"We want more diversity but…": resisting diversity in recreational sports clubs

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A B S T R A C T

Participation in sport is highly valued by governments and policy makers. Policies and programs encourage participation of populations who are underrepresented in sport. In many countries sport participation is possible primarily under the auspices of voluntary sports clubs, many of which name demographic diversity as an organizational value. Underrepresented population groups continue to lag, however, in participating in sports clubs. Change has been slow in coming. Relatively little research focuses on resistance by those in positions of leadership to the entry or involvement of underrepresented or marginalized population groups into sports clubs. The purpose of this paper is to develop insight into why change may be so slow in coming even though demographic diversity is purportedly highly valued. Drawing on Raby's (2005) conceptualizations of practices of resistance, on empirical research on diversity in recreational sports clubs and on work by Foucault, the authors identify six discursive practices that those in positions of leadership in sport clubs draw on to resist diversity: speech acts, moral boundary work, in-group essentialism, denial/silencing, self-victimization, and bodily inscription. The authors conclude that resistance to diversity in sport clubs has emerged from a confluence of discourses that enable noncompliance at the micro level with the use of a macro-level discourse of diversity.

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1. Introduction

Participation in sport has become highly valued by governments and policy makers. In addition to its physical health benefits, it is often seen as an activity that has a positive social integrative function. It is not surprising that local and national governments with a diverse population have policies and programs that encourage participation of populations that are underrepresented or marginalized in sport. In many countries sport participation is possible primarily under the auspices of voluntary sport organizations, many of which name demographic diversity as an organizational value. For example, Australia's Sport 2030 policy aspires by 2030 to "have a diverse and inclusive sport and physical activity sector that supports more Australians to be more active more often" (Australian Government, 2018, p. 3). Canadian sport policy lists as a policy objective that "opportunities are provided for persons from traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized populations

to actively engage in all aspects of sport participation, including leadership roles" (Sport Canada, 2012, p. 9). Yet, change has been slow in coming. Relative to their counterparts, members of underrepresented or marginalized groups are less likely to participate in recreational sport clubs.

Most scholarship that explores this gap in participation rates draws attention to individual, sociocultural, and sometimes structural barriers and facilitators. Thus, research has focused on the proportion of women and minorities (Adriaanse, 2016; Donnelly & Donnelly, 2013; Elling, Hovden, & Knoppers, 2018), on commitment to and support for diversity in sport organizations (Cunningham & Melton, 2014; Cunningham, 2015; Melton & Cunningham, 2014; Spaaij, Magee et al., 2018), on often invisible organizational processes that together contribute to exclusion and marginalization (Bradbury, van Sterkenburg, & Mignon, 2014; Bradbury, van Sterkenburg, & Mignon, 2018; Knoppers, Claringbould, & Dortants, 2015; Norman, 2012), and on how those underrepresented engage in resistance to techniques of dominance exercised by those in positions of leadership (Bradbury, 2011; Hartmann, 1996; Norman, 2012).

Beyond sport, critical diversity scholars have voiced concerns about the way organizations often use the language of diversity to curtail deeper investigations into the structural inequalities that continue to persist in organizations (Embrick, 2011; Litvin, 2006). For example, Brayboy (2003) argued that organizations "often view diversity as a free-standing policy" in that it can be "implemented without necessarily changing the underlying structure of the institution and its day-to-day operations" (p. 73). Whilst organizations, including sports clubs, may be able to invoke diversity as an institutional value, often no genuine attempts are made to ensure or enforce diversity in organizational policy and practice (Embrick, 2011). Ahmed (2007) has shown how organizations associate the term "diversity" with the ideal image they have of themselves, whereby analysis of diversity policy and its implementation becomes "a question of 'what works', where what is meant by 'diversity' is kept undefined for strategic reasons" (p. 242). Based on their study of gender representations in texts, statistics, and images in annual financial reports of organizations valuing diversity, Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) concluded that these reports reproduced the gendering of organizations while celebrating their efforts to increase demographic diversity. In sports studies, this idea has been explored through, for example, critical analysis of the speech acts of sport organizations' diversity policies (Bury, 2015) and how the use of an "equal opportunities" lens fails to challenge dominant and discriminative ideologies (Norman, 2016). At the macro level then, there is general agreement on the value of demographic diversity in organizations including sport clubs. However, the daily discursive practices at the micro level reveal a different narrative.

Relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to how those in positions of leadership in sports clubs (i.e., decision makers, coaches, managers, and directors) maintain the status quo and, in doing so, are able to resist efforts towards greater demographic diversity in their club and sport in general. The purpose of this paper is to develop insight into why change may be so slow in coming even though demographic diversity is purportedly highly valued in sports clubs. Sports clubs are the basis of recreational participation in organized sport in Australia. They are not-for-profit, voluntary based organizations that are guided by national and state sport policies but have considerable autonomy in their operations. Recreational sports clubs in Australia are responsible for translating policy agendas into practice. They are expected to develop a participation base and support the development of talented young players. They usually do this by sponsoring a series of age- or ability-grouped teams who compete in leagues and tournaments. National and state sports governing bodies expect clubs to cater to a wide spectrum of individuals to meet broad inclusion objectives, and hence to provide both participation and performance opportunities.

