


Please cite the Published Version

Patil, Swarali  and Doherty, Alison (2023) Capacity for gender equity initiatives: a multiple case study investigation of national sport organisations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 15 (2). pp. 271-288. ISSN 1940-6940

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2023.2201293>

Publisher: Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

Version: Accepted Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/632071/>

Usage rights:  [Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Additional Information: This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* on 12th April 2023, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2023.2201293>. It is deposited under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

Capacity for Gender Equity Initiatives: A Multiple Case Study Investigation of National Sport Organisations

Patil, Swarali¹ and Doherty, Alison²

Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Kinesiology, Western University

Contact Information:

1. Corresponding author: spatil6@uwo.ca | @Swarali_Patil2 | www.linkedin.com/in/swaralipatil/ | Orchid ID: 0000-0001-9634-2301
2. adoherty@uwo.ca | @AlisonDoherty1 | www.linkedin.com/in/alison-doherty-57747551/

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Introduction

1
2 The pursuit of gender equity in sport, and particularly the improved circumstances and
3 engagement of women, continues to be a focus of policy and practice. In Canada, for example,
4 the federal government committed \$30M over three years in 2018 as part of its pursuit of gender
5 parity in sport by 2035 (Government of Canada 2018). As leaders of amateur sport in a given
6 country, including Canada, national sport organisations (NSOs), are typically tasked with guiding
7 their respective sport to achieve gender equity (Hallman and Petry 2013, Scheerder *et al.* 2017).
8 NSOs may address gender equity because it is the right thing to do, because of policy and
9 financial directives from government (e.g., Sport Canada, the federal arm of sport in that
10 country), or because doing so may present benefits to the organisation, such as accruing a skilled
11 pool of staff and increasing revenue streams by catering to a larger market segment (Canadian
12 Women & Sport 2022). Gender equity efforts of NSOs may be evident through different
13 initiatives that are policy-based (e.g., gender quotas) or events- and programs-based (e.g.,
14 international hosting, leadership training), but they are dependent on the organisations' capacity
15 to undertake these initiatives. There is, however, a notable lack of empirical evidence about the
16 capacity of NSOs to successfully develop and implement initiatives that promote the engagement
17 of women in sport. Our study aimed to fill that gap and provide insights to NSO capacity for
18 gender equity.

19 Capacity is defined as the ability of an organization to draw on and use critical resources
20 to achieve its goals (Hall *et al.* 2003, Misener and Doherty 2009). Organisations have multiple
21 capacities, such as human resources, planning and development, and external networks, that are
22 interconnected, and contribute to goal achievement (Hall *et al.* 2003). There may be variations
23 among organisations, or types of organisations, with regard to the most critical elements of those

24 capacities for goal achievement, and organisations' ability to utilise them. Organisational
 25 capacity research has focused on identifying and understanding the key elements that
 26 organisations draw on to achieve their goals, their ability to do so, and the relative impact of
 27 various capacities to achieve both broad and specific goals. Research in different sectors, such as
 28 community social service agencies (Paynter and Berner 2014), community sport (Doherty and
 29 Cuskelly 2020), and public health agencies (Röthlin *et al.* 2015), provides insight to the
 30 particular elements that are paramount to those organisations for goal achievement in each
 31 setting. Our study builds on this work and uses an organisational capacity perspective to further
 32 explain, and ultimately enhance, the ability of NSOs to address gender equity.

33 Through a rich sample of three case studies, we explored NSO capacity for implementing
 34 a gender equity initiative by (1) uncovering critical elements of capacity in this context, (2)
 35 identifying whether the elements are strengths or challenges for the NSOs, and (3) exploring
 36 environmental factors that are perceived to impact NSO capacity to pursue their gender equity
 37 initiative. Our findings advance understanding of the gender equity process, from an
 38 organisational capacity perspective. Study findings also have implications for the capacity of
 39 NSOs to address government policy and directives for addressing gender equity in sport.

