

2024



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN IN SPORT SYMPOSIUM

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



**PROFESSOR HOLLY
THORPE**

Academic Keynote
University of Waikato



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1 Parramatta Square, Parramatta

AUG

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ABOUT IWSS

The International Women in Sport Symposium brings together leading experts and practitioners from around the world to discuss the latest research and best practices in advancing gender equality and promoting the participation of women in sport.

Delegates have submitted from a diverse range of institutions, including universities/organisations in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Germany, Canada, Spain and the United States.

The abstracts presented in this booklet pertain to the themes that will be explored at the conference.



Engendering Social Change



Research and Disciplinary Challenges



Fan Engagement



Health, Physiology and Performance



Constructing Gender



Leadership and Allyship



Children and Youth



Participation, Strategy and Analysis



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WITH THANKS



We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Parramatta Eels Rugby League Club for their significant sponsorship of the symposium.

As a prominent sporting organisation in Western Sydney, the Parramatta Eels have recognised the importance of providing equal opportunities for women in all aspects of the game.

The Parramatta Eels generous support of the International Women in Sport Symposium reflects their commitment to empowering female athletes, coaches, administrators, and enthusiasts, and fostering an inclusive sporting culture.



AGENDA

DAY 1

OPEN

Opening of Day 1 Symposium (10:00am - 11.30am) [CR3]

Smith: Welcome

Sweeney: Opening of Conference

Garlin: Acknowledgement of Country

Thorpe: Keynote Address: Navigating the F-Word: A Glossary for Doing Feminist Research in Women's Sport

STREAM 1

Engendering Social Change (12:00pm-1.15pm) [CR1]

- ✓ **Skellern:** Playing Sport Like a Girl. How Sport Shapes Skills for the New Economy
- ✓ **Ciancia:** The 2024 Women's March Madness Game Changers: A Slam Dunk Towards Gender Equality, Fair Pay, and Beyond
- ✓ **Litchfield:** Gender-based violence in sport: Considerations for keeping safe in the digital realm
- ✓ **Brown:** Research in women's leadership and sport: methodological challenges and opportunities.

STREAM 2

Fan Engagement (12:00pm - 1.15pm) [CR2]

- ✓ **Richards:** NRLW Fan Engagement Report: The Launch
- ✓ **Camillos:** Alternative media delivers engagement and connection for women's sports
- ✓ **Rosenberger III:** Understanding Motivations and Online Engagement for Women's Football Fan Loyalty: Comparing Australia and Germany
- ✓ **Papakosmas:** Beyond the Field: Exploring the Inspirational Effects of the 2023 Women's FIFA World Cup on Social Perceptions in Women's Football

STREAM 1

Constructing Gender (2.00pm - 3.20pm) [CR1]

- ✓ **Dove:** Knowledge-making in Australian elite girls' football: capturing and optimising the performance of changing bodies
- ✓ **Silva:** A historical analysis of women's soccer in Brazil: from its early exhibitions to hosting the Women's World Cup in 2027
- ✓ **Gibbons:** Pacific Sports Women's Knowledge and Experiences of Menstruation
- ✓ **Schnioffsky:** "We're all in swishy dresses": The dress and white femininity in Australian netball

STREAM 2

Children and Youth (2.00pm - 3.20pm) [CR2]

- ✓ **Cheng:** Providers' Constructions of Gender in Children's Sporting Activities in Australia
- ✓ **Ashton:** Twelve-month outcomes of a community-based, father-daughter physical activity program delivered by trained facilitators.
- ✓ **Pavlicevic:** Go Girls Storytelling: Evaluation of a physical and mental wellbeing program for 9-11 year old girls
- ✓ **Bunde-Birouste:** Festival23 – a Football for Good sport for development program conducted during the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup



AGENDA

DAY 2

OPEN

Opening of Day 2 Symposium (10:00am - 11.30am) [CR3]

Richards: Welcome

O'Shea: Industry Panel Discussion

Bonita Mersiades (Founder and Author of Fair Play Publishing)

Melissa Achten (Baseball Australia)

Tiarnna Spice (Tennis NSW)

Margo Harley (Cricket Australia)

STREAM 1

Research and Disciplinary Challenges (11.30am - 12.45pm) [CR1]

- ✓ **Bowell:** Male allyship to promote increased women's sporting research
- ✓ **O'Shea:** Understanding how primary violence prevention can be embedded within a Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) degree program of study.
- ✓ **Karlik:** An investigation into the lived experiences of international women football players: Ethical considerations
- ✓ **Mariyani-Squire:** Why are Women So Underrepresented in the Field of Sports Economics?

STREAM 2

Health, Physiology and Performance (11.30am - 12.45pm) [CR2]

- ✓ **Muslichah:** Exploring Eating Behavior and Female Athlete Triad among Female Adolescent Athletes in Indonesian Youth Governmental Training Centers
- ✓ **Brooks:** Exercise may benefit those with endometriosis: The 'Exercise 4 Endo' project
- ✓ **Nelson:** The Bleeding Edge of Women's Performance Enhancement? Examining Strength Athletes' Engagement with Menstrual Cycle-Based Training using Actor-Network Theory
- ✓ **Gunawardhana:** Effects of different phases of the menstrual cycle on balance and hand-eye motor coordination performance in female athletes

STREAM 3

Facilitation of Excellence (11.30am - 12.45pm) [CR3]

- ✓ **Solanas Sánchez:** Lesbian Coaches in Sport: Creating New and Inclusive Orientations
- ✓ **Cai:** The Impact of Female Naturalized Athletes on Chinese Women's Sports Strategies: The Case of Eileen Gu
- ✓ **Highfield:** Co-designing Female Talent Development Research in Olympic Pathways with Australian Sailing.
- ✓ **Maxwell:** Investigating Women's Sports in Western Sydney: How can organizations, facilities and policies facilitate inclusion and increase participation

STREAM 1

Leadership and Allyship (1.35pm - 3.20pm) [CR1]

- ✓ **McGuire:** Transformative impact of Women Leadership: Sport Coaching to Thriving Communities
- ✓ **Avner:** Building bridges across the gender divide: Mobilising male allyship in sport coaching
- ✓ **Sturges:** Football for social change: an evaluation of the Festival23 and future directions in sport for development and gender equality activist research
- ✓ **Bennie:** Coaching Unlimited – How a coaching program designed with and for First Nations peoples aims to create positive change within the sports industry

STREAM 2

Participation, Strategy, and Analysis (1.35pm - 3.20pm) [CR2]

- ✓ **Desjardins:** Lifting the Bar for Women in Powerlifting
- ✓ **Esmundo:** The Digital Terrain: A Content Analysis of Twitter attitudes on Australian Women's Sport
- ✓ **Hill & Hassani:** Arezo – Football is Our Identity, A Football for Good program for Afghan Women.
- ✓ **Longmuir:** Shaping the Future of Australian Women's Football: Data-Driven Strategies for Matildas' Talent Identification
- ✓ **Grainger:** Coloniality or Commitment? FIFA's relationship to Indigeneity

STREAM 3

Inclusive Spaces in Womens Sport (1.35pm - 3.20pm) [CR3]

- ✓ **Symons:** "Feminine and fun": investigating representations of the ideal netballer in early 00's netball marketing and fan engagement in Australia
- ✓ **Li:** "Ice Parents", Parenthood as Talent Agent and Figure Skating as Shadow Education - A New Option of Training Young Figure Skaters in China
- ✓ **Storr:** Understanding Youth LGBTIQ+ Participation in Sport and Active Recreation
- ✓ **Willing:** 'Skate, Create and Collaborate'

ABSTRACTS

Building bridges across the gender divide: Mobilising male allyship in sport coaching

Coaching Unlimited – How a coaching program designed with and for First Nations peoples aims to create positive change within the sports industry

Male allyship to promote increased women's sporting research

Exercise may benefit those with endometriosis: The 'Exercise 4 Endo' project

Research in women's leadership and sport: methodological challenges and opportunities.

Festival23 – a Football for Good sport for development program conducted during the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup

Alternative media delivers engagement and connection for women's sports

Providers Constructions of Gender in Children's Sporting Activities in Australia

The 2024 Women's March Madness Game Changers: A Slam Dunk Towards Gender Equality, Fair Pay, and Beyond

Lifting the bar for women in powerlifting

Knowledge-making in Australian elite girls' football: capturing and optimising the performance of changing bodies

The Digital Terrain: A Content Analysis of Twitter attitudes on Australian Women's Sport

Pacific Sports Women's Knowledge and Experiences of Menstruation

Effects of different phases of the menstrual cycle on balance and hand-eye motor coordination performance in female athletes

Co-designing Female Talent Development Research in Olympic Pathways with Australian Sailing

Arezo – Football is Our Identity, A Football for Good program for Afghan Women

An investigation into the lived experiences of international women football players: Ethical considerations

"Ice Parents", Parenthood as Talent Agent and Figure Skating as Shadow Education –A New Option of Training Young Figure Skaters in China

Gender-based violence in sport: Considerations for keeping safe in the digital realm.

Shaping the Future of Australian Women's Football: Data-Driven Strategies for Matildas' Talent Identification

Why are Women So Underrepresented in the Field of Sports Economics?

Investigating Women's Sports in Western Sydney: How can organizations, facilities and policies facilitate inclusion and increase participation.

Transformative impact of Women Leadership: Sport Coaching to Thriving Communities



ABSTRACTS

Twelve-month outcomes of a community-based, father-daughter physical activity program delivered by trained facilitators.

Exploring Eating Behaviour and Female Athlete Triad among Female Adolescent Athletes in Indonesian Youth Governmental Training Centers

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Understanding how primary violence prevention can be embedded within a Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) degree program of study

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NRLW Fan Engagement Report: The Launch

Understanding Motivations and Online Engagement for Women's Football Fan Loyalty: Comparing Australia and Germany

"We're all in swishy dresses": The dress and white femininity in Australian netball

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Playing Sport Like a Girl. How Sport Shapes Skills for the New Economy

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The Impact of Female Naturalized Athletes on Chinese Women's Sports Strategies: The Case of Eileen Gu

Lesbian Coaches in Sport: Creating New and Inclusive Orientations

Coloniality or Commitment? FIFA's relationship to Indigeneity in the 2023 Women's World Cup and Beyond

'Skate, Create and Collaborate'

Building bridges across the gender divide: Mobilising male allyship in sport coaching

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In our recent explorations of 'gender effective coaching' we have suggested that problematic 'myths' surrounding the effective coaching of female and gender diverse athletes abound and are often uncritically reproduced within sport coaching contexts (Jones & Avner, 2021).