Drawing on our empirical research that focuses on diversity in recreational sports clubs and using a Foucauldian framework, we address the following question: what discursive practices do leaders, managers, coaches, and other stakeholders in sports clubs use to enable their overrepresentation in participation and in leadership positions to continue? We view sport organizations as empirical sites for developing better theoretical and practical understandings of how resistance to diversity relates to power and privilege. We focus on the multiple power relations that operate in the diversity space, with an empirical focus on gender, race/ethnicity, and disability. In a broad sense of the term, we assume that demographic diversity occurs when people of varied backgrounds in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, or other observable or unobservable social factors are present and interact (Spaaij, Farquharson et al., 2018; Spaaij, Lusher, Jeanes, Farquharson, Gorman, & Magee, 2019). However, diversity is a contested concept. We acknowledge that demographic diversity is a construction based on the creation of symbolic boundaries that are used to include and exclude (Berrey, 2014).[1] Although these boundaries are constructions embedded in discourses about social relations of power such as race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, they have material effects based on hierarchical classifications of visible bodies that are used to include or exclude (Hardy & Thomas, 2015; van Amsterdam, Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2017). We focus on discourses about diversity that pertain to those that have historically faced discrimination and disadvantage and specifically, the discursive practices employed by those in positions of leadership to resist inclusion in sport and sport organizations.[2]

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[1] We acknowledge that diversity can be defined in other ways than demographics, for example as intersecting processes and practices (of masculinity, whiteness, ability, etc.).

[2] Our focus is on lack of policy implementation based on social or demographic diversity. We recognize however, that the boundaries of constructed categories that define demographic diversity are fluid and that the experiences of those assigned to a specific category are heterogenous (see also Choo & Ferree, 2010).

2. Conceptualizing resistance to diversity

Resistance is part and parcel of all struggles for social justice and equality. Resistance is also an important form of power that implies agency in the context of organizational change. It is expressed in a multitude of discursive actions and (re) productions in organizations (Benschop & van den Brink, 2014; Raby, 2005). We view resistance as being multi-faceted. Women and minorities engage in discursive practices that resist the status quo. Those occupying positions of leadership however, may engage in rhetoric that endorses the value of institutional diversity while also engaging in resistance to the actual implementation of diversity. Benschop and van den Brink (2014) argue that these leaders resist implementation of diversity to maintain and reproduce power relations; their resistance is typically particularly strong when an organization's cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and values are the target of change efforts. Thus, in this paper, we explore resistance as a discursive action that is performed by those in positions of developing or implementing policies for facilitating diversity to (re)position themselves in their privilege, and/or to mask such privilege. We call these people leaders, a category that includes decision makers, coaches, managers, and directors in and of sports clubs.

The discourse of (demographic) diversity seems to be especially salient at the macro level as it positions sport organizations or clubs as valuing diversity; that valuation is seen as a societal norm (Embrick, 2011; Knoppers et al., 2015). While at the macro level the rhetoric of the discourse of diversity has arguably become normalized and often accompanies the discourse of the positive benefits of sport participation, much of the (overt) resistance to it – and therefore to inclusion of marginalized groups – seems to occur at the micro level. We explore how the power of discourses used to exclude as part of daily practice at the micro level frequently seems to be greater than that of the discourse of diversity as it is used at the macro level. This difference perhaps helps to explain why sport organizations have not become significantly diverse.

We situate this paper within a Foucauldian framework to attempt to understand the micro-politics of resistance to diversity. We especially draw on Foucault's (1979,1980) ideas about the relationship between power and resistance, about a multiplicity of discourses that can be employed to practice resistance, and about relationships among these discourses and discursive practices. Foucault saw power as a circulating force that is almost synonymous with knowledge that travels through discourses. Discourses are ways of thinking and doing that define how individuals understand the world and determine what is seen or constructed as normative or truth. Discursive power is not something a director of a sport club possesses because of her position but refers to dominant ideas she holds and may see as common sense and as true. Discursive practices or strategies can be seen as discourses-in-action. We focus on discourse and discursive practices on which leaders in sports clubs draw when they discuss implementing social diversity. Building on Foucault, we assume a multidirectional notion of resistance that includes contradictions such as individuals drawing on the discourse of the value of diversity while also challenging discourses of change. We also assume that various, often ambiguous and contradictory, discourses about diversity circulate in organizations and that power relations occur between discourses as well as within them (see also Harding, Ford, & Lee, 2017).

Raby's (2005) review of forms of resistance to the status quo offered a useful framework for analysis. Her attempt to understand resistance addressed "complex flows of power relations, fragmented, constructed subjectivities and local and individualized activities" (p. 12). She described various forms of what she called postmodern positions on resistance. This included micropolitical practices of resistance based on the use of linguistics, misidentification, and bodily enactment. Although her typology describes forms of resistance by those marginalized by dominant discourses, Raby (2005) argues that discursive forms of resistance employed by those marginalized may also be used by those that are privileged through dominant discourses to strengthen hegemonic goals (p. 12) We draw on Raby's (2005) work on resistance not so much as to create a definitive typology but to sketch a complex panorama of adversarial and destabilizing discursive practices used by those in positions of leadership that constrain social inclusion in sports clubs (see also Dean, 2010). Specifically, we draw loosely upon, and effectively invert, Raby's (2005) taxonomy to conduct a critical micro-level analysis that identifies how those overrepresented draw on contradictory and complementary discourses to resist the implementation of policies that enhance social diversity within sports clubs. We specifically aim to identify the discourses and discursive practices used by those in positions of leadership to keep women, people of colour, people with disabilities and others who are underrepresented out of or in the margins of sport organizations.