40 **Theoretical framework**

41 Our study is framed by Hall *et al.*'s (2003) conceptual model of nonprofit organisational
 42 capacity, which identifies human resources capacity, financial capacity, and structural capacity
 43 (that is comprised of infrastructure and process, planning and development, and relationship and
 44 network capacities) as fundamental to goal achievement. Together, these five dimensions
 45 represent – and can be used to describe – an organisation's ability to draw on various elements of
 46 those dimensions to achieve its goals. Human resources capacity is the ability to utilise human

47 capital in the form of paid staff and volunteers within an organisation, and critical elements may
48 be the competencies and commitment of those personnel. Financial capacity refers to an
49 organisation's ability to generate and utilise financial capital, and thus key elements may be
50 revenue generation, financial assets, and fiscal responsibility. Relationship and network capacity
51 is a nonprofit organisation's ability to draw on its relationships with members, funding agencies,
52 the public, partners, and the government. Thus, having sustained connections with external
53 stakeholders may be a key element of capacity. Infrastructure and process capacity is the
54 organisation's ability to draw on key features employed in day-to-day operations, and so critical
55 elements of that capacity may be open communication and relevant policies. Finally, planning
56 and development capacity refers to the organisation's ability to draw on strategic and long term
57 plans for goal achievement, and thus critical elements may be having a vision, engaging in
58 planning, and particular features of plans. The multidimensionality of organisational capacity is a
59 key feature of Hall *et al.*'s framework, as is the expectation that critical elements within each
60 broad dimension are specific to different contexts. A further tenet is that the dimensions are
61 interconnected and may be expected to impact each other in various ways (Hall *et al.* 2003)
62 reinforcing the multidimensionality of organisational capacity. For example, human resources
63 capacity may be impacted by an organisation's ability to draw on sufficient funds to hire, train,
64 and retain staff. Further, human resources capacity may influence an organisation's ability to
65 build and maintain relationships that are fundamental to its relationship/network capacity.

66 The five dimensions and their varying associations with the achievement of both broad
67 goals and specific outcomes is well supported in the sport literature. Some of that work has
68 focused on uncovering critical elements, within each dimension, that are specific to nonprofit
69 community sport (Doherty et al. 2014) and sport for development (Clutterbuck and Doherty

2019) organizations, thus refining Hall et al.'s framework in those nonprofit contexts. Their work, along with others, has found support for a range of critical elements within each dimension that are both common to, and vary by, different contexts. For example, drawing on enthusiastic, skilled and engaged volunteers is critical for both community sport clubs (e.g., Doherty *et al.* 2014, Misener and Doherty 2009, Sharpe 2006) and sport for development (SFD) organisations (e.g., Clutterbuck and Doherty 2019, Svensson and Hambrick 2016, Svensson *et al.* 2017), although the nature of the specific skills varies by context (Clutterbuck and Doherty 2019). Further, organisations in both contexts have identified the importance of strategic planning to meet their mandates (e.g., Clutterbuck and Doherty 2019, Doherty *et al.* 2014, Misener and Doherty 2009, Svensson and Hambrick 2016, Svensson *et al.* 2017, Wicker and Breuer 2011). However, the planning capacity of SFD organisations is additionally a function of the ability to collaborate and consider risks and opportunities (Clutterbuck and Doherty 2019); elements that have not been identified in the community sport club setting. The strengths and challenges of the critical elements in each dimension for sport organisations' goal achievement have also been reported and, in line with Hall *et al.* (2003), human resources capacity is generally a strength while financial capacity is a challenge, across contexts (e.g., Misener and Doherty 2009, Wicker and Breuer 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, Balduck *et al.* 2015, Kitchin and Crossin 2018, Svensson *et al.* 2019, Doherty and Cuskelly 2020). Again, though, more nuanced findings reveal that the element of fiscal responsibility or financial management is actually a capacity strength for clubs (Doherty and Cuskelly 2020), and that financial challenges refer specifically to lower capacity to draw on a contingency fund and alternative sources of revenues. Together, these findings highlight the merits of considering organisational capacity as a multidimensional phenomenon, and exploring the critical elements within each dimension in a given organisation or context. Our

93 adoption of Hall *et al.*'s (2003) framework in the current study extends its application to the
94 context of NSOs and the consideration of their capacity for gender equity.