This is often because of the accultured assumptions that male coaches bring into the female sport coaching space (Jones & Avner, 2024). This reproduction has significant implications both in terms of problematic coaching norms and practices, but also for athlete development and experience. While it is clear that many men hold egalitarian and progressive views of gender in sport, research has shown that few men actively participate in activities that attempt to redress the aforementioned imbalance (Rogers et al., 2017).

In order to learn more about this important issue in sport coaching, in the current ongoing study we are engaging with male coaches of female and gender diverse athletes to consider male coaches' knowledge and understanding of 'gender responsive coaching' and in doing so, to map and explore what gendered assumptions currently inform their work. It is hoped that data generated from this research may serve to inform policy and practice recommendations related to gender responsive coaching and provide key insights into the role of male allyship in building strong and inclusive sport experiences and environments for all genders.



Coaching Unlimited – How a coaching program designed with and for First Nations peoples aims to create positive change within the sports industry

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Since 2013, researchers and Government alike have called for culturally safe spaces for women and girls to engage in physical activity while also noting the importance of First Nations women to act as role models for young people. This is because female sporting role models like First Nations coaches can positively impact First Nations athletes by encouraging them to explore their cultural identity while enhancing a sense of belonging. Yet, female First Nations coaches are scarce and few opportunities to gain coaching accreditation in culturally safe contexts means that First Nations women and girls continue to miss out.

This presentation begins by reflecting on First Nations peoples' representation in sport coaching roles from a global standpoint. In doing so, we briefly highlight the findings from a world-first research project investigating First Nations peoples' pathways into, and experiences, when in sport coaching roles. Our presentation then shifts to focus on the Coaching Unlimited program – a sport coaching program designed with, and for, First Nations Peoples – and how this program is being used as a vehicle for positive social change by empowering women to be leaders in sport through coaching roles.

Coaching Unlimited has now formally qualified more than 100 First Nations sport coaches in netball, tennis, and football (soccer) and is creating a clear pathway for First Nations women in sport coaching. To conclude, we share a range of ideas that may provoke further social change within the sports industry including the next steps for expanding the Coaching Unlimited program into an ongoing mentoring program.

Male allyship to promote increased women's sporting research

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This paper will argue for increased male allyship within academic research communities of women's sport. Women's sport is generally underrepresented in social and management-driven sporting research (Sherry et al., 2023). Moreover, existing women's sporting research often focuses on participation, frames women as a homogeneous group, and is generally left to women and non-binary academics to produce this research (Sherry et al., 2023). Hence, there is a lack of male academics engaging in women's sporting management/sociology research. These findings highlight a need for male allyship to promote gender equality across the spectrum of women's sports, including within its research agendas.

Broadly, allyship sees a member of a dominant social group aligning themselves with a marginalised social group to move toward a system where power is equitable and shared (Radke et al., 2020). Specifically, male allyship refers to men actively supporting and advocating for gender equity, challenging gender biases and discrimination, and promoting inclusive and equitable practices in their personal and professional spheres, including sports. Male allyship within sporting research communities is critical in addressing the uneven representation of women's sporting scholarship, as men are generally the ones in leadership positions who set university school and faculty curricula and research agendas. However, there are some barriers to enacting allyship that need acknowledging and, in turn, the development of strategies to overcome.

Allyship does not always benefit the disadvantaged group it engages with (Jolly et al., 2021). Reasons for this are that allyship has been criticised as, at times, being shallow and performative without outcome (Radke et al., 2020). In effect, allyship – if performed incorrectly – can further disadvantage the intended group, elevating the social standing of the advantaged group enacting the advocacy (Teetzel, 2020). As a result of these challenges, men often do not know how to engage in allyship or are unsure if it is their place to act. This often results in inaction, leaving the advocacy to the marginalised group to perform (Symons et al., 2022). This, too, is the case within sport management/sociology research of women's sport. Therefore, this paper will advocate for increased attention to women's sporting research among male academics and offer solutions to some of the challenges that hold back male academics from researching women's sport.

To support these recommendations, I will draw on my experiences of empirically researching women Australian Rules footballers to highlight how I overcame my positionality and effectively enacted allyship through my research agenda. Critical learnings that enabled me to successfully research women's sport and allowed me to be an effective ally included having key women mentors to listen and learn from as I immersed myself among a gender and intersectionality community of practice research group. Moreover, it was key for me to have self-awareness and practice reflexivity regarding my positionality. Reflecting on the challenges and successes of my research will offer directions for future male sporting researchers to engage, promote and advocate for increased women's sporting research within their university school and faculty curricula and research agendas.

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Exercise may benefit those with endometriosis: The 'Exercise 4 Endo' project

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Endometriosis affects 1 in 9 women in Australia. Current medical and surgical management strategies for endometriosis are not always effective and often result in side effects, resulting in sub-optimal pain management. Exercise may exhibit benefits to those with endometriosis. However, previous research has provided mixed results about the impact of exercise.

This study explored the current exercise habits of those with endometriosis in Australia and New Zealand, including if they are engaging in exercise, what type(s) of exercise and what impact it has on their symptoms. A cross sectional online survey was administered via Qualtrics.

A total of 424 responses were received. Many people with endometriosis in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand reported to be exercising regularly of their own volition. Whilst some respondents reported not currently exercising due to the negative effects on their symptoms, many used exercise as a form of symptom management, or to benefit their ongoing physical and mental health.

Exercise may provide a promising avenue for non-surgical treatment of endometriosis, but further research is needed to explore appropriate exercise prescription to limit symptom exacerbation.

Research in women's leadership and sport: methodological challenges and opportunities.

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This presentation explores the research methodology which has been used in the study of the contribution of school sport to the development of women leaders. We will look at data collection options, the ethical and methodological challenges and why using combined methods is the best option when considering gender issues, previous school sport experiences, leadership trajectories and life experiences.

Research methods:

1. Qualitative survey – was used because of its ability to capture a large and varied selection of participants. Through surveying participants, a connection between previous sports experience and current leadership roles can be made. The engagement of participants occurred through snowball sampling in order to target participants identifying as women in leadership positions.
2. Case Study research through; a) participant produced drawing and b) semi-structured interview – was used because of the arts-based research method's potential to elicit deeper more emotional accounts when compared with more traditional qualitative approaches. This method was used to dive deep into the backgrounds, experiences and trajectories of women leaders which allowed for exploration of the contributing contextual and intersecting factors which led them to their roles.

Challenges:

Through this study several challenges were identified in the research methodology. Gender theories are relevant to this study and an interpretation of gender is required; however, it can be difficult to phrase questions based on gender identity because of strong emotional responses some participants have of gender understanding.

The participant produced drawing was selected for use because of its ability to elicit deeper, more emotional accounts, however one of the ethical challenges has been the psychological discomfort experienced by some participants because the method has elicited this deep response.

The reference to arts-based methods can instil fear in some participants with concern that their artistic ability will be judged. This needed to be addressed when recruiting participants and reassurance provided about the artwork being used merely to initiate a discussion.

Opportunities:

The use of an online qualitative survey allowed for easy distribution and allowed in the recruitment of participants for the case study interviews.

The participant produced drawing activity is an excellent method to establish a quick rapport with participants and discover critical connections and experiences that would not have been identified or elicited through a standard interview.

Festival23 – a Football for Good sport for development program conducted during the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup

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Background: Festival23 was a Football for Good (F4G) project aligned with the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. It was designed to produce a lasting social legacy of enhanced social capital, social inclusion, leadership, and resilience in Football for Good emerging women leaders across the globe. Football United, Common Goal and Creating Chances were the implementing organisations for the festival with the festival supported by a range of government and corporate partners <https://www.festival23.org/partners>

Festival Aims:

Objective 1: Raise the awareness and stimulate the debate about gender equity related topics by promoting the development of women's football, their participation in the sport as well as discussing gender-transformative approaches.

Objective 2: Create a collective ambition to advance key United Nations Global Goals: gender equity, climate action, youth employability, and diversity and inclusion.

Objective 3: Provide an opportunity for emerging local and global young leaders to strengthen their connections by sharing their knowledge with Football for Good experts.

Objective 4: Enhance intercultural learning among the participants by offering a safe setting to interact with peers.

Objective 5: Develop participants' interpersonal skills in order for them to take on leadership roles and SDG-related initiatives in their respective organizations and communities.

Festival participants, activities and feedback:

Festival23 welcomed 69 women aged 18-30 from organisations globally that use football for social and educational purposes. They came from over 45 different countries, the majority being from the Asia-Pacific region, including 13 from the Festival's host countries (Australia & New Zealand). In addition, eight managers from the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) were present for specific training to enable them to foster support of the delegates when they returned to their organisations post-Festival.

Football for Good Festivals have been held at FIFA World and Festival23 activities were centred around advancing four United Nations Global Goals: gender equity, climate action, employability & all abilities inclusion. The Young Leader Programme focused on empowering and building the skills of the 69 young women delegates and supporting them as emerging leaders in football. Opportunities for delegates to directly engage with youth in Australia included community sports days (gala days) in nine local communities across Sydney and a fair-play football tournament for members of the community who may not have had an opportunity to engage in the festivities surrounding the Women's World Cup. A major element of the program was a Football for Good Forum, a collaborative workshop over two days designed to inspire the young women delegates to imagine themselves as leaders in football and to exchange good practice. This brought together role models and gamechangers in the Football for Good movement through panels, inspirational talks, and workshops. Many participants felt that the social enterprise workshops generated the most tangible actions for them to apply within their home organisations, with several participants articulating specific projects in which they could use the skills they had learned.

Conclusion: The festival implementation was marked by a strong collaboration across organisations and the curriculum designed with attention to adult learning and sport for development pedagogy. Overall, feedback on the running of the festival was extremely positive with future festivals encouraged to adopt a similar capacity building curriculum and to improve the program by providing more space to reflect and relax and for formal networking among delegates.



The Impact of Female Naturalized Athletes on Chinese Women's Sports Strategies: The Case of Eileen Gu

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Naturalized athletes have become increasingly prominent in the international sporting arena, making significant impacts both in competitive terms and within geopolitical contexts. Understanding the diverse circumstances that lead athletes to choose to represent a nation other than their birth country is crucial.

This paper focuses on the phenomenon of naturalized athletes in the context of China (PRC). It investigates how the naturalization strategy, as the core of soft power development in sports, can positively impact sports diplomacy in the development of Chinese sports. Utilizing a case study of Winter Olympics champion Eileen Gu, this paper explores the intricate ways in which naturalized athletes influence China's Women's Sport strategy.