3. Methods

This paper is part of a larger project that explored diversity in recreational sport in Australia (Spaaij, Farquharson et al., 2018, Spaaij et al., 2019). The project aimed to identify how diversity was understood, experienced, and managed in sports clubs (and particularly, junior sports clubs), and to develop resources and guidelines that sport organizations could use in their decision making and practices. The larger project was applied in nature, aiming to translate research-based knowledge on diversity in junior sport into tangible outcomes for the community sport sector and other relevant stakeholders, including educational resources and community capacity building training. The researchers worked closely with a range of sports clubs throughout the project.

The larger project used a mixed methods design conducted over a three-year period (Spaaij, Farquharson et al., 2018, Spaaij et al., 2019). This paper distinguishes itself from this larger project by focusing specifically on discursive practices of resistance to diversity. For the purpose of this paper, we draw particularly on qualitative data obtained through interviews to explore the forms of resistance engaged in by those in positions of leadership in the sports clubs. The research team

conducted a total of 101 semi-structured interviews across five sports: Australian Rules football (henceforth: football), Association football (henceforth: soccer), netball, cricket, and basketball. These sports were selected because they are five mass participation sports in the Australian context. Interviewees were selected purposively based on their active involvement in community sports clubs that had teams and competitions in any of the five sports at the junior level. The interviewees' roles in the clubs included formal club leader (e.g., president, committee member) (*n* = 33), coach (*n* = 24), player (*n* = 13), volunteer (*n* = 12), and parent (*n* = 19). Approximately 60% of respondents identified as men and 40% as women. In this paper, we focus especially on how those in positions of leadership within the clubs engaged in agency to resist diversity. In the interviews, these data were elicited through questions regarding respondents' personal commitment and attitudes to diversity, their perceptions and experiences of diversity at their club, any specific actions they had taken or behaviours they had engaged in to promote or prevent diversity at the club, and their perceptions and experiences of resistance to diversity within the club.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with the written permission of participants. The data were entered NVivo 11 software for data management and analysis. The respondents' roles at their clubs were recorded as a variable in NVivo, which allowed us to identify leadership positions from the 101 interviews for analytical purposes. Data were analyzed in an iterative, cyclical process using thematic analysis techniques. Our paradigmatic assumptions informed the data analysis and interpretation process. While the identification of codes and themes was largely an inductive process, it was influenced by a poststructuralist approach that focused attention on postmodern forms of resistance, including those discursive practices identified by Raby (2005) and in Foucault's work. The analysis was informed by the conceptual framework of resistance outlined in the previous section. Specifically, the analysis included data coding pertaining to "leaders" broadly defined (n = 57; comprising formal club leaders and coaches) for the forms identified by Raby (2005) (i.e., linguistics, disidentification, alternative discourses, strategic, and body elements) and for practices that were unique to our data. Through a process of open coding, reflection, and re-coding/axial coding, we were able to identify six forms of resistance used by leaders of sports clubs to resist incorporating measures to increase demographic diversity: speech acts, moral boundary work, in-group essentialism, denial/silencing, self-victimization, and bodily inscription. We discuss each of these forms, presented as discursive practices, in the next section.

4. Findings

In Table 1, we outline the discourses and discursive practices used by those in positions of leadership in these recreational sports clubs that enabled them to sustain their overrepresentation in both participation and leadership. We show how the use of these discourses and discursive practices served to preserve privilege by keeping underrepresented or marginalized population groups out or in the margins of the sports clubs.

4.1. Speech acts

Linguistic resistance to diversity in the sports clubs drew heavily on discourses of colour-blindness and gender-blindness. This discursive strategy operates by appearing to recognize and value difference, yet failing to appreciate systematic inequality and normativity, thereby effectively preventing the construction of a genuinely progressive or radical diversity politics by non-dominant groups (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). We found that club leaders and managers tended to define diversity in abstract, universal terms based on the discourse of the desirability of diversity in sport. In most cases, diversity was used as a descriptive term reflecting that their club, and the community within which it is located, is a collective of different people and cultures, not a singular, homogenous entity. Difference was constructed as an individual attribute and rhetorically used as evidence of heterogeneity. For example, one club president noted that "everyone's different, that's the way I'd look at it, everyone's different, but they're all at the club for the one reason, that's to play that sport. So, everyone's background is different. Everyone's got a different speciality." A club volunteer offered a similar view, saying "I think diversity wise, I mean it can . . . there's different personalities and different types of people." This statement was typical in that it defined diversity in such abstract terms that discourses about social power relations that refer to groups that have been facing systemic discrimination and disadvantage receded from view or became just another form of diversity alongside a wide range of observable and unobservable differences. Very few respondents drew on discourses that described diversity as a social or political project or as moral imperative dictating both the acceptance of difference and the need for anti-discrimination.