95 An additional feature of Hall *et al.*'s (2003) framework is the consideration of 'external'
96 factors that can impact an organisation's capacity by influencing one or more of the dimensions,
97 including environmental constraints/facilitators, access to resources, and historical
98 norms/actions. Few researchers have directly explored these aspects in sport capacity research,
99 although scholars have considered the influence of 'backstage power strategies' (Caprais *et al.*
100 2020, p. 361), as well as discursive resistance (Knoppers *et al.* 2021), and cultural (Valenti *et al.*
101 2021), political and economic (Scelles 2021) determinants for gender equity efforts in other sport
102 research. Environmental constraints and facilitators includes forces such as the political climate,
103 current societal values, competition with other organisations, and the physical environment
104 within which the organisation functions. These broad forces are assumed to be interconnected
105 and to impact organisational capacity. Access to resources refers to the availability of financial
106 resources, volunteers, and technology in the organisation's environment that it can draw on to
107 achieve its goals (Hall *et al.* 2003). Historical factors refers to previous activities and behaviours,
108 such as reward systems, as well as the underlying (and entrenched) norms, values, and
109 assumptions of an organisation that continue to impact its current capacities. (Hall *et al.* 2003).
110 The consideration of these environmental influences extends the investigation, and
111 understanding, of organisational capacity.

112 A "one-size" capacity framework does not fit all' (Clutterbuck and Doherty 2019, p. 18),
113 and thus it is important to consider the critical elements of each dimension of capacity, and the
114 environmental factors that influence those elements, with respect to a particular focal
115 organisation, type of organisation, or context (e.g., Hall *et al.* 2003, Misener and Doherty 2009,

116 Svensson and Hambrick 2016, Svensson *et al.* 2017, AbouAssi *et al.* 2019). Doing so then allows
117 consideration of the specific strengths and challenges that are relevant to an organisation's
118 capacity to achieve its broad (or specific) goals. Framed by the Hall *et al.* (2003) model, and
119 building on the seminal approach of Doherty *et al.* (2014), we explored the particular capacity,
120 and environmental influences to that capacity, of three NSOs engaged with their select gender
121 equity initiative.

122 **NSO capacity for gender equity**

123 NSOs around the world continue to be directed – and strive – in a variety of ways to
124 improve the engagement of girls and women as participants and leaders because of their
125 continued underrepresentation (e.g., Caprais *et al.* 2020, Organista 2021, Valenti *et al.* 2021). In
126 Canada, despite efforts since the 1970s to promote equal opportunities for women in sport – and
127 a substantial rise in participation in the ensuing decades – ‘both equity and equality have proven
128 elusive’ for participants and leaders (Norman *et al.* 2021, p. 208). Our study contributes to
129 scholarly efforts that continue to examine policy and practices in support of, or against, women
130 and sport (Scelles and Pfister 2021), and in the context of NSOs and their mandates.

131 Research on the ability of NSOs to pursue and achieve gender equity has had a sustained
132 and predominant focus on the gendered, male-dominated norms, beliefs, and attitudes that
133 restrict the development and uptake of gender equity policy and practices in these organisations
134 (Shaw and Penney 2003, Skirstad 2009, Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd 2017, Norman *et al.* 2018,
135 Evans and Pfister 2020, Caprais *et al.* 2020, Organista 2021, Knoppers *et al.* 2021). Within this
136 body of literature, there is a particular focus on constraints to gender equity in national sport
137 governance (cf. Evans and Pfister 2020), and some consideration of NSO efforts for women in
138 coaching (e.g., Norman *et al.* 2018) and sport participation (Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd 2017,

139 Valenti *et al.* 2021). A few scholars describe the influence of patriarchal values specifically on
140 the human and financial resources and facilities that are available for the planning and
141 implementation of gender equity policy and initiatives (Myers and Doherty 2007, Lusted and
142 Fielding-Lloyd 2017), providing finer-grained insight to NSOs' capacity for this endeavour.
143 However, there is value in the consideration of a broader range of resources that might be
144 important for NSOs to draw on for their gender equity efforts, as well as factors that may
145 influence their ability to do so.