Through a analysis of how various media outlets covered Gu during the 2022 Winter Olympics, our findings draw attention to the role of naturalized athletes as relevant actors in states' cultural diplomatic efforts. Both international and Chinese media outlets have increased awareness of China through their coverage of Eileen Gu and have changed the traditional image of Chinese women in society and sport.

Aligning with other similar studies, our data also evidence how the media tend to portrait the neoliberal individual as the source of all their success, transforming them in sporting commercial brand ambassadors, which also helps their cultural diplomatic roles. This study sheds light on the complexities of the choices made by naturalized women athletes and their broader impact on diplomatic international relations.



Alternative media delivers engagement and connection for women's sports

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Shooting the Breeze is a podcast that focuses on women's basketball and women in basketball. Relying on storytelling rather than just reportage and avoiding the usual media trope of game and statistical based analysis.

The goal of the podcast is to provide a platform illuminating stories and providing a deeper narrative around the sport that helps elevate, inform and connect people.

The capability non-traditional media, such as podcasts, delivers, is rich narrative, depth of focus and specialisation. While focus and specialisation may lead to a smaller total audience, it also translates to a highly engaged audience by delivering the kind of content that audience is looking for. It also fills an unmet need in a media landscape where only 15% of media is attributed to women's sports. (1)

We believe women's sports are better supported by non-traditional media outlets because they can focus and delve deeper into their subject providing insights traditional media cannot. This approach drives engagement and engagement drives growth not only for the audience but also for people interested in learning about the sport.

By sharing the unique journey of Shooting The Breeze, from its formation and growth to engaging a community, hosting in person events, we demonstrate how it connects in transformative ways.

We believe non-traditional media represents a vital and attractive alternative to mainstream media sources for women's sports as a propellant for growth. As well as satisfying the unique needs of women's sports fans, in their desire to learn and engage more deeply and connect through community relationship building.



Providers Constructions of Gender in Children's Sporting Activities in Australia

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There has been an increasing focus on girls' and women's sport participation in recent years. The success of the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023 indicates a slow but certain shift in the public's perception of women's sport. However, the disparity between the support for men's versus women's sport as well as uneven levels of participation in sport among girls and boys indicate the vast gender inequalities still at play.

Using critical discourse analysis, this paper aims to shed light on the discursive construction of gender at grassroots level by investigating the discourse of twelve children's extracurricular providers from Sydney, Australia. This paper seeks to understand how the providers, themselves also the instructors or coaches, perceive gender among their participants.

Specifically, it investigated 1. how they discursively constructed the characteristics of girls in comparison to boys in relation to their specific activity; 2. how they discursively evaluated the performance and achievements of girls in comparison to boys in their activity; and 3. how they discussed any interplay and relationship between genders.

I establish that the negative evaluation of girls and positive evaluation of boys starts from a young age. Either the providers themselves evaluate girls negatively and boys positively, or discuss gendered behaviours and attitudes which point to wider society doing the same. This is not only salient in traditional 'male' sports, but also in gender neutral and female-orientated sports.

Also concerning is the discursive construction of these evaluations as objective and matter of fact.

This paper investigates the role extracurricular providers may play in influencing and sustaining girls' interest in sport and other extracurricular activities, and explores ways in which we can unravel this unconscious bias against girls

The 2024 Women's March Madness Game Changers: A Slam Dunk Towards Gender Equality, Fair Pay, and Beyond

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The 2024 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Playoff Basketball tournament took center stage, as one of the world's most popular events in sports. This U.S. based tournament, nicknamed March Madness, consists of 68 Division I University basketball teams that play in multiple knockout rounds that lead to the Final Four championship. While this past NCAA tournament became the most-watched women's college basketball game ever with over 24 million views, criticism still arose for gender equality.

Female athletes saw a significant increase in popularity during this tournament, where the name Caitlin Clark, became a worldwide household name overnight. While this women's competition completely took the world by storm, there was still criticism by some. Although this tournament was arguably more memorable than the men's playoff tournament, there were still significant discrepancies. I use the 2024 NCAA Basketball tournament as a case study for considering promises, shortcomings, and challenges involved in attempting to leverage equitable outcomes for women in professional sporting outlets. Looking at strategy, planning, data-driven decision-making, policy, sales, spectator appeal, marketing and media coverage, I adopt a critical framework approach through discourse on how this tournament can influence larger state and federal efforts to develop more equitable opportunities for girls and women in sport.

In 2019, the NCAA passed a policy allowing university student-athletes to receive compensation from sponsorship for their name, image, or likeness (NIL). Student athletes are now allowed to sign local and national endorsements deals that can provide additional financial revenue for a student on an athletic scholarship. Universities continue to profit from their athletic teams through ticket and jersey sales, advertisement sponsorship, and other sources of revenue. While some believe NIL is not warranted, I take the position that collegiate athletes should be allowed to continue obtaining sponsorship, just like professional athletes. There has been a significant gap in female athletes receiving NIL deals compared to male collegiate athletes. The wage gap then continues when female student-athletes enter their sport's professional league and still receive substantially less in their salary, a discrepancy that needs to be addressed.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits the discrimination on the basis of sex within the United States educational system. This federal law applies to all aspects of educational programs and activities that receive federal funding, including athletics. Title IX will be discussed in the context of NIL deals, spending on collegiate athletics and facilities, and fair pay for female athletes.

It can be difficult to put a price tag on the overall value of an athlete. Although female athletics are continuously in the limelight, there are still pitfalls when it comes to gender equality. The increase in discourse, viewership, and overall public support of women in sports can lead to a powerful advance for championing female athletes. This paper addresses the broad systemic and societal gender inequalities and a call for action for change.

Lifting the bar for women in powerlifting

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Women's participation in strength sports has grown significantly in the past decade (Brigden, Hehtmanek, and Forbis 2023), including in the Australian powerlifting context.

In 2013, 881 men and 302 women competed in a registered powerlifting competition in Australia (almost three times more men than women), while in 2023, 2981 men and 1884 women competed in a registered powerlifting competition in Australia (fewer than double the number of men compared to women).

Participation statistics indicate that the popularity of powerlifting as a sport has increased significantly across genders, and, interestingly, has grown faster amongst women. While gender parity is not yet in sight, the gap is closing. At the same time, strength sports in general and powerlifting in particular remain both male-dominated and associated with masculinity.

Drawing on interviews with 41 Australian women who powerlift and ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the gendered dynamics of powerlifting sport participation. I draw on empirical data to discuss barriers preventing women from entering the sport and/or continuing in the sport.

I also explore facilitators that enable women's participation, which is of particular interest given women's rapidly increasing participation in powerlifting.

Knowledge-making in Australian elite girls' football: capturing and optimising the performance of changing bodies

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In 2023, Australia co-hosted the biggest elite women's sporting event that the World has ever seen: the FIFA Women's World Cup. As sport's governing bodies desperately seek to 'capitalise on the growth opportunities' provided by the success of this event, institutional uncertainty pervades women's football in Australia.

My ethnographic research takes place within an elite girls' football program that suffers from organisational precarity and historical under-resourcing but still successfully produces national team athletes.

This ongoing research project pays careful attention to the relationships between athletes, coaches, sports scientists, and administrators to understand how knowledge about girls and women in football is made, captured, and shared.

By investigating this epistemic culture, I aim to analyse how actors in this field call upon scientific and biomedical knowledge to legitimise their work, and reveal latent beliefs about gender, athlete development and athletic performance. In this paper, I will present some emerging findings from this research and situate this analysis within the prominent discourses of change and progress that exist within women's sport both in Australia and globally.



The Digital Terrain: A Content Analysis of Twitter attitudes on Australian Women's Sport

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The Sport Nexus has been described as an institution that replicates the inequalities of society, where men are considered as first-class citizens. This notion has implications for how women are treated and viewed within the sport industry. The perception that sportswomen are inferior to their male counterparts has been emphasised and normalised through traditional media and has subsequently transcended into everyday dialogue in society.

Thorpe et al. (2017) highlights the transformative nature of the digital space, noting that social media has enabled sportswomen to offer their own commentary and alternative narrative of who they are, beyond the perspective of men. Increasingly, sport fans have followed suit, utilising platforms such as Twitter to voice their sentiments on women's sport, it has provided a space for fans to challenge dominant ideas of the inferiority of women (Ash et al., 2017; Sanderson & Gramlich, 2016). The purpose of the study was to explore fan attitudes on women's sport in an Australian context and offer an insight into how fans have perceived, valued, and engaged with women's sport within Twitter.

Methods

This study examined Twitter users' perceptions of women's sport across two time points of two Australian women's domestic leagues and one international team. Tweets related to the AFLW, WBBL and the Matildas were collected and analysed on the opening day of each respective season, or the opening match for the national team. The concepts of micro-aggression and micro-kindness were used to create a coding scheme to categorise negative and positive sentiments in two stages. Stage one involved categorising Tweets based on the presence of micro-aggression and micro-kindness, and stage two involved categorising tweets in relation to the sub-categories of micro-aggression (assumption of inferiority, sexual objectification, restrictive gender roles, and general dislike) and micro-kindness (acknowledgement, challenge, and excitement). Frequencies were calculated for each category across time points to assess changes in fan sentiments over time.

Results

Micro-aggression increased over time in tweets referring to the AFLW (8.3%), Matildas (4.1%), but decreased for the WBBL (0.9%). Moreover, micro-kindness increased over time with tweets referring to the Matildas (4.7%) and WBBL (1%). There was a decrease in micro-kindness tweets with the AFLW (19.6%).

Conclusion

The study highlights that Twitter is an ideological terrain where dominant ideas of the inferiority of female athletes may be reinforced or challenged. Although micro-aggression was present across all leagues and national team, the presence of micro-kindness demonstrated the ways in which sport fans' views on women's sport can differ from what is being presented in traditional media.

Coloniality or Commitment? FIFA's relationship to Indigeneity in the 2023 Women's World Cup and Beyond

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The 2023 Women's World Cup (hereafter 2023WWC) was notable for its use of Māori and First Nations' languages, symbols, and practices in the leadup to and duration of the tournament. From a logo and branding created in collaboration with Indigenous artists to the First Nations and Māori flags flying in every stadium to the karanga and Welcome to Country of the pre-game ceremonies, there were clear and conspicuous attempts to 'embrace' the Indigenous cultures of the host nations. Such efforts belied the contentious state of affairs for Indigenous peoples in Australia and Aotearoa.

