Findings (examples)	Level
Social Capital	Theme 2: Prevalence of former athletes	"In reality, I started from the bottom and that was the work culture that my sport [as an athlete] taught me. I learned that [in order] to know how to command, you first have to know how to obey and you have to start from the bottom". (Participant 10)	Micro
	Theme 1: "*machista*" attitudes	"It was complicated. I did not have the unconditional support that my father had during his term [when he was the president of the NSF] We [her country] are immersed in a machista society" (Participant 2)	Meso-Macro
Human Capital	Theme 4: Preference for qualified leaders over quotas	"We have to be careful with that because when gender quotas are implemented and the people designated are not adequate for the position, that could play against us [the NOC]." (Participant 5) "It is not about quantity, it is about quality. Regardless [of gender] you want to make sure that whoever gets in, has the skills needed for the position." (Participant 6)	Micro-Meso
	Theme 1: Effects of "*machista*" attitudes	"I realized that it was a gender issue and not a lack of knowledge [among women]. There is a lot of talent in both men and women. Also, something I realized is that we are all malleable, we all can train, learn and adapt. (Participant 11)	Meso-Macro
Socio-Cultural	Theme 3: Prevalence of white/European women	"I have lived in the United States, and in there [discrimination on] race is a contentious issue. But if you see at the sports level, there are a lot of athletes of color, leaders of color, coaches of color… Here in my country, [there are] no protests or anything. So, the socioeconomic level does matter. And if we talk about race, our indigenous communities live in an extremely precarious situation. And that is where it all connects". (Participant 9)	Meso
	Theme 6: Generational change	"We were taught to resist, to move on, to keep ourselves quiet, and sadly we internalized those behaviors as normal. But young people are not doing that anymore, they are able to see things differently and to act upon them". (Participant 8)	Micro-Meso

Power-based Discourses	Theme 1: Effects of "machista" attitudes	"I have had issues with some coworkers who are openly machistas. There is someone in here who dislikes that I have a hierarchical position and refuses to accept any order that I give him. And that has directly affected certain administrative processes" (Participant 3)	Meso
	Theme 2: Prevalence of former athletes	"Those of us who have been athletes know how sport operates. We could see from another point of view how sport is wrongfully handled and how it should be handled" (Participant 4)	Micro

Appendix H

Table 4

Definitions of each category

Category	Definition
Social capital	Networks and interpersonal relationships people form at a given organization or industry (Investopedia, 2021).
Human capital	Characteristics of an individual that could serve as an input within their organization, such as skills, health, education and knowledge (Wright & McMahan, 2011).
Sociocultural factors	Sociocultural factors of a given country, society or group are the theoretical and physical elements that their members use for interaction. It originates at an anthropological level (Gharajedaghi, 2012)
Power based discourses	Power based discourses are social constructs used to designate levels of power based on cultural and social attributes (Karlberg, 2005).

Appendix I

Table 5

Definitions of each level of analysis

Level	Definition
Macro-level	Sociocultural environmental context, such as labor market, federal policies, norms, and politics that affect the economic development of a society as a whole (Hartzell and Dixon, 2019)
Meso-level	Social norms at the operational and cultural level of an organization (Hartzell and Dixon, 2019)
Micro-level	Individual understandings of gender, including behavior, human and social capital (Burton, 2015)