146 The oft-cited gendered 'historical values and cultural practices' (Lusted and Fielding-
147 Lloyd 2017, p. 57), or 'deep structure' (Shaw 2007, p. 82), that may influence the resources
148 available to an NSO's pursuit of gender equity aligns with Hall *et al.*'s (2003) historical
149 norms/actions factor in the capacity framework. Notably, Hall *et al.*'s framework does not
150 approach organisational capacity as a gendered phenomenon; however, attention to underlying
151 norms and values enables consideration of possible gendered influences to the resources an NSO
152 is able to draw on in its pursuit of gender equity. Again, related research suggests that this factor
153 shapes NSO capacity for gender equity (Myers and Doherty 2007, Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd
154 2017, Knoppers *et al.* 2021), although further investigation is required. There is also some
155 evidence that environmental forces – such as government pressure and media coverage (Myers
156 and Doherty 2007, Skirstad 2009, Valenti *et al.* 2021) – influence the resources NSOs direct to
157 particular gender equity initiatives. Nonetheless, there is a gap in understanding such
158 environmental influences to various NSO resource capacities for gender equity. Our study
159 complements and extends research on sport organisational capacity, and NSO gender equity
160 efforts, and in doing so addresses Evans and Pfister's (2020) call for further evidence
161 highlighting critical organisational practices for enacting gender equity.

162

Method

163

164

165

166

167

168

We used a multiple instrumental case methodology (Stake 2006) to examine and compare the organisational capacity of three NSOs to implement their respective gender equity initiatives. The case study method promotes an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within its relevant contextual conditions (Yin and Davis 2007). Multiple cases allow the researcher to gain further insights by examining similarities and differences across cases (Stake 2006), which can inform practices, programs, and policies (Patton 2015).

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

We identified instrumental cases using the following criteria: (1) related to the phenomenon that is the focus of the research (engaged in a gender equity initiative); (2) provide a variety of backgrounds and circumstances (different NSOs/sports); and (3) provide the opportunity to obtain deep and dense insights into a variety of contexts (range of informants). Thus, similar to Valenti *et al.* (2021), the focus of our study was organisational cases that were engaged in a gender equity effort, in order to study and learn from their experiences. Our initial search efforts were aimed at the official websites of all Canadian NSOs funded by Sport Canada ($n = 58$ at the time of the study) to ascertain those with specific initiatives directed at the promotion of women and girls in sport. Personal communication with leaders at the Canadian Association for the Advancement for Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS; now Canadian Women & Sport) and Sport Canada also helped identify NSOs engaged in gender equity initiatives. Our search revealed 11 NSOs that fit the criteria. With further screening, organisations that listed an equity and diversity policy on their official website but were not actively engaged in any related initiatives were excluded. Ultimately, we identified three NSOs from different sports with an existing gender equity initiative to promote women and girls within the sport, and a variety of informants willing to discuss the initiative.

185 **Research context**

186 In the following section, we describe the three NSOs, their respective gender equity
187 initiatives, and success with those at the time of the study. We use general descriptors and
188 pseudonyms to protect the identity of the organisation and the participants.

189 **Case 1: NSO 1.** NSO 1 serves a non-Olympic winter team sport. At the time of the study,
190 it comprised less than 10 paid staff and a governing board of 8-10 members. It had a four-year
191 strategic plan, and a general equity and diversity policy. NSO 1's predominant funding was from
192 Sport Canada, with relatively smaller support generated from provincial sport organisation (PSO)
193 PSO member fees. NSO 1's initiative was a national policy that targeted increasing the number
194 of women coaches in the sport via its mandate of including a certified woman coach on the
195 bench for teams and events within its purview. One staff member was assigned to oversee the
196 policy implementation, with direct assistance from the most senior executive manager.

197 NSO 1's policy and related coaching development programs resulted in the increased
198 engagement of women in coaching positions on the provincial junior and senior teams at the
199 national championships, and on the national teams in international competitions. The policy also
200 contributed to the increased engagement of women in coaching positions at the PSO and
201 community sport organisation (CSO) levels but with considerable variability. A senior staff
202 member noted the circumvention of the policy by some PSOs as they were 'struggling a little bit
203 with this notion of a female on the bench.'