The 2023 WWC co-hosts have long histories of racism, settler-colonial violence, Native land seizures, attempted eradication of Native populations, and assimilationist policies. The 2023 tournament also took place against the backdrop of Australia's 2023 referendum on the Voice to Parliament, the most significant campaign for First Nations' rights in the country since 1967, and at a time when Aotearoa New Zealand was gearing up for a general election whose outcome had the potential to impact moves towards models of co-governance and the push for greater Māori sovereignty.

This chapter therefore critically interrogates FIFA's use of Indigenous culture and practices at the 2023 FWWC asking whether the tournament is indicative of a new organizational commitment to greater equality and inclusion or, as Indigenous Football Australia put it, simply "empty symbolism."

The presentation explores the significance of FIFA's use of Indigeneity in the tournament, problematizes the assumed legacy of this use in the host countries, and posits as to whether FIFA will remain committed to Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples across future tournament sites. In the paper we also consider some of the challenges and possibilities of being non-Indigenous in the study of Indigenous issues. While the role and place of non-Indigenous people in Indigenous research spaces has been rightly contested across a range of disciplines, we offer that, by opening space for Indigenous voices, non-Indigenous researchers can play an important role in addressing the colonial foundations and structural racism embedded in settler institutions and societies.

Pacific Sports Women's Knowledge and Experiences of Menstruation

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Despite a growing body of research focused on women's experiences of menstruation in sport, most of this has been done by white women on white women and then applied to sportswomen from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Very rarely are the menstruation-related experiences of Black, Indigenous, and women of color considered, let alone the focus of such studies. In this presentation, I share findings from my research on Pacific sportswomen's experiences of menstruation.

Adopting a culturally responsive Masi methodology approach, I set out to understand how Pacific sports women navigate different knowledge (i.e., scientific, family, cultural, religious, and social media sources) about menstruation in their everyday lives.

The project involves a survey of over 200 sportswomen across the Pacific, and talanoa sessions (focus groups and interviews) with 21 Fijian sportswomen living in Fiji, and 18 Pasifika sportswomen in Aotearoa. This research highlights various stigmas and silences, but also how Pacific sportswomen navigate an array of challenges while menstruating, particularly discomfort and pain that coaches do not acknowledge.

For too long, sports science and medicine have been dominated by white, western ways of knowing. As a result, many Pasifika sportswomen's knowledge has been overlooked, and their health needs have been ignored. Thus, this research seeks to improve the support structures for Pacific sportswomen by expanding sports and health providers' understandings of culturally specific needs, knowledge, and values.

Effects of different phases of the menstrual cycle on balance and hand-eye motor coordination performance in female athletes

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Background: The menstrual cycle is a normal, yet complex physiological process experienced by females, with the onset of menarche signalling the maturation of the reproductive system. As a result of the menstrual cycle, many females experience various symptoms that can influence several aspects of health and well-being, including physiological and psychological attributes. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the volume and focus of research on women's health, particularly in areas related to reproductive health.

Most relevant to this project is the growing interest in the impact of menstrual cycle on athletic performance. Recent investigations have predominantly concentrated on physiological factors such as speed and endurance, alongside psychological well-being, including mood and confidence.

Aim: Although research studies have examined the relationship between the menstrual cycle and sports performance, the effects on balance and motor coordination have not been thoroughly investigated. Therefore, this research project aims to understand the effects of menstrual cycle phases on balance and motor coordination performance in female athletes.

Proposed Method: This project involved a comprehensive literature review followed by an experimental study. The experimental study will recruit voluntary participation from female athletes. Both normally menstruating athletes and athletes using hormonal contraceptives will be included in the study. The aim is to evaluate their balance and motor coordination performance during different phases of their menstrual cycle.

The study will conduct tests and collect data on static balance, dynamic balance, and eye-hand coordination during each phase of the menstrual cycle. Tests will be conducted over two menstrual cycles, with each cycle consisting of four phases. Additionally, a survey method will be applied to obtain perspectives from the athletes and their coaches regarding the effects of balance and eye-hand coordination during each of the four phases of the menstrual cycle.

Study implications: This research is expected to provide significant benefits to sports science researchers by addressing the current knowledge gap and serving as a foundation for further research and exploration in this or related fields. The anticipated outcomes of this project will also benefit individuals outside the academic domain, including female athletes, coaches, trainers, sports medicine practitioners, and governmental sports bodies such as Sport Australia.

By understanding the impact of menstrual cycle phases on balance and motor coordination performance, female athletes and their coaches can optimize and make informed decisions regarding training and competition strategies, potentially leading to improved performance. Sports medicine practitioners will gain a deeper understanding of how the menstrual cycle affects female athletes' performance, enabling them to provide more informed advice, effective treatment, and care.

On a broader level, more research on the menstrual cycle is essential to promote and support female athletes, which is crucial for encouraging greater female participation at all levels. Notably, Sport Australia's 2030 plan also aims to encourage physical activity among women and girls which highlights that the growth of women's sports has transformed societal perceptions, emphasizing the need for ongoing research and support.

Co-designing Female Talent Development Research in Olympic Pathways with Australian Sailing

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Sailing is one of the most complex sports in the world, as well as one of Australia's most successful Olympic disciplines. Despite its success, mostly in male categories, there is a push towards improving the retention, development, and performance of female sailors.

This project itself aims to identify the key challenges and enablers in female Olympic sailing development pathways, building towards targeted interventions and support strategies through a series of research studies. This abstract captures lessons and experiences of co-designing a research program from the perspective of a PhD candidate embedded full-time within the Australian Sailing Team.

The limited empirical knowledge that exists in women's Olympic sailing encourages this program to engage more intrinsically with key parties within the performance sailing community. The panel for the present PhD consists of a transdisciplinary group of university-based research supervisors, as well as coaches, performance support staff and team leaders; their knowledge is employed throughout a three-phase, mixed-methods research plan.

In Phase 1, exploratory perceptions of barriers and enablers on the pathway will be identified through a qualitative athlete interview and a survey for coaches, staff, and parents. In Phase 2, an expert cohort will be established for a Delphi study, which will identify key priority areas and help design an actionable intervention. Phase 3 aims to optimise the female sailing development pathways from a range of possible angles, from adapting policy to facilitating learning of onboard behaviour.

Throughout this research plan, we recognise the breadth of sailing athlete development experience leading up to the senior elite level, and discuss how we hope to engage athletes and parties across the wider Australian sailing system. This project aims to support female sailors' development through targeted changes in an evolving Olympic sport, and provide insights for researchers fully immersed in high-performance sporting environments.



Arezo – Football is Our Identity, A Football for Good program for Afghan Women

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Adapting programs to embrace refugees and new migrants is essential for community integration. The first five years are crucial for refugees' integration into Australian society, fostering a sense of belonging and future-building. Equitable opportunities in football can challenge discriminatory norms and promote gender empowerment. This project addressed gaps to ensure fair opportunities, pathways to education and employment, and promoted wellbeing and inclusion for Afghan-Australian women.

Background:

Arezo, meaning "hope" in Dari, is a values-based football program aimed at enhancing resilience, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging for Afghan girls and women in Australia. Developed with Afghan-Australian women and funded by Migration Council Australia, the project focused on civic participation, education, training, employment, and health and wellbeing through football. The program has three components:

1. **Skill Development:** Delivered in schools and communities, this part focuses on football skills and social-emotional learning, emphasising coping mechanisms, self-awareness, and connections.
2. **Leadership Empowerment:** A one-week intensive leadership programme designed for emerging Afghan female leaders nationwide. It focuses on self-awareness, growth mindset, networking, mentoring, and applying human-centred design-thinking to inspire action and promote sport and wellbeing.
3. **Community Coordination:** Led by an Afghan woman coach with extensive community experience, along with qualified Dari-speaking female coaches and role models.

Arezo Aims:

1. **Coach Training:** Recruit and train local community coaches to deliver regular values-based sports sessions, promoting positive development and community engagement.
2. **Tournaments:** Organise Cross-Cultural Football Fair Play Tournaments for Refugee Week 2022 and International Women's Day 2023, engaging 150 participants to promote inclusivity, cultural exchange, and gender equality.
3. **Weekly Sessions:** Facilitate weekly football sessions for Afghan-Australian women and girls and their families to enhance resilience, belonging, and self-confidence.
4. **Community Partnerships:** Establish partnerships to support project activities, provide referrals, translation, mental health, and settlement support.
5. **Leadership Development:** Offer a sophisticated learning experience for emerging female leaders, including access to expert facilitators and professionals, skill development, and pathways to further education and employment.

Arezo Participants, Activities, and Feedback:

The Arezo program included weekly football sessions and a leadership program, empowering young Afghan women through sports and leadership development. Over 100 participants engaged in organised football for the first time, and 35 emerging coach leaders received training. The Leadership Program provided 20 emerging female leaders from Afghan-Australian and refugee communities with workshops, networking opportunities, and pathways to education and employment, reinforcing social inclusion and community empowerment through sport. Collaborating with diverse stakeholders, Creating Chances implemented impactful youth development programs. Participants reported significant learning in prosocial behaviour, teamwork, sportsmanship, and football skills. Feedback indicated 26.8% of participants highlighted learning prosocial behaviour, 23.9% teamwork and sportsmanship, and another 23.9% improving sports skills. Although there was a small sample size there was a 7.2% increase in self-efficacy. The initiatives culminated in two celebratory tournaments at Wanderers Park, engaging over 130 participants from diverse backgrounds including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Syria, China, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Coach education sessions, including Miniroos and Game Training Certificate courses, benefited 35 participants, predominantly young men and women from the Afghan community in Western Sydney.

Conclusion:

The Arezo project fostered robust collaborations among stakeholders across various sectors. Participant and school feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with additional program requests. The coaching initiative empowered community coaches and aspiring leaders, while the leadership program facilitated personal growth and community support reflection.

An investigation into the lived experiences of international women football players: Ethical considerations

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The pursuit of playing football in another country for remuneration and other non-financial benefits is commonly referred to as “Sport Labor Migration” (SLM). With the professionalization and globalization of women’s football in recent years, the number of players leaving their home country to play in another country has increased significantly (FIFA, 2024).

As an international women’s football player, I now live and play football in Australia. Australia is one of five countries (Australia, Iceland, Israel, Italy, USA) where I have lived and played football. I have lived and played football in six different states in the USA (Colorado, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia). International women football players have been represented on all of those teams. From my lived experience playing football in multiple countries and on multiple teams, I have observed a lack of resources, knowledge, and, at times, willingness to effectively integrate international women football players into those individual teams, clubs and the host culture. To address these outstanding issues, I am investigating and documenting the lived experiences of international women football players. Such evidence is required to drive policy change for players, clubs, and institutions.