Most respondents considered individual axes of diversity as being distinct from each other and constructed them in categorical essentialist terms, such as gender or race/ethnicity. The sport leaders were not inclined to see different forms of diversity as being inter-related or as part of a broader diversity agenda (Spaaij, Farquharson et al., 2018). In interviews and in public statements (in local media, at club social events, and on club social media), they claimed that "yes, we are inclusive," pointing to the presence of, say, some players with culturally diverse backgrounds or participants with a disability. For example, a white male football club volunteer in his forties outlined how his club embraced diversity through their "All Abilities" disability team. In describing the position of the players with disabilities within the club however, he suggested:

Well, All Abilities, the whole team you know they certainly have, and they get as much right to this place as anyone else you know, they train one night a week and we give them a ground one night a week, I mean they train around the senior times, but that's everyone fitting in together, for no other reason.

Table 1
Discourses and discursive practices of resistance used by club leaders.

Discursive practice	Underpinning discourses	Description	Examples
Speech acts	Discourses of colour-blindness and gender-blindness	Linguistic resistance that arises in the gap between speech acts and how they are taken up (Raby, 2005), through "non-performative speech acts" (Ahmed, 2007) or "happy talk" (Bell & Hartmann, 2007)	• Appropriating language of diversity without altering ideologies, values or practices: "we are inclusive", "there are equal opportunities here", "everyone is welcome"
Moral boundary work	Neoliberal discourses such as meritocracy	Creating moral boundaries between dominant and non-dominant groups, while masking who defines qualifications	• Emphasizing self-reliance, moral character, and competitive success as key indicators of moral worth • Drawing boundaries against those perceived to be "in deficit", ill adjusted, unqualified, lazy, uninterested, or lacking experience
In-group essentialism	Discourse of essentialism	Advancing in-group identity in a simplified, collectivized way that essentializes its self-image and/or public image, and that downplays complexity and fluidity	• Using an essentializing, homogenizing discourse to justify the status quo: "how things are done here", "we've always done it this way" "tradition", "core business", "norm(al)"
Denial/ silencing	Discourse of denial (of privilege)	Marginalizing, ridiculing, or rendering (politicized) difference and discrimination invisible	• Accusing members of playing the discrimination card • Punishing "disloyal" members (e.g., "whistle-blowers") • Masking and not penalizing misogyny, racism, or ableism • Use of sexist/racist jokes and expecting women and minorities to laugh
Self-victimization	Discourses of victimhood	Countering diversity claims and change efforts through playing the victim card	• Pointing out the barriers and challenges that the organization faces and hence their inability to promote diversity, e.g. lack of capacity and resources • Self-pity: cannot make jokes anymore
Bodily inscription	Discourse of difference/Other	Inscribing on women and minorities' bodies a sense of otherness, or in dominant groups a fear of the other	• Using discourse of how Black players are naturally gifted and hence welcome at the club; their inclusion is contingent upon their bodily capital, not upon their worth as human beings • Using discourse of how athletes with a disability are "non-competitive" and purely recreational • Degrading women who do not perform heteronormativity; emphasizing women's frailty

This volunteer used the presence of a disability section to justify the club as inclusive. The team is "allowed" to train one night a week, however, despite all the other teams having access for two nights. Furthermore, the volunteer's description of this process was a speech act that defined the club as a gatekeeper. The club permitted diverse individuals to participate, but clearly positioned the team as the nonnormative Other ("them") and as different from the main (abled) teams. The club benevolently gave "them a ground" rather than seeing the disability team as an integral and important part of its operations.

Other clubs that claimed to embrace one axis of diversity reluctantly admitted that they had never considered whether they also supported other forms of diversity. For example, although they drew on the macrolevel discourse of desired diversity to emphasize that everyone is welcome, they tended to ignore that the club's facilities were inadequate for people with physical disabilities, or that the club culture may have been perceived as hyper-masculine. Some volunteers claimed their club was diverse but when asked to provide specific examples, they struggled to do so. One club volunteer explained that since his club was culturally diverse they had very few issues with racism. However, his speech act defined cultural diversity at the club in terms of white European participants the lack of tension he described may have been due to the limited cultural diversity:

We haven't had too many racial issues at all because . . . if you have got new players come through you make them feel all welcome, it doesn't matter what country they're from or where they're from . . . We do have some people, I'm only guessing, English, maybe Scottish . . . what sort of . . . I don't know from say Islam and that sort of background. I'm only guessing, I don't know a hundred percent, we don't ask. We don't need to ask. If we involved people as being part of the team it's not an issue. (White male volunteer, 30s, soccer club)

As his response indicates, whilst suggesting club members are culturally diverse, he was unsure whether this is the case. However, he glosses over this with the broader rhetoric of "everyone's welcome," automatically qualifying the club as inclusive despite this not being visually obvious.

These speech acts, that is, the use of diversity and inclusion language, enabled club volunteers to draw on colour-blindness and gender blindness. This rhetoric helped members of sport organizations fend off criticism and claim compliance with policy imperatives and access to associated resources (e.g., funding, "good sports" awards). They claimed to

enable a diverse and inclusive sports environment and pointed out (rather selectively) examples that appeared to support this claim. The use of these speech acts meant they failed to critically interrogate, let alone alter, organizational cultures and practices.