204 **Case 2: NSO 2.** NSO 2 serves an Olympic winter individual sport. At the time of the
205 study, it comprised 10-20 staff and a governing board of 8-10 members. It had a five-year
206 strategic plan, and a general equity, diversity, and inclusion policy. NSO 2 had several funding
207 partners and sponsors, in addition to Sport Canada support. NSO 2's initiative was a program

208 that targeted increasing the engagement of women in the sport through nation-wide events that
209 provide training by certified coaches and officials for women interested in participating in the
210 sport as athletes, coaches, and officials. Up to three staff members were assigned to work on the
211 initiative at any given time.

212 NSO 2's initiative resulted in the increased engagement of women. A senior staff member
213 explained that the number of events hosted by the NSO had doubled, while event participation
214 rates of women had experienced about 30% growth. The initiative also contributed to the
215 increased engagement of women at the provincial and community sport level, however there was
216 considerable variability, according to a former staff member, 'because the on-the-ground-work
217 [was] done by the club, not by [NSO 2], [and so implementation of the initiative] really
218 depend[ed] on the region.'

219 **Case 3: NSO 3.** NSO 3 serves an Olympic summer team sport. At the time of the study, it
220 comprised 10-20 paid staff and a governing board of 8-10 members. It had a four-year strategic
221 plan, and a general equity and inclusion policy. NSO 3 received funding from a variety of
222 partners and sponsors, in addition to Sport Canada support. NSO 3 was developing an initiative
223 that targeted increasing the engagement and retention of women in the sport as coaches and
224 officials using a mentorship model and coaching/officiating programs. Up to three staff
225 members, as well as rotating interns, were assigned to work on the initiative at any given time.
226 NSO 3 had placed an emphasis on educating women coaches and officials so that '[they were]
227 prepared to be taking up some of the jobs' (senior staff member).

228 ***Data collection***

229 We collected data for each case from multiple interviewees, with the different
230 perspectives collated to generate an understanding of the capacity strengths and challenges of

231 each NSO regarding their gender equity initiative. The study focused on uncovering NSO
232 capacity for gender equity specifically, as opposed to achievement of its broader mandate and
233 goals. Policy documents and action plans, that were shared by the NSOs and/or available from
234 their websites, were a secondary source of data that we drew on to enhance our understanding of
235 the initiatives. Comparing the documents with what we heard from participants enabled us to
236 corroborate, and in some instances clarify, what we heard from participants about such things as
237 goals and intended outcomes of the initiatives, external partnerships around the initiatives, and
238 support provided to provincial and community sport organisations for implementation. The
239 secondary sources helped to further triangulate the data to enhance the consistency and
240 trustworthiness of the findings (Guba and Lincoln 1989).

241 The first author conducted semi-structured interviews using a conversational approach,
242 allowing for flexibility in the interview process and the opportunity to build on responses (Patton
243 2015). Audio-recorded interviews, lasting approximately 50 minutes, were conducted by
244 telephone with NSO personnel who had primary involvement in developing, shaping, and/or
245 informing the respective gender equity initiative. Our interview guide aligned with the Hall *et al.*
246 (2003) framework of organisational capacity and the approach taken by Doherty *et al.* (2014).
247 Participants were probed about the particular strengths and challenges the organisation has
248 experienced with respect to each capacity dimension in the development, adoption, and
249 implementation of its gender equity initiative. Identification of particular strengths and
250 challenges represent the elements of capacity most critical to NSOs for their gender equity
251 efforts (Doherty *et al.* 2014). Interviewees were also asked about the influence of environmental
252 factors on those capacity elements.

253 We present a profile of the interview participants in Table 1 that describes their position
254 and years with the NSO at the time of the study, and involvement with the respective NSO's
255 initiative.