My presentation will focus on how the project takes an ethnographic approach—including autoethnography and ethnography—and share my reflections on the ethical considerations I am navigating to complete this project. In this project, and as an insider-outsider, managing conflict of interest was considered. By critically evaluating the ethical implications of this project, steps were taken to mitigate potential conflict of interest when conducting semi-structured interviews and the analysis of conversations in a pre-existing and ongoing WhatsApp Group Chat called “The Player’s Network” (TPN).

In my presentation, I will detail the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with international women’s football players and interactions with international women’s football players who have joined TPN. I will discuss the importance of communicating with athletes in spaces they feel comfortable. During data collection, I maintained an awareness of my positionality to ensure the safety and protection of women football players. With reflexive practice, I considered the well-being of the women football players. Such an approach informed the ethical considerations in this study.

This project was approved by Swinburne’s Ethics Committee to ensure, as far as possible, the privacy rights and welfare of the women football players who participated in the project.

The academic literature on SLM is male dominated (for review see: Magee & Sugden, 2002; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Maguire & Stead, 1998). There is an under-representation in the academic literature on women football players who migrate legally to another country to play football (Skogvang, 2019; Botelho & Agergaard, 2011). This project will investigate the lived experiences of international women’s football players when in another country. The project aims are to: 1) identify, 2) understand, and 3) resolve the challenges that international women football players face pre-arrival, during arrival, and post-arrival in another country. Such knowledge will be important to optimize the integration of international women football players into the team, club, and country.

“Ice Parents”, Parenthood as Talent Agent and Figure Skating as Shadow Education —A New Option of Training Young Figure Skaters in China

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Figure skating, once a state-oriented sport in China, is turning to be dominated by the young figure skaters' families at present. In the past decades, the figure skating talent training system in China was established by the state sport administrations and young figure skaters who participated in the training just needed to paid little for their training, and the figure skaters were expected to win medals in those significant sport events as honors of the nation. This talent training system, however, is decaying since the 21st century for some reasons. Considering their own school education requirement, individual schedule and personal development, young children, especially girls who are interested in figure skating tend to join the market-oriented, commercialized skating clubs for training today, even though it is much more expensive. Consequently, those commercialized skating clubs are booming in the recent years and the “ice parents”, most of which are mothers, are so generous to pay for the expensive sport and accompany their children to figure skating training even in the circumstance of school work pressure and uncertain prospect. Based on the paradox and controversial facts of the young figure skaters and their parents, I hereby raise four questions and try to answer them in my research:

- First, why are the “ice parents” so generous to pay for their children’s figure skating training and accompany them facing the school work pressure and uncertain prospect?
- Second, how do the “ice parents” deal with the difficulties in the process of figure skating training, including financial problem, pressures from school, as well as the relationship with their coaches and clubs?
- Third, do the participants of figure skating, both young skaters and their parents, have any gender bias in the figure skating career?
- Fourth, what prospect could be expected to the young figure skaters paid by their family in China, comparing to the figure skaters growing up in the state-oriented training system in the past?

Using the methods of ethnography, depth interviews and participant and non-participant observations, I have investigated the current situation of commercialized figure skating training system in China and drawn conclusions with the framework of “parenthood as talent agent” as following:

Initially, young figure skaters’ parents are motivated by their children’s interest in this sport to accompany them and pay for their training. As time of commitment passing by, most families will quit due to the pressure of school education, stagnated sport performance and conflicts with their coaches and clubs. Even though almost all the figure skating clubs are market-oriented and commercialized in China, the faults and flaws inherited from the state-oriented training system still prevails in the current commercialized training system as a “path dependence”, which has been a major controversial topic between the figure skating families and the coaches. It can be considered as a gap left by the transition from the state-oriented training system to the commercialized one. Parents, especially mothers thus have to perform as their children’s talent agent to deal with the problems of finance, school education pressure and relationship with coaches in the figure skating career and fill the gap mentioned above.

Figure skating is a feminist sport. Most young skaters are girls and mothers take quite a large proportion of “ice parents”. The gender bias definitely exists in the figure skating communities. Girls are much more likely to give up this sport due to the rapid physical development in their adolescence, and their mental development consciousness to sport might be more susceptible. Additionally, accompanying children to figure skating training affects the mothers life and career on both sides. On one hand, the time consuming sport training compels mothers to reduce their work load and even quit from job market; one the other hand, figure skating provides some new possibility to the mothers’ job options. Finally, the prospect of commercialized figure skating training in China is still uncertain right now. However, the commitment of “ice parents” should be respected and valued because they are the real investors, financial backers and sponsors in the current training system. Figure skating is no longer to be a state-oriented sport to honor the nation simply, taking it as shadow education as what the “ice parents” do is likely to be a practical way to solve the existing problems.

Gender-based violence in sport: Considerations for keeping safe in the digital realm.

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Social media has provided an important space for high profile sports women to engage in self-representation, challenge hegemonic masculinity and bypass the gatekeepers of traditional media outlets. This self-representation is particularly important for women from marginalised groups who may be sparsely reported on in mainstream media.

Alongside the benefits of engaging in virtual worlds, the presence of violence in these spaces is now widely accepted as part of the fabric of online social commentary. While anyone engaging with an online audience has the potential to experience abuse, women and girls are more often the targets or recipients of such violence.

This presentation will frame the topic of online violence more broadly and consider online gender-based violence and its impact on recipients of such violence.

This presentation will provide insight into the literature surrounding the experiences of high-profile women in sports negotiating online spaces and considers the issue of staying safe online. In doing so, we highlight the need for greater protection and regulation of online environments in order to support those who use them.

Shaping the Future of Australian Women's Football: Data-Driven Strategies for Matildas' Talent Identification

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Women's football in Australia stands at a pivotal moment, as revealed by insights from the 2020 Women's Performance Gap Report and underscored by challenges exposed during the first quarter of 2024 leading up to the April Mexico Friendly, where key injuries highlighted the urgent need to strengthen talent within the Liberty A-League. This presentation responds to these imperatives with a comprehensive statistical analysis aimed at expanding the Matildas' player pool and elevating the quality of Australian women's football.

Our analysis leverages extensive play-by-play data from the A-League and employs advanced quantitative methods to evaluate player performance metrics, tactical adaptability, and positional versatility across the recent Olympic Cycle. Through detailed statistical comparisons and sophisticated modelling techniques, our goal is to identify standout and emerging players with the potential to contribute significantly to the Matildas' roster.

Furthermore, our research integrates insights from Football Australia's report, updating metrics to align with the evolving landscape of women's football. By aligning our talent identification strategies with the report's developmental objectives, we aim to address systemic performance gaps and enhance the individual potential of identified players.

The prominence of Australian women footballers in international leagues underscores their ambitions and abilities. Many of these athletes launched their careers in the Liberty A-League before excelling in prestigious competitions like the FA Women's Super League and the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL). Success stories such as Claire Hunt and Courtney Vine highlight the adaptability and performance of A-League talents, demonstrating their capability to compete at the highest levels. Our research aims to build upon these achievements, emphasising the potential of A-League players to elevate Australian women's football on a global scale.

In addition, this presentation introduces a publicly accessible dashboard enabling stakeholders—including fans, analysts, and coaches—to interactively analyse and compare player data. This innovative tool empowers the broader community to engage with research findings, providing insights into the talent landscape of the Liberty A-League and potentially reshaping how players are scouted and considered for higher-level opportunities.

In conclusion, our presentation advocates for a proactive approach to talent identification within the A-League, positioning it as a critical platform for nurturing future Matildas. By harnessing data-driven insights and fostering public engagement through the interactive dashboard, we aim to raise awareness of deserving players who may have been overlooked by traditional scouting methods, ultimately transforming how talent is identified and developed in Australian women's football.



Why are Women So Underrepresented in the Field of Sports Economics?

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There is an economic dimension to many aspects of women's sport, ranging across attendance and participation, earnings and performance, competitive balance in leagues, discrimination and inequality, infrastructure, sponsorships, and media coverage. And yet when it comes to sports economics research, women are woefully unrepresented.

Concomitantly, almost no research has explored why that is the case. This paper does not provide comprehensive answer, but does seek to make a start by proffering some explanations for this sad state of affairs.

One cluster of explanations is parasitic on reasons offered for the parlous representation of women's issues in economics more generally. The 'base' argument here is that the gender imbalance in the economics profession is reflected in sports economics, which in turn skews research in favour of sports that male economists find interesting – viz. male-dominated sports.

Two sub-explanations of the gender imbalance premiss are: first, that the androcentric nature of the theoretic and methodological nostrums of the dominant paradigm used in sports economics discourage female scholars from entering the field; second, the 'toxic' disciplinary culture of the economics profession in general is discouraging to women.

Another cluster of explanations is specific to sports economics itself. The 'base' argument here is that economists, both male and female, are less inclined to research women's sport because the incentive structure in the subfield of sports economics tends to 'reward' the study of male-dominated sports.

Two sub-explanations arise here: first, male-dominated sports have greater social valence, which in turn influences perceptions of what would or should be acceptable for publication; second, closely related, male-dominated sports spend and generate substantially more money than women's sports, which not only adds to the former's perceived 'importance', but also entails monetary spillovers into 'applied' academic research.

These explanations need not be thought of as rivals. It entirely possible that these explanations complement each other, contributing to the sought-after 'comprehensive' explanation. Further research into these explanations, and how they might be related, is important if economists are to address and redress the underrepresentation of women in the field of sports economics.



Investigating Women's Sports in Western Sydney: How can organizations, facilities and policies facilitate inclusion and increase participation

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Despite recent wins, women and girls continue to be underrepresented in sport, recreation, and physical activity, both on and off the field (Sherry & Rowe, 2020). Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQ+, and girls and women with a disability confront further disadvantages in terms of both access to and discrimination in sport and physical activity (Maxwell & Stronach, 2020).

With this in mind, this paper presents the preliminary results of a collaborative project to map and better understand sporting opportunities for women and girls in Western Sydney. Our specific focus is Western Sydney's Blacktown, the largest local government area (LGA) in NSW, home to an estimated 403,000 residents with a projected population of 612,000 by 2041. In the project, an interdisciplinary team from Western Sydney University worked with the Blacktown City Council to first 'map' current sporting 'assets,' including spaces, facilities, and organisational knowledge and capacity.

The project considers the quantity, range, and accessibility of sporting spaces in Blacktown as well as the history and symbolic practices that shape access to and participation in these spaces. To better understand how these spaces are understood, experienced, and governed we undertook interviews with key stakeholders in the region and then conducted focus groups with members of the Blacktown community. Using thematic analysis, discuss the intersectional disadvantages face by women and girls within the community and consider how key stakeholders might better meet the diverse needs of both current and future participants.