4.2. Moral boundary work

Our data point to moral boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont, 2000; Raby, 2005) as a discursive practice used by those in positions of leadership in the sports clubs to resist change. This practice consisted of the construction of social hierarchies. Their moral boundary work drew on neoliberal discourses such as meritocracy to create a hierarchy of valued demographic categories. Several leaders and members of the clubs in our study used the language of moral worth to draw boundaries to limit the entry of other groups based on moral criteria, for example for their lack of self-reliance, of competitive success, and of moral character. A key theme that emerged from the data was the perceived tension between a sports club's competitive goals and providing opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds, especially people with disabilities. Several club representatives considered the development and maintenance of disability provision to be at odds with their values and culture, which were represented by achieving competitive success. Attaining diversity through inclusion was thus seen as limiting success. These respondents justified their clubs' lack of engagement with disability agendas by suggesting it would compromise the club's chances of success in leagues and tournaments (Jeanes et al., 2019).

Similarly, at a different club, a volunteer suggested that whilst the club was comfortable with women holding roles on the committee they could not be involved in senior coaching roles. He explained:

> But it's not that we would ever say, "Oh look, you're a woman, you can't get on the committee," or anything. There was no role in the club probably other than probably a senior coach, that they wouldn't give over to a woman, I wouldn't think. Yeah . . . and honestly, to tell you the honest truth, I don't believe women understand football like blokes do. (Male volunteer, 50s, football and netball)

The volunteer drew on inherent sexism to justify his and the club's opinion that women would simply not have the knowledge to be a senior coach. In similar vein, another volunteer at the same club outlined that women would be ineffective within senior leadership roles, such as club president because they were unable to take control. Again, drawing on stereotypical assumptions regarding women's personality and capabilities, the volunteer expressed:

> You need someone at the top, a very good leader to say "pull your head in a little bit" . . . . You need to take charge. And it's hard for a lady to do that I think, because a lady wants to be liked by everyone.

Women's perceived limitations were constructed as a regime of truth and used by the club to rationalize why women did not hold any significant positions of power within the club environment.

In a similar vein, some club leaders in this study justified their reluctance to engage more immigrants of colour by referring to the "extra work" this would create to support them. When probed why this inclusion would require additional effort, interviewees identified not only structural barriers such as financial cost and transport, but also behavioural challenges in which they constructed immigrants of colour as being relatively undisciplined, less punctual, and unwilling to engage in doing volunteer work for the club. Few interviewees (seven of the 33 club leaders we interviewed) questioned the legitimacy of these stereotypes or their perpetuation.

These examples reveal how moral boundary work may operate from the use of a deficit model, whereby differences are interpreted by managers as deficiencies or challenges to be managed, not only in terms of financial cost or time but, crucially, also in terms perceived lack of skills, experience, or moral character (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). This boundary work by leaders places the onus for "fitting in" and demonstrating worth firmly on the shoulders of those considered "unfit" to participate in the governance and management of the club.

4.3. In-group essentialism

Our findings indicate that some of those in positions of leadership in local sports clubs engaged in an essentializing and to some extent, a standardizing of their public image, thus advancing their in-group identity (i.e., the club "community" or "culture") in a simplified, collectivized way that downplayed complexity and fluidity (Eide, 2010). This discursive practice, which draws on the discourse of essentialism, helped to preserve the status quo and resist diversity efforts. More specifically, club leaders engaged in attempts to frame their organization and its culture as internally homogenous, which downplayed the need for "special" accommodations for those underrepresented. This involved, for example, rejection of attempts to change the structure of work or governance such as time of meetings, length of workday, and number of board members, decline to review and alter selection procedures for coaches or board members, and refusal to provide additional mentoring for those underrepresented. The following quote from a coach illustrates how in-group essentialism manifested itself in the everyday practices of clubs:

> Yeah, I coached the senior side. And, you know, I got accused of being a racist, because there were a couple of Aboriginal boys that were good enough to play – they were good enough to play, they didn't want to train. Tuesday, Thursday nights they wouldn't train – they wouldn't rock up to training. Come down in the Reserves and they would kill them, because the Reserves is the lower standard than what the Senior Grade is, and then I had a guy come to me and said to me, "Oh, you're

discriminating. You're being racist because you're not . . . ". At the end of the day I've got to do the right thing by the team. And that's what it comes down to. You're prepared to do the hard work, you'll get the reward. (White male coach, 40s, football)

The coach in this extract refused to offer additional support to Aboriginal players, implying they are lazy and lack motivation because they do not regularly attend training. Rather than work to support these players and understand why they did not attend training, the coach punished them, relegating the players to lower grade team. He denied any suggestions of racism, instead contending that the players' work ethic was questionable and that he rightfully prioritized the team. This normative judgment overlaps with the use of moral boundary work by those in positions of leadership.

The interviews further revealed how by framing diversity as "not core business," "not mainstream," or outside common organizational and decision-making processes, club leaders were able to resist policy changes that would modify existing structures and develop more inclusive practices. The effect of this technique was not lost on underrepresented groups. For example, one person of color (male, 40s) who sat on the board of a local sports club noted: "[Most clubs] have a rigid way of thinking, they are stuck in their way. They do not want to engage in a dialogue, to learn from others. They don't want to adapt. So, if you want to play footy you have to accept how things are done; you have to take it the way it is." This understanding by women and minorities of "having to take it the way it is" meant that leaders could practice silence or denial during and after misogynist, racist, or ableist actions.