256 [Insert Table 1 about here]

257 ***Data analysis***

258 Data analysis was preceded by the verbatim transcription of the audio-recorded
259 interviews. We used transcript checking to allow study participants to review their individual
260 transcripts and correct any errors or statements they felt did not represent their thoughts
261 accurately. This process enhanced the credibility of data (Guba and Lincoln 1989). We first
262 engaged in a priori coding (King 1998), guided by the Hall *et al.* (2003) framework with codes
263 representing the broad dimensions of capacity and environmental factors. We coded the data
264 independently and compared and discussed our preliminary findings until consensus was
265 achieved. Subsequently, we independently revisited the transcripts for evidence of subthemes
266 (elements) within each capacity dimension, and within each environmental factor. Our coding
267 framework was further refined with the identified critical elements of capacity and meaningful
268 environmental forces, which we discussed and reconciled until consensus was achieved. Finally,
269 we noted whether the elements were a strength or challenge for the NSOs, and whether the
270 environmental factors were a positive or negative influence on NSO capacity. We also noted
271 where participants talked about connections among the capacity dimensions (or their elements).

272 We generated a case profile of each NSO with respect to its capacity for gender equity
273 and influential environmental factors. Following that, we engaged in a cross-case comparison
274 that revealed both common and unique elements of capacity and environmental factors, which
275 are presented here.

276
277
278
279
280
281
282
283
284
285
286
287
288
289
290
291
292
293
294
295
296
297
298

Results

NSOs' capacity to develop and implement their respective initiatives was a function of their ability to draw on particular critical elements representing each of the five capacity dimensions. Some of the critical elements within those dimensions were common across the three NSOs, despite their different initiatives, while others were unique to a particular NSO. Whether the NSOs' ability to draw on those elements was a strength or a challenge for them was also uncovered. These findings are detailed below and summarized in Table 2. Evident connections among elements across the capacity dimensions are noted throughout. This is followed by a presentation of environmental factors that influence the capacity dimensions, and whether that influence is positive or negative for the NSOs' capacity for gender equity. A sample of quotations that represent the findings are provided throughout.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Human Resources Capacity

NSOs' success with their respective gender equity initiatives was reportedly dependent on several elements of human resource capacity that were common across the organisations, including having knowledgeable, experienced, and committed staff and leaders, and sufficient staff and volunteers. Some of these critical elements were strengths in the organisations, and some were challenges, with corresponding implications for the NSOs' capacity to implement their initiative. Having personnel who were familiar with the sport and the NSO, and were personally dedicated to gender equity, was a particular strength for the NSOs. A board member at NSO 1 explained that their women coaches on the bench policy was facilitated because, 'staff definitely understand the sport. Most have been involved in the sport. I think the strengths are [they] know the people and the coaches that are coming up.' A staff member at NSO 3 noted the

299 successful development of its women in coaching and officiating initiatives because of leaders’
300 commitment, describing how ‘[women leaders in particular] lived through the times when it
301 wasn’t really important to have female-based initiatives. They are willing to be a leader in that
302 area.’

303 Meanwhile, having sufficient NSO staff and volunteers to engage with the gender equity
304 initiative was a challenge for all three organisations. A senior staff member at NSO 2 explained
305 that challenges with staffing numbers meant limited support for implementation of the events
306 because staff were ‘spread fairly thin. It’s a challenge because you are not able to do one thing
307 really well.’ It also meant limited support to PSOs and CSOs for educating them on the initiative,
308 which was critical because ‘this [women coaches on the bench policy] isn’t meant to be just
309 another box you need to check off,’ and the challenge lay in ‘[building] up that education piece
310 to help people understand why we did this’ (senior staff member, NSO 1). Staffing challenges
311 for its initiative were identified at NSO 3 as well: ‘In our department, driving [the gender equity
312 initiative], it’s literally [another staff member] and I... and our plates are full. We can’t add to it’
313 (staff member).

314 ***Financial Capacity***

315 Having a dedicated line item for the gender equity initiative in the annual budget was a
316 critical element of financial capacity for successful planning and implementation of the
317 initiatives, and a strength, across the NSOs. The NSOs were then able to designate funds towards
318 the initiative, and related programs that help to support its implementation, with general core
319 funding from Sport Canada. According to NSO 2, that line item meant that, despite any
320 fluctuations in external support for the women-specific programming, it was able to maintain
321 some financial commitment by getting ‘creative in the way it’s able to [continue to] allocate

322 resources to help ensure there's some support for the program.' At NSO 1, such dedicated
323 funding allowed the provision of, for example, 'some training resources to the PSOs to try and
324 help encourage this move to have more women trained and certified' in support of the new policy
325 (board member).