Our hope is to provide important insights into current experiences of, and future trends related to, the spatial and facility use and needs of Blacktown to help guide the development of council strategies moving forward. Our hope is that the project is of more general interest for scholars and practitioners seeking to provide safer, more inclusive, and more equitable spaces for women and girls to be able to participate in sport and physical activity.



Transformative impact of Women Leadership: Sport Coaching to Thriving Communities

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Sport is an enabler of human thriving. Sport can bring diverse groups together, and thereby help reduce prejudice, break down barriers, and provide impetus for broader positive change in society. Yet, inequalities and discrimination operate and perpetuate in sport just like in any other profession.

As one example, the drop-off rate of women from sport participation as players to roles and positions of sport leadership in Australia is significant and worsening.

Women are vastly under-represented in roles of coaching and officiating in sport (Sambol, Dadswell and Hanlon, 2024). This limits the potential of Australian sport to be a transformative force in society and constrains its impact as an economic engine (Australian Sports Commission, 2023, Commonwealth of Australia, 2024).

The aim of this research is to investigate the concept of Shared Coaching or Co-Coaching as a systemic lever to help close the gender gap in Australian sport leadership. In contrast to the dominant head - coaching paradigm that perpetuates gender gap by instilling stereotypes and preventing opportunity and space for women, a co-coaching model may help build a base of experience and confidence for women (agency) and facilitate overall thriving.

This project examines this concept through qualitative research and in-depth interviewing with diverse stakeholders in five sports - tennis, soccer, football (AFL), cricket, and swimming. We will also draw on literature in other professions beyond sport - e.g. co-CEOs

Twelve-month outcomes of a community-based, father-daughter physical activity program delivered by trained facilitators.

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Background: Dads and Daughters Exercising and Empowered (DADEE) is a world's first program targeting fathers/father-figures as agents of change to improve their daughters' physical activity and well-being. Previous randomised controlled efficacy and effectiveness trials of DADEE demonstrated meaningful improvements in a range of holistic outcomes for both fathers and daughters in the short-term.

This study aims to assess the long-term impact (12-months) of the program when delivered in the community by local trained facilitators.

Methods: Fathers/father-figures and their primary school aged daughters were recruited from Newcastle, Australia into a single-arm, non-randomised, pre-post study with assessments at baseline, 10-weeks (post-intervention) and 12-months. The 9-session program included weekly 90-min educational and practical sessions, plus home-based tasks. The primary outcome was fathers' and daughters' days per week meeting national physical activity recommendations. Secondary outcomes included physical activity, screen time, self-esteem, father-daughter relationship, social-emotional well-being, parenting measures, and process outcomes (including recruitment, attendance, retention and program acceptability).

Results: Twelve DADEE programs were delivered between 2017-2019 with 257 fathers (mean age: 40.0 ± 9.2 years) and 285 daughters (mean age 7.7 ± 1.9 years). Mixed effects regression models revealed significant intervention effects for the primary outcome, with fathers significantly increasing the number of days/week meeting physical activity recommendations by 27% at 10-weeks ($p < 0.001$) and by 19% at 12-months ($p < 0.001$) compared with baseline. Likewise, for daughters there was a significant increase by 25% at 10-weeks ($p < 0.001$) and by 14% at 12-months ($p = 0.02$) when compared to baseline. For fathers, there were also significant intervention effects in MVPA, co-physical activity, screen time, parenting practices and the father-daughter relationship, while for daughters there were significant intervention effects for screen time, social-emotional well-being, and self-esteem at the end of the program. Apart from screen time for both fathers and daughters, all significant effects were maintained at 12-months follow-up. Furthermore, the process outcomes for recruitment capability, attendance, retention and satisfaction levels remained high.

Conclusions: Findings provide support for a sustained effect of the program while delivered in a community setting. Further investigation is required to identify the most efficient implementation systems, processes and contextual factors to deliver the program at scale.

Exploring Eating Behaviour and Female Athlete Triad among Female Adolescent Athletes in Indonesian Youth Governmental Training Centers

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Background: With the increasing participation of females in sport competitions, female athletes are faced with health issues including female athlete triad (FAT) as a results of prolonged poor dietary intakes and eating behavior. Indeed, poor dietary intakes have been consistently reported among this population, including adolescent athletes. In addition, adolescence is a crucial period where negative eating behavior often arises.

Objectives: To investigate the prevalences of FAT, body dissatisfaction (BD), and presence of eating disorder (ED) as well as their correlations with body composition, and dietary intakes among female adolescent athletes in Indonesian Youth Governmental Training Centers.

Methods: The cross-sectional study involved all postmenarcheal female athletes or those aged at least 15 years old residing in Indonesian youth governmental training centers including PPLP Jawa Barat, PPLP Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, PPLP Nusa Tenggara Barat, and PPLP Sulawesi Selatan. A Bioimpedance Analysis (BIA) was used to collect body weight (BW), percentage of body fat (BF) and skeletal muscle (SM). Dietary intake was measured using 24-hour food recall. BD, ED, and risk of FAT were assessed using 34-item Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ), Eating Disorder Diagnostic Scale (EDDS), and Low Energy Availability in Females Questionnaire (LEAF-Q). Correlations were appropriately analyzed using either Spearman's rank correlation or chi-square test.

Results: Among 126 athletes (mean age 15.4 years old), 43.7%, 73.8%, and 53.2% was reported to experience BD, various types of ED, and risk of FAT, respectively. Averagely, daily carbohydrate intake was 4.9 gr/kg BW with low intake (<5 gr/kg BW/day) observed in 61.9% of athletes. Although overall athletes consumed adequate amount of protein (1.3 gr/kg BW/day), 54.0% of athlete consumed less than 1.2 gr/kg BW daily. Spearman's rank test reported that higher degree of body dissatisfaction was significantly correlated with higher body weight ($r= 0.46$) and percentage of body fat ($r= 0.43$) yet lower percentage of muscle mass ($r= -0.25$) and carbohydrate intake ($r= -0.24$, $p<0.05$ all). Presence of eating disorders was correlated with body dissatisfaction ($p=0.00$). However, no correlation was observed between risk of FAT and any measured variable.

Conclusions: BD, ED, and risk of FAT were prevalent among female adolescent athletes in Indonesian governmental training centers. Athletes with BD weighed heavier with higher percentage of BF while consumed less amount of carbohydrate.

The Bleeding Edge of Women's Performance Enhancement?: Examining Strength Athletes' Engagement with Menstrual Cycle-Based Training using Actor-Network Theory

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Over the last five years, academic and sporting interest in the relationship between the menstrual cycle and athletic performance has gained considerable momentum. In opposition to its historical positioning as an impairment to athleticism, the menstrual cycle is now being framed—somewhat contentiously—as a source of performance enhancement for women athletes.

Some scholars suggest that sportswomen can improve their performances by altering their training in line with the hormonal fluctuations of the menstrual cycle, while other researchers find minimal differentiation in athletic capacity across its phases. While both perspectives have proliferated on social media and in sporting spaces, with fitness influencers, prominent coaches, and academics arguing their stances, it stands to question whether and how this contradictory knowledge landscape is shaping women athletes' training practices.

This presentation shares findings from a larger study exploring the gendered knowledge landscape of women Olympic Weightlifters at two gyms in Aotearoa New Zealand. Engaging a feminist reading of Actor Network Theory, this presentation maps the different forms of knowledge affecting sportswomen's experiences and understandings of menstruation in sport, relaying the content, sources, and perceived trustworthiness of these narratives about menstruation and athleticism.

This paper outlines these athletes' positions in the 'debate,' demonstrates key gaps in research and communication between academics and athletes, and suggests the kinds of menstruation/athleticism messaging that women athletes are in search of, regardless of wider academic arguments.



Understanding how primary violence prevention can be embedded within a Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) degree program of study

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Background: The influence and visibility of public universities and their influence over 1.4 million students and 300 staff means they are well-positioned to promote and deliver sexual harm prevention initiatives. Tied to this influence, universities have acute responsibilities for promoting and fostering safe study, work, social and living environments. The last Federal Budget included funding for an Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education, aimed at filling gaps in the regulatory architecture requiring universities to take whole-of-organisation approaches to preventing gender-based violence, while acknowledging "teaching staff should be supported to build their own capacity and the capacity of others to promote gender equality, respect, diversity and inclusion in how, and what, they teach and research." (Department of Education, 2024, p.11). It is against this backdrop and a decade independent reporting problematising universities as sites where sexual harms are perpetuated and prevalence remains alarmingly high, that we position our discussion on how primary violence prevention can be meaningfully embedded within and across degree programs of study.

Aim: Understand how partnership pedagogy can be drawn on to embed primary violence prevention authentically and practically as part of a first-year sport management unit of study (The World of Sport Business) that forms part of the Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) degree program.

Proposed Method: Pre- and post-surveys on students' understanding of sexual harm, reflective journals, post-project narrative reflective assessment, and within-unit evaluative systems. Follow-on initiatives from this intervention included an annual presentation within units by the RR (Respectful Relationships) team. The RR team's presentation to the School of Business faculty on disclosure response together with the School of Business Gender Equity and Diversity Working Party.

Study implications: The unit coordinator of the World of Sport Business (Michelle O'Shea) and the Respectful Relationships team (Stephen Zissermann) partnered to develop a work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunity for undergraduate students completing the Bachelor of Business (Sport Management).

The WIL opportunity was a 120-hour placement, with four students completing the initiative for 10 weeks. The first component of the project involved engagement with the socio-ecological model considering the multiple components that interact to create the conditions for gender-based violence and sexual harm. To support student learning at the preliminary stage, the Unit Coordinator and members of the Respectful Relationships team met with students weekly via Zoom.

A guest speaker from Our Watch's Equality and Respect in Sport team also presented, and students conducted mini-research projects with community athletes (a third stakeholder from the University Sport Team and graduate of the Sport Management program (Mr Brendan Hoey) provided access to community athletes and student supervision). Students further unpacked case studies addressing prevention, response, and intersectionality in the sports management context. Gender pay equity within the World Surf League and the inclusion of transgender athletes were areas of focus. Finally, students workshopped, developed, and pitched curriculum artifacts for inclusion in a first and third-year unit for the Bachelor of Business (Sports Management) degree.

Subsequently, Sport Management student contributions have been embedded through the first-year World of Sports Business unit assessment and allied learning resources where students are required to respond to a gender equity issue involving the treatment of women sport journalists. The symposium presentation explores the challenges and opportunities tied to the curriculum intervention. Relatedly, we consider how the approach can be strengthened and modified within and across undergraduate sport management programs of study.