4.4. Denial/silencing

Sport organizations can resist demographic diversity through their handling of expressions of misogyny, racism, or ableism. In so doing, they strengthen these practices. Our findings revealed various ways in which these discursive practices were denied, marginalized, or ridiculed within sport organizations. In the more extreme cases, this involved backlash, singling out, and scapegoating of those underrepresented. We identified various factors that resulted in the maintenance of a sporting culture where racism, sexism, and ableism were tolerated, even when lip service was given to their inappropriateness. For example, anti-racism measures were symbolic rather than substantive; racist sledging was tacitly tolerated as a legitimate tactic (see also Farquharson et al., 2018; Hylton, 2010). Players of colour frequently described encountering racist slurs, from opposition players and sometimes from their own team mates. An Aboriginal player outlined how his team mates would tell racist jokes and suggest his behaviour was problematic if he became upset and challenged them about it. The player, after being subjected to a racist joke by a team mate suggested that he "could not believe what came out of his mouth . . . I was pretty upset about it. I didn't play for about three weeks. I didn't go to training that week because I was pretty stirred up with it." Whilst the player felt compelled to remove himself from the environment, the club denied any wrong doing and refused to discipline the racist player, instead suggesting the Aboriginal athlete was being overly sensitive and the team was "just having a laugh."

When clubs did respond to accusations of racism, white managers tended to prevent grievance processes from being effective, preferring to use informal means of managing racism, and accusing Aboriginal respondents of using the race card. The response of White managers response, if any, to racial abuse frequently led to negative consequences for the abused, scapegoating of the complainants and no visible consequences for the abusers. As a result of this form of resistance to implementing and sustaining demographic diversity by those in positions of leadership, young people of colour, refused to engage with official processes for managing racism. Here too, lip service was given to the need to have more minorities in participate in sport while racist attitudes and practices were rarely policed.

At several clubs that named demographic diversity as an organizational value and strength, our observations and interviews revealed subtle and less subtle forms of resisting diversity and reproducing the status quo through the enactment of the discourse of denial. Some club rooms provided a visible celebration of men's sport and were rarely used by anyone beyond the club leadership and senior men. As one netball coach explained, going to the clubhouse to attend the social nights was not something she prioritised because "it is not that welcoming or friendly, I never really feel like I should be there."

There were numerous examples of overt silencing practices. A volunteer described his club's response to same-sex relationships, suggesting they had found this difficult terrain to navigate. The quote below illustrates how the club effectively sought to hide the presence of same-sex relationships:

We have experienced in the last few years same-sex relationships within the women's team. We had not noted this prior, so I don't think we were homophobic, but it was an eye-opener and another time where you have to take stock and think about, OK, how do we handle this, or how should this be treated, or whatever. We were very open and communicative at the very beginning by saying that your sexuality or what you do away from the club, that is not our responsibility or our issue. So, we sort of said to them, "You know we don't have an issue if that's what's happening in your life, that's your life. We're here to play football, so it's about the footy when we come here as long as everybody is getting along". And we sort of said, "Well don't make it [same sex relationship] overt." (White male volunteer, 40s, football)

Whilst the volunteer denied that the club was homophobic, the presence of same-sex couples amongst its players clearly brought a level of discomfort. The volunteer justified the club's position by suggesting that these relationships lay outside the club's responsibility and that there was no issue whilst simultaneously he encouraged players to keep their relationships hidden.

There were further examples of denial by club members in relation to homophobic behavior, as illustrated by the follow interview extract:

Interviewer:[Words like] faggot, do you hear things like that amongst the boys?

Respondent:Yeah, very . . . yeah, it's rife, isn't it? Yeah . . . . it's still very . . . and I think it's . . . you know it's almost now not a . . . and it's not a go at homosexual people, it's just that that's just what we say, like that's just . . . just language now, you know, "Oh, you're a poof."

Interviewer:How do people deal with that when it happens?

Respondent:Oh, that's definitely not addressed. Yeah, definitely not. (. . .)

(White male, 40s, coach, football)
The coach suggested the club did little to respond to or challenge the language used by the players. The coach denied that it was used as a homophobic slur.

4.5. Self-victimization

Drawing on a discourse of victimhood, some of the club leaders examined in our research engaged in self-victimization during the interviews as a technique to resist change. They highlighted, for example, the barriers and challenges they faced in attempting to increase social diversity at their clubs. These barriers were deemed particularly pressing for volunteer-based clubs with limited organizational capacity. For example, a female football coach noted the pressure diversity management put on already stretched resources:

You're talking about clubs; the issue of just maintaining the club is such a burden . . . well burden's probably the wrong word but it's so much work and it's a big job already. Then trying to add on things without applying some extra resources is just really, really hard. . . . We would have the physical resources in the club, but we don't have the time. Running a club is an incredibly hard and complex thing. (White female coach, 30s, football)

Of interest here is the respondent's reference to diversity as an "add on," or as something that is perceived to be beyond the "normal" sphere of club practices and responsibilities (Jeanes et al., 2019; Spaaij, Farquharson et al., 2018). Diversity initiatives were discursively connected to peripheral aspects of the organization without altering its fundamental strategy or mission (Cunningham, 2009). Similarly, a basketball coach indicated that the club was struggling for space to host their mainstream teams and was therefore unable to accommodate players with disabilities: "Because we don't own our own facilities, they're not . . . you know I mean they all have access for physical disability, access to some extent, but we just don't have enough room or . . . well enough room to cater for everybody." This coach positioned the issue as beyond the club's control because it does not own the facilities. However, the club can cater only to many mainstream teams.