326 Sufficient funding was another critical element of the capacity of all three NSOs to
327 achieve their initiatives, with sustained funding also being key to capacity to continue to deliver
328 the programs of NSOs 2 and 3. However, sufficient funding for their gender equity initiative was
329 a challenge for NSOs 1 and 2, despite having a budgeted line item in place. As a result, the two
330 NSOs were restricted in hiring adequate staff and thus building their human resources capacity
331 for the initiative, and restricted in developing material resources and marketing campaigns, and
332 providing support to the PSOs and CSOs for implementation of their respective gender equity
333 initiatives throughout the sport system. A senior staff member at NSO 1 noted that insufficient
334 funds affected 'how much money [we] can put aside for... putting together a [policy-related
335 training] course,' further limiting the NSO's efforts to 'help people understand and create
336 a...shift' that is necessary for effective uptake of the women in coaching policy.

337 Notably, sufficient and sustained funding for its women in coaching/officiating initiative
338 was a capacity strength for NSO 3. It implemented a pay-by-user system, where program
339 participants paid a fee to receive training and education, and these monies supported the
340 operational costs of the program. A senior staff member described this system as a strength
341 because 'the cost [of the program wasn't] based on a grant. It's a strength that it does allow [the
342 initiative] to exist past the time of a grant.'

343 A unique financial capacity element, and a strength, for NSO 2's initiative was financial
344 and in-kind sponsorship support for the programming to increase women in the sport. A board

345 member explained that drawing on the sponsorships enabled NSO 2 to develop a variety of
346 resources in support of marketing and training for its events targeting women as participants,
347 coaches, and officials.

348 *Infrastructure and Process Capacity*

349 A culture of collaboration within the organisation was particularly important to the NSOs’
350 capacity to implement their respective gender equity initiatives, and was a strength across all
351 three organisations. A staff member at NSO 3 described the importance of working on its women
352 in coaching and officiating programs in ‘a very team-based approach,’ with colleagues identified
353 as ‘open’ and ‘willing’ to collaborate. A board member at NSO 1 explained that the collaborative
354 culture within the organisation extended to the board, ‘made up of a mixture of [men and
355 women] ... not afraid to talk to each other’ on different issues including gender equity, and the
356 policy in particular.

357 Communication about the initiative was also a critical capacity element across the three
358 NSOs. However, it was identified as a challenge for each organisation in terms of being able to
359 effectively convey the intent and relevance of their respective initiatives, building awareness, and
360 educating stakeholders involved in implementation. A board member at NSO 2 identified
361 traditional means of communication, such as promoting its new programming through print and
362 media, as a challenge because of the difficulties in ‘getting the word out. Often the word costs
363 money,’ and the challenge of sufficient funding for the initiative was noted earlier. A senior staff
364 member at NSO 1 explained the breakdown in communication with its PSOs with whom it was
365 sharing guidelines around the women coaches on the bench policy: ‘By the time we get down to
366 [the PSOs], it’s like a bad game of telephone. We have lost some of the intent behind [the
367 policy], and [the PSOs] just use it as one more thing they have to do.’

368 A number of infrastructure capacity elements uncovered in the study were critical to only
369 one or two of the NSOs for the implementation of their initiatives, and all were strengths of the
370 respective organisations. Having a governing, rather than operational, board allowed NSO 1 to
371 utilize the diverse skills and experiences of its board members to develop and ratify policies like
372 the women coaches' policy, rather than focus on operations of the club. One board member
373 described the NSO as 'having the right constructs and frameworks in place, to put [NSO 1] on
374 the right path' for initiatives like the policy.

375 At NSOs 2 and 3, operations and technology, respectively, were identified as critical
376 elements, and strengths, for implementing their gender equity initiatives. A senior staff member
377 at NSO 2 described the organisation's operations as helping 'define the day-to-day with [the
378 initiative] and what it looks like,' including 'aligning [the initiative] with specific funding
379 opportunities' like sponsorships, that help to build its financial capacity. At NSO 3, the use of
380 integrated technology and a database of resources to support its women in coaching/officiating
381 initiative was a critical element, and a strength, for the organisation. A staff member described
382 the 'online database... where coaches can register for courses, keep a record of NCCP [National
383 Coaching Certification Program] courses they have completed, professional development, watch
384 videos to learn [sport skills], [read] different documents,' in support of the NSO's initiative. In
385 addition, the availability of quality facilities, described by a staff member as 'helpful in terms of
386 having the space to deliver training material and get programs on the ground running,' was
387 another critical, and strong, element of infrastructure for NSO 3.