Beyond the Field: Exploring the Inspirational Effects of the 2023 Women's FIFA World Cup on Social Perceptions in Women's Football

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The social and inspirational effects of major sporting events have attracted significant interest, particularly in regards to women's sports. This study explores the transformative influence of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup on junior football players, and uncovers significant shifts in attitudes, particularly regarding the abilities of female athletes. A survey was conducted involving parents of junior community football players which gathered more than 400 responses.

A free-response question within the survey asked participants about the potential impact the Women's World Cup had on their children. A thematic analysis identified twenty-nine preliminary codes, fifteen categories, and ten overarching themes. Equity, social connections, inspiration, and excitement emerged as themes that resonated with both female and male junior players.

While the tournament fostered aspirations among female players, it also prompted significant attitudinal changes among their male counterparts. There were positive shifts in male perceptions about female players, particularly in terms of respect for and awareness of their abilities as competitive footballers. Equity was found to be a significant social implication, with participants from both genders envisioning the football field as a level playing field for all.

These findings are encouraging, underscoring the universal appeal of the sport and its potential to inspire positive social change. The study makes a significant contribution to the continued development of women's football by identifying the inspirational effects and cultural shifts generated by the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

The results have implications not only for grassroots football but also for academics, sports administrators, and marketers. Additionally, this study shows the role the Women's World Cup has on advancing Sustainable Development Goal #5, which champions gender equality.

Go Girls Storytelling: Evaluation of a physical and mental wellbeing program for 9-11 year old girls

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This study evaluated self-reported girlhood experiences of a physical and mental wellbeing programme delivered to 9–11-year-old girls in the school environment.

The Go Girls programme included five sessions covering gymnastics, football, mental health, and nutrition. A participatory approach was used, collecting qualitative reflections from students immediately after each session.

Integration into the curriculum provided quality experiences and varied learning outcomes in skills, activities, knowledge, and ability. Consecutive weekly sessions acted as 'multipliers', accelerating positive changes. Positive coach/participant relationships were evident. The most popular activities were games involving jumping, balancing, and ball control. Pairing these skills in a learning game improved knowledge acquisition.

A significant finding was that the girls' belief in their capabilities was rarely reflected on, indicating a need for session design that builds self-confidence. Non-verbal expressions, such as drawings, suggested a sense of belonging, while verbal feedback highlighted negative experiences with boys present during a football session.

This research highlights the potential of a girl-friendly programme to address challenges related to socially constructed 'territorialisation' of space in primary schools. The findings have implications for educators, sport providers, and policymakers aiming to improve personal development outcomes, particularly in self-confidence and emotional expression, and in providing equitable sports experiences.

NRLW Fan Engagement Report: The Launch

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The National Rugby League Women's competition (NRLW) was established in 2018 as a pathway for elite female rugby league players in Australia. Since its inception, the NRLW has grown rapidly in popularity and participation, with more teams and players joining the competition each year. As the NRLW continues to gain traction, it is important to understand the experiences of those involved in and around the competition, particularly the experiences of fans attending live games. This paper aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of NRLW fans, examining how they perceive the value of the sport and what their experiences have been attending live games. By examining the lived experiences of NRLW fans, we hope to shed light on the broader social and cultural significance of women's rugby league and contribute to ongoing efforts to promote and expand the NRLW competition. Given the ongoing challenges faced by women's sports in terms of media coverage, funding, and visibility, understanding fan experiences and perceptions can play an important role in promoting greater support and investment for women's sports more broadly.

The sport of Rugby League has been conventionally viewed as a representation of hegemonic masculinity in the Australian context. The establishment of a national women's competition was seen as a potential avenue for challenging the entrenched gender norms within the sport. However, it is noteworthy that the marketing strategy adopted by the National Rugby League Women's (NRLW) competition differs substantially from that of other national competitions such as netball, which emphasizes the values of friendship and a family-friendly image of the sport. In contrast, the NRLW's marketing approach seems to emulate that of the men's competition, with a focus on physicality and masculinity. This strategy suggests that the NRL is applying a consistent approach to the marketing of its men's and women's competitions, which may have broader implications for the gendered culture of the sport.

Drawing on sociological theories of fan culture we surveyed 400 sports fans and conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 NRLW fans to understand their motivations for attending games, their perceptions of the quality of play, and their experiences of fan culture within the NRLW community. Our findings suggest that whilst the NRLW was only established in 2018 and is still in its early stages, fans view the competition as an important step forward for women's rugby league and see it as a valuable addition to the overall NRL brand. However, fans expressed concerns about the limited media coverage and visibility of the competition, which they feel limits its potential growth and impact. In terms of live attendance, fans report positive experiences overall, with many highlighting the sense of community they feel within the NRLW fan base. However, fans also noted challenges related to access and inclusion, particularly in terms of the limited availability of NRLW games and the lack of family-friendly facilities at some venues. Overall, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse around women's sport and fan culture, by providing insights into the experiences and perceptions of fans of a rapidly growing women's sporting competition.

Understanding Motivations and Online Engagement for Women's Football Fan Loyalty: Comparing Australia and Germany

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Introduction. There has been a groundswell of growing interest in and public support for women's professional sport globally, with a need for improved understanding of the drivers of loyalty outcomes for professional women's football (soccer). Despite this growing interest, women's professional football suffers low attendance numbers compared to men's football in Australia (one-sixth as many per game) and Germany (one-fifteenth as many per game), which are the focal countries for this study. Two constructs of interest are motivations and online engagement (i.e. COBRAs). To this end, based on the S-O-R paradigm and uses and gratifications theory (UGT), we posit a conceptual model of fan motivations driving COBRAs (consumers' online-related brand activities), which in turn drive commitment and behavioural loyalty. We report the preliminary results of a comparison of Australian and German women's football fans.

Literature. Motivation is an activated state within a person that drives, urges, wishes or desires the individual towards goal-directed behaviours. COBRAs reflect a continuum from high to low online brand-related activity, including consuming (e.g. reading), contributing (e.g. liking, sharing) and creating (e.g. blogs, videos) behaviours. In our S-O-R model, motivation (stimulus) drives fans' COBRAs (organism) and in turn leads to fan loyalty (response). Motivation is a driver of consumer behaviour, whilst COBRAs reflect fans' information-processing (cognitive state) through their need to stay informed about their team and league updates and related fan community social bonding and engagement capture the (affective) emotional state. Following other S-O-R studies, the response is fan loyalty – both attitudinal (commitment) and behavioural types.

Methodology. We used two online studies that featured convenience samples of 120 Australian A-League Women fans (study 1) and 122 German Frauen-Bundesliga fans (study 2). Measures were drawn from the literature. Seven motivation dimensions were modelled as reflective-formative hierarchical construct. COBRAs tapped the frequency in engaging in a variety of online engagement behaviours.

Analysis & results. PLS-SEM was used to test (study 1) and validate (study 2) our conceptual model. Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were supported. Findings support the importance of fan motivations as a significant antecedent of COBRAs. COBRAs positively influence both fan-loyalty outcomes (commitment and behavioural loyalty). However, there was some variation across the three COBRA types in the strength and significance of their effects on commitment and behavioural loyalty. The strong similarity in results between the two countries suggests our conceptual model has a certain degree of robustness under different contextual conditions.

Conclusion. Our findings support motivation's importance as a driver of COBRAs for women's football fans in both countries. Secondly, COBRAs were found to influence commitment and behavioural loyalty, although there were variations amongst COBRAs and between the countries for COBRA Create. Lastly, and encouragingly, our conceptual model is largely supported by the Australian study and validated with the German study, with the relationships largely similar for the two samples.

Lesbian Coaches in Sport: Creating New and Inclusive Orientations

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Sport institutions are highly gendered and (hetero-)sexualised places. As such, previous research has illustrated that lesbian coaches face double discrimination (as women and lesbians) that have resulted in harassment, limited opportunities, and a need to manage their identities.

Despite this, there is a prevailing belief that women coaches benefit from experience in men's and competitive sport spaces. The purpose of this paper was to examine how lesbian coaches are affected by, and produce affect in, their sporting spaces in Spain. We used a queer phenomenological (Ahmed, 2006) approach that considered how the interconnected nature of orientations, spaces, and bodies come to matter for queer persons.

Taking a conversational inquiry approach (Leavy 2017), we use data from 16 semi-structured individual interviews (Kvale 1996) with lesbian coaches. The data were analysed using a dialectical approach (Freeman 2017), typological coding (Saldaña 2016), analytic memos (Marshall and Rossman 2011), and abductive analysis (Reichert 2009). Our initial findings suggest that lesbian coaches experienced dis-orientations during their time in competitive and men's sporting spaces.

These experiences, however, led them to women-led 'alternative' sport spaces (e.g., grassroots, disability, action) where they were able to develop a new (more inclusive) coaching orientation. As a result, these coaches took these orientations into new spaces in order to make sport more inclusive and diverse. We conclude the paper by arguing that lesbian coaches are better served with gaining coaching experiences in alternative spaces where they are valued and empowered to develop a coaching orientation that aligns with their vision of sport.



"We're all in swishy dresses": The dress and white femininity in Australian netball

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In 2022, amidst a broader shift in the conversation around women's uniforms, Netball Australia announced new, more inclusive uniform guidelines. Taking this change into account, in this presentation I examine the historical and contemporary tensions surrounding the netball dress as the expected uniform in Australia.

Drawing on archival material and interviews with netballers, in this paper I adopt a critical whiteness and intersectional feminist lens to consider the significance of the netball dress in shaping and upholding a particular version of white femininity in the Australian netball context.

By focusing on the netball dress, I shed light on racialized femininity in Australian sport which has its roots in British colonial values and imperialism.

Ultimately, the white feminine image of an Australian netballer helps to fuel the exclusion of those who do not fit this ideal and has the potential to threaten the future popularity and sustainability of the sport for Australian women and girls.

A historical analysis of women's soccer in Brazil: from its early exhibitions to hosting the Women's World Cup in 2027

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Women have always been present in Brazilian football. When football arrived in Brazil, following an elitist and European model, women who attended the stands were narrated in news articles and sports chronicles. They were always portrayed as well-dressed and accompanied by fathers, brothers, or husbands. Women attended stadiums to watch the first football matches in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In 1910, newspapers began reporting the first exhibitions of women's football in Brazil. Initially, women would enter the field to perform shows or spectacles.

Therefore, it was common for newspapers to announce women playing football in circus shows or simply kicking the ball to start a match between male teams. Gradually, women's teams were organized, and by around 1920, matches were already being held between women's teams in major Brazilian cities. In the early decades of the 20th century, football (played by men) lost its elitist and European model and came to be portrayed as a eugenic sport and a symbol of national identity. However, for women who practiced this sport, other issues were raised.