A football coach (white male, 40s) asked: "It's [diversity] a great idea, but who's going to do it?" For these respondents, fostering harmonious diversity was not part of their core business although they valued organizational diversity. A similar view was presented by a committee member of a field hockey club who commented:

We struggle to get all our coaches for our teams, we struggle for people in the canteen, you know. So, these are things that we're faced with weekly. But we would love to run [diversity] programs, yeah, we would, but again, it's just the resources and people available, you know, and that's the hard thing.

This last quote reveals a common discursive theme across the data: club leaders' self-professed sympathy toward diversity is hindered in action only by the lack of capacity and resources to make change happen. Underlying ideologies and values remain firmly concealed in such statements. These ideologies not only emerged in discursive practices such as speech acts, in group essentialism, denial, silencing and self-victimization but also in how bodies are inscribed.

4.6. Bodily inscription

Bodies are centrally implicated in all forms of resistance as sites of power struggles (Foucault, 1979, 1980; Raby, 2005). Our data suggest certain distinctive bodily forms of resistance to diversity that work by inscribing in women's and minorities' bodies a sense of otherness, or in the dominant, a sense of fear of the other. Foucault calls this inscription of discourses on bodies, biopolitics. In their use of this discursive strategy, the leaders involved in this study drew on discourses of difference and the Other. For example, a basketball coach (White male, 40s) in the study initially evoked a familiar linguistic technique by claiming that "as a club we're inclusive and we're about engagement and participation", but quickly added that "we also want to field strong teams." When prompted to explain how this inclusivity had impacted on the club, he emphasized how it had helped "shatter stereotypes." Yet, in clarifying his statement, he enacted a familiar double stereotype of Black male physicality and the myth of natural talent on the one hand, and deficit and family dysfunction that enabled them to engage in moral boundary work on the other hand:

With the South Sudanese kids, 90% of them, and there's a big number, 90% of the boys are fantastic basketballers. Like, why is that? They are just awesome. So, you just look at these kids and *they're so athletic and so fast and it's obviously a*

genetic thing and they play a lot. So, then you've got all these kids, *none of which can really get to games, parents won't score, parents won't coach, parents won't team manage*. So, you can't . . . if we were to rank our teams one to 15, you literally could have in your first three teams of nine boys, 27 kids, you could literally put 25 Sudanese boys, if it was just purely on skill. So, then you face this issue of well OK, we really want to cap it at two. [. . .] You're like, well . . . some of the coaches love it. We'll win every game but then some of them have a few *issues with reliability and communication*, *they won't turn up.* (emphasis added)

A female club president described her experiences of gender when she attended a meeting with presidents from other local clubs. She expressed:

My first experience at my very first presidents' meeting, 'cause I was the first female president in the league, so I walked in to a room where there were some lovely men that had been in their role for quite some time, and some new ones. They were sitting down one end around some tables. Now this end was a coffee urn and some biscuits, and everything else. Their assumption was that I was here to serve them their tea and coffee, and give them their biscuits, and were quite shocked when I sat down and went, "Hi, my name's Anna and I'm the new President of the Football Club." I think you could have heard a pin drop for about five minutes. (White female president, 40s, football)

Her quote indicates the way in which the male representatives degraded her by assuming she must be there to serve the tea. Whilst she resisted their othering by declaring she had a legitimate place within the meeting, she still had to endure their positioning of her and their perceived surprise or discomfort to find that she held a senior leadership position within a football club where male bodies are the norm.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have drawn on a Foucauldian notion of resistance that involves power and agency to develop insight into the ways in which those in positions of leadership (decision makers, coaches, managers, and directors) in recreational sports clubs use discursive practices that enable their overrepresentation in sport participation and leadership to continue. Our micro-level analysis identifies six discursive practices used by those in positions of leadership to resist greater social diversity within their sports clubs. We have shown how these discursive practices can strengthen normativities that pervade much of sport and that keep bodies that do not comply with dominant discourses invisible or on the margins (Adams & Kavanagh, 2018; Caudwell, 2011). The statements of resistance by those interviewed may be dismissed as being opinions of individuals. According to Foucault (1980), however, the ways in which individuals assign meanings are not personal or particular to that person but are connected to discursive networks of power/knowledge, that is, to the macro level.

The results suggest that resistance to diversity in sport organizations does not consist of one discourse pitting it (so to speak) against the discourse of diversity. Instead a multiplicity of discourses circulates in broader society and sport organizations that can be mobilized to resist another societally valued discourse, that of diversity. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that when a discourse is normative in several areas, such as language, institutions, and practices, then that discourse is part of a "discursive formation." This multiplicity of discourses drawn on by these respondents suggests the underlying discourses of noncompliance with or resistance to implementation of diversity (see Table 1) are part of a discursive formation (Foucault, 1972) and as such may strengthen the resistance. This resistance or a noncompliance discursive formation emerged from a confluence of discourses of, inter alia, meritocracy, difference, victimization, and denial (see Table 1) that enabled noncompliance with a macro-level discourse. This discursive formation of resistance or noncompliance is based on constructions of perceived material effects at the micro level of a macro-level discourse.