When women took the field to play football, there were intense debates: Was football a eugenic and moral sport for women? In the early 20th century, medical doctors and health scientists, the press, and the State created narratives that reinforced the idea that the female body and morality were incompatible with the practice of football. In the 1940s, opposing opinions to this practice continued to gain strength in newspaper articles, becoming something that required police intervention. Thus, in June 1940, an emergency decree was issued to prohibit women's football in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Police authorization was required to hold women's football matches. Alongside the intense criticisms of women's football and police interventions, the discussion on the regulation of sports in Brazil emerged in 1940.

Sports were not only seen as a matter of the sports or leisure domains but also as a matter of state regulation. For the Vargas government, sports practices manifested as a means of disciplining bodies and improving the race. The political appropriation of sports, especially football, led to direct state interventions in people's bodies and sports practices. Football had become a major tool for the dissemination of state ideals; hence the federal government took control over it. In 1941, the systematic regulation of sports at the national level emerged through Decree-Law 3199. For nearly 40 years, Brazil prohibited women from playing soccer.

Therefore, this paper presents a brief analysis of the history of women's soccer in Brazil, highlighting key issues related to the first appearances of women on the field, the intense debates involving the media, medicine, and the government regarding the female body and soccer in the 20th century, and the process of banning women's soccer in Brazil—a country that will host the next Women's World Cup in 2027.

Playing Sport Like a Girl. How Sport Shapes Skills for the New Economy

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Does sport matter to the work skills of the new economy? This research shows that sport does matter, but it is how women play sport that offers the most potential for the skills of the future.

The industrial bases of advanced countries are being re-shaped by geo-political forces beyond their control. Regarded as the most significant change since the industrial revolution, this 'new economy' has significant implications for the future of work. As countries embark on this critical transformation, the key role of developing a broader set of competencies has been universally emphasised. In addition to having technical or professional expertise and a focus on results for shareholders, the best performers working in new economy organisations will succeed because they deliver better outcomes for a range of stakeholders by practising valued interpersonal skills differently.

These competencies are transferable between workplaces and employment sectors, and include leadership, teamwork, empathy, collaboration, communication, competing, and problem-solving. Importantly, these skills are practised differently in new economy organisation models — in an open, inclusive, egalitarian, agile, and people-centric manner. In contrast, the old economy organisation model was designed for a more predictable stable environment where hierarchies of managers seek to plan and control outcomes for shareholders.

Although the competencies needed to succeed in the new economy are known, their source and gendered practice in the workplace is poorly understood. This project addresses that knowledge gap by identifying the important role sport plays in the skills problem and how gender matters. Research focuses on commercial law, a female majority profession in Australia that nevertheless maintains a hegemonically masculine workplace culture, as a case study. It critically examines the role that ordinary experiences of playing organised team sport have in competency development and practice.

The data show how the practice and appreciation of these skills have profound impacts on work and career advancement. Using an approach that combines analysis of observational, interview, and survey data, and deploying Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the research discovers unsuspected connections between the persistence of the gender gap in paid work, participation in sport, and the practice of a broader set of competencies vital to success in the new economy.

The key discovery is that 'playing sport like a girl' is an advantage in the economic transformation and a resource for gender equality in two ways. First, feminine sports-shaped competencies are a better match for the new economy organisation model. That match should be recognised and utilised by organisations and reflected in women's better remuneration and career advancement. Second, recognition and demand for masculine sports-shaped competencies will diminish as old economy organisations are forced to change or perish.

This discovery suggests the need for sports organisations to protect how females learn to play sport and resist the temptation to confuse the successful commercialisation of women's sport with 'playing sport like a man'. It also highlights the need to change how most males learn to play sport. Speculatively, failure to do so may well produce a gender gap adverse to men in the new economy.

Understanding Youth LGBTQI+ Participation in Sport and Active Recreation

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While some studies explore sport-related experiences of LGBTQI+ Victorians (Fletcher, 2014; Symons et al 2010), these are yet to ascertain participation numbers. This issue extends to data from the ABS, and Sport Australia's AusPlay, as they do not profile sexuality or gender identity. In addition, evidence in Australia identifies sport as unwelcoming and hostile to LGBTQI+ communities (Storr et al., 2021), most commonly within youth environments (Symons et al, 2014).

Addressing these knowledge gaps is critical; therefore, this research sought to produce the first dataset estimating the prevalence of sport participation or physical activity among youth-aged LGBTQI+ Australians. A survey was distributed capturing participation rates and attitudes as well as occurrences of anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination. LGBTQI+ respondents (n=506) were aged between 16-25 years.

Results show that while 91% of respondents participate in informal sport or recreational physical activity, only 47% were registered players with any sport team, and 64% use a form of fitness centre. In addition, 53% reported having witnessed vilification based on their identity. A further breakdown according to gender, sexuality and sport will be provided at the time of presentation. A focus on women and gender diverse people will be discussed in this presentation.

Promoting equality for LGBTQI+ people in Australia is a key policy imperative for the state government. This research addresses the lack of LGBTQI+ youth participation data in sport and active recreation that can be used to inform policy, practice, and investment across the sector.



Football for social change: an evaluation of the Festival23 and future directions in sport for development and gender equality activist research

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Background: Festival23 was a Football for Good (F4G) project aligned with the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup in Sydney. It was designed to produce a lasting social legacy including building skills, leadership capacities and cross-cultural/country learning among female youth leader delegates (YLD). This presentation will explore the findings of the evaluation of Festival23 co-led by UNSW Sydney and Western Sydney University researchers with the support of the event organizers: Football United, Common Goal and Creating Chances.

Methods: The mixed methods approach included a pre/post survey design, qualitative data collected via open text survey responses and postings using an online communications application (Slack). This was implemented as an innovative way to engage young people in the evaluation. Lastly, we conducted opportunistic video interviews throughout the festival. The survey instrument collected quantitative and qualitative self-reported perceptions of YLDs including their attitudes to interacting with people from other cultures and of their beliefs in themselves as leaders prior, immediately after and three weeks post the festival.

Results: The number of YLD reporting they strongly agreed that they have the ability to be a leader rose from 58% prior to 77% after the festival. Qualitative data supported this finding with participants describing arriving at the festival and not necessarily seeing themselves as leaders. A key finding from the qualitative data was that many had improved confidence attributed to shared experiences at the festival. There was a significant change in YLD beliefs from agree to strongly agree that they can make the world a better place, from 35% to 62%. The number of YLD reporting that they strongly agreed that they had the ability to be a leader rose from 58% prior to the festival and 77% after. Qualitative data supported this finding with participants describing arriving at the festival and not initially seeing themselves as leaders. A key finding from the qualitative data was that many had improved their confidence, which they attributed to the shared experience at the festival. There was a significant change in YLD beliefs that they could make the world a better place (from agree to strongly agree over the three time points from 35% to 62%). Many participants expressed that a key benefit of attending the festival, was the ability to be exposed to participants from different cultural backgrounds backed by a significant positive increase in 'other-group orientation' post-festival compared to baseline. Across all data sources, participants from a range of countries recognised that there were issues of gender inequity within their communities. Many expressed that sharing with others at the festival enabled them to recognise these issues were not unique to their context. Further, many expressed elevated levels of motivation after learning about pragmatic solutions to address inequity that they felt they were able to take back to their organisation.

In the final 3 week follow up survey, delegates were asked in what areas they would like to have further support. Support to address gender equality, and further developing leadership skills were the most chosen options. In the final 3 week follow up survey, delegates were asked in what areas they would like to have further support. Support to address gender equality, and further developing leadership skills were the most chosen options.

Conclusion: We conclude this presentation outlining plans to further enhance the support mechanisms identified by the participants and associated research.

This research project was commissioned by Football United and funded by the 2023 Western Sydney University Research Theme Champions Grant Assistance and UEFA Foundation for Children. Football United, Common Goal and Creating Chances were the implementing organisations for the festival. Youth Leader Delegates (YLD) who have shared their perspectives and experiences at the festival.
<https://www.festival23.org/partners>

“Feminine and fun”: investigating representations of the ideal netballer in early 00’s netball marketing and fan engagement in Australia

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In 2009, Netball Australia (NA) developed ‘Diamond Girl’, a white, blonde, feminine mascot aimed at capturing the imagination of netball fans and driving participation. NA’s description of the ideal Australian netballer through Diamond Girl was ‘the girl next door’ and characterised as ‘strong, professional, graceful, brilliant, multi-faceted, passionate, feminine and fun’ (Marketing Week, 2009).

These qualities are visible in contemporary netball marketing, with Diamond Girl utilised at international matches featuring England and New Zealand during October 2022 and was also throughout 2023. In this context, recent history suggests the mascot is reflective of prior and current initiatives from NA, including teams connected with brands such as Cartoon Network’s Powerpuff Girls series (2000) and the toy brand My Little Pony (2022).

As Fiona McLachlan notes, ‘Barely any historians have examined the place of netball in the development of Australian sport. There are very few published works detailing the origins, processes of diffusion, codification and commercialization, and the cultural practices and lived experiences of netball in Australia.’ (McLachlan, 2016, pg. 2154).

McLachlan while providing a history of the game in Australia also challenges researchers about why netball ignored by the academy and asks us to more to understand this as a site for the development of women’s sport in Australia as well as the roles of gender, sexuality, class and race in a colonial sport designed for women.

Methodologically, the paper draws on marketing and fan engagement initiatives over the last two decades to analyse the positioning of netball in Australia’s sporting landscape as a code built for women, and reflects on the feminised, infantilised and racialised ideals that are maintained through a range of commercial activities.



'Skate, Create and Collaborate'

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In this paper we reflect on the incoming findings from a women and non-binary researchers led, interdisciplinary project at The University of Sydney initiated by Dr Indigo Willing called 'Skate, Create, Educate and Regenerate' (SkateCER), conducted in collaboration with Dr Sanné Mestrom (DECRA project Art/Play Risk) and artist Nadia Odlum, plus Associate Professor Lian Loke (Curator of ElectroSk8).

The research is guided by the 'feminist turn' and an emerging intersectional lens in skate studies and utilises co-design processes that draw upon sociological and arts-based methodologies.

Through incoming findings, we highlight the benefits of forms of urban play, including within but also beyond traditional spaces like skateparks, sports grounds and playgrounds. Using the case study of creative sports, we also highlight how investment in social resources, design planning and art are vital to open public space for urban play and to foster more creative and inclusive cities and regions for all.