This is not to say all the discourses of noncompliance were equally influential. Some discourses may be similar to those used in nonsport organizations to resist diversity while others may be unique to sport. The position of the latter, however, is strengthened by the ways in which they are congruent with those of nonsport organizations. The discursive formation those in leadership positions drew upon to resist diversity policies or efforts acted as constraints to the implementation of measures to enhance diversity.

A second implication of the results concerns our focus on micro-level analysis. Postmodern accounts of resistance have been criticized for being less able to theorize collective, organized resistance (Raby, 2005) and for offering only localized possibilities of resistance (Markula, 2003). Our results tentatively suggest that the diversity discourse was less powerful at the micro level (i.e., at the level of local sports clubs) while at the macro level it was assigned greater value and seemed to be more powerful. The (depoliticized) discourse of diversity appears to be powerful enough, perhaps may even be common sense from both business and social justice perspectives (Kirton & Greene, 2016), so that it is difficult to resist it at the abstract level. In other words, there may also be relations of power between discourses that are contextual/level related.

The discourses about the societal benefits of sport participation/sport club membership and about the value of diversity in sport organizations that dominated the macro level seem to be in opposition to the discursive formation consisting of six forms of resistance used by leaders of sports clubs at the micro level. Butler's (1993) understanding of the ways speech acts function may help to explain why this incongruence can exist. Butler argues that there is space between what is said and how that is taken up. The space or gap between macro and micro levels or between abstract notions of diversity and sport participation and everyday practice of implementation may facilitate this resistance. Discourses at the macro level are not

empty as Embrick (2011) suggests, but may give those in positions of leadership the space they need in everyday practice to position themselves as sympathetic to demographic diversity. This speech act in which they endorse diversity then enables them to engage in micro-politics of resistance by employing a multiplicity of discourses that prevent them from implementing these so-called ideals. In this case they used moral boundary work, in-group essentialism, denial, and bodily inscription to position themselves as victims and powerless to implement a demographic diversity. Macro-level discourses such as these about diversity and sport participation may be illocutionary. Specifically, macro-level discourses themselves are practices of intent or promise that become authoritative because they are repeated not only in formal policies but also by government officials as well as club leaders themselves (Butler, 1993; Raby, 2005). Our focus on the discourses and discursive strategies used by those in positions of leadership in recreational sports clubs to preserve privilege and resist change therefore, complements common conceptualizations of resistance that foreground acts of resistance to the status quo by non-dominant groups in sport.

In this paper, we have only begun to scratch the surface with regard to identifying these micro-macro discursive connections. Herein lies a promising direction for future research. There is a need to move beyond our narrow empirical focus on local sports clubs to investigate to what extent the discursive practices identified in this paper can also be found in major international and national sport organizations. While it is generally believed that leadership on increasing diversity in sport organizations should also come "from the top," such change has been slow in coming and "the top" of sport organizations is also often not socially diverse (Sotiriadou, De Haan, & Knoppers, 2017). We hypothesize that techniques of dominance or discursive formations that are practiced in community sport clubs may operate in similar ways in major sport organizations to resist change and preserve privilege.

Finally, the results have implications for sport policy and practice. Sport policies that focus exclusively on increasing participation amongst diverse and underrepresented groups will rarely lead sports organizations to embrace diversity and alter discriminatory practice. The findings illustrate how clubs may welcome diverse players but do little to change their discursive practices. Indeed, club leaders and volunteers may be unaware of how their practices may contribute to the marginalisation and othering of women and minority groups. The data point to the need for education among club leaders regarding diversity and inclusion. It would be valuable for clubs and their members to engage in conversations regarding their interpretations and implementation of diversity. In particular, education is necessary to encourage clubs to critically reflect on their practice and recognize that an "everybody is welcome" approach is likely to conceal and keep intact the subtle discursive practices that affect the participation and experiences of underrepresented groups. For example, in our own research we have produced practical recommendations and facilitated workshops with local clubs that specifically addressed underacknowledged discursive and organizational practices of this nature informed by, for instance, critical race theory. Club-focused education can highlight to club leaders that seemingly normalized and everyday practices can have a detrimental impact on their members. More broadly, if diversity is to be embraced as normal practice within clubs, sports governing bodies need to ensure it is not positioned as extra or optional work.

The data suggest that, at a basic level, work still needs to be done regarding legislation aimed to address discrimination. The examples of racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic behaviour that are left unchallenged are testament to the limitations of current anti-discrimination policies and legislation that are often a precursor to policies of demographic diversity. That individuals feel unsupported in challenging racist behaviour, for example, indicates the need for a stronger line in ensuring support for individuals who do experience discrimination. Sports governing bodies should therefore critically reflect on their own ideologies about demographic diversity and examine the diversity practices in the clubs they support. This may help them to recognize that though a club embraces diversity and showcases its diverse participants as evidence thereof, this voiced support for diversity does not automatically translate into genuinely inclusive or equitable practice.

Acknowledgments

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