388 ***Planning and Development Capacity***

389 Inclusion of the gender equity initiative(s) within the strategic plan was the only common
390 critical element of planning/development capacity across all three NSOs, and was a strength for

391 the implementation of their respective initiatives. A staff member noted NSO 2's 'good vision of
392 what [we] are aiming for and how these [events for women in the sport] help support that,' along
393 with 'significant planning... to look at aligning [gender equity] goals with specific funding
394 opportunities.' Further, engaging in long term planning specifically for the gender equity
395 initiative(s) was a critical element for NSOs 2 and 3, yet was a notable challenge for both
396 organisations. They struggled to pin down future needs and make necessary accommodations
397 with respect to their initiatives. A staff member at NSO 3 described a 'defocus' on the women in
398 coaching/officiating programs due to a priority (and related personnel and funds) placed on other
399 short-term goals like 'trying to look to [upcoming months] because that is when [NSO 3] has
400 [international events].' The same staff member added that this forced the NSO staff to play
401 'catch up on all the things that were missed or needed to get done in the past year' with regard to
402 its initiative and thus, impacted how it 'sees the bigger picture and plans ahead.'

403 NSO 1 identified more specifically the importance of key performance indicators (KPIs)
404 to its gender equity initiative. However, a senior staff member described the NSO's inexperience
405 utilizing KPIs as a challenge for monitoring the implementation of the women coach on the
406 bench policy: the organisation '[didn't] really know what [they were] doing' in terms of using
407 performance metrics, and struggled to 'figure out a way [to work with KPIs]', including
408 identifying acceptable thresholds of implementation and achieving those 'within the timeline
409 [NSO 1] set out' for the policy.

410 ***Relationship and Network Capacity***

411 Critical elements of the NSOs' relationship/network capacity to implement their
412 initiatives were the advice and non-financial resources, as well as delivery mechanisms, they
413 drew on from PSOs within their sport and national level organisations outside their specific

414 sport. These elements were both a strength and a challenge for the NSOs. A staff member at
415 NSO 2 described the guidance and resources it was able to draw on from an NSO in another
416 sport as a strength: ‘Because they’ve got a great pathway and mechanism and we wanted to
417 essentially [apply] that. . . to make our [program to engage women in the sport] great.’ The
418 NSOs also identified accessing gender equity material resources and tools through its
419 connections with multi-sport organisations, such as the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC)
420 and CAAWS, as valuable to implementing their initiatives. A staff member at NSO 3 noted,
421 ‘[We are] not reinventing the wheel. CAC and CAAWS already have that pre-made so we can
422 use it.’ Implementation or delivery of their respective initiatives through links with PSOs in their
423 sport and NSOs in other sports was also a strength for the NSOs. A senior staff member
424 described dissemination of the women coaches on the bench policy through its PSOs as a ‘key
425 piece for [NSO 1] to get [the policy] on the ground, [for them] to communicate directly to clubs
426 and associations and to coaches.’ A staff member at NSO 3 described how its collaborations with
427 NSOs in other sports, largely through its knowledgeable and experienced staff, allowed it to
428 ‘cost-share some of the expenses,’ and try out initiatives, such as their women in coaching
429 program, on a ‘larger test group to see how programs are working and whether or not [the
430 initiatives] are effective... and meeting the needs of the audience they are intended for.’

431 However, drawing on the non-financial resources from multi-sport organisations, such as
432 the CAC and CAAWS, was also a challenge for the NSOs’ capacity for gender equity because of
433 the inherently broad mandate and thus focus of those multi-sport institutions. While the NSOs
434 benefitted from resources sourced from these organisations, such as training manuals and action
435 plans, the broader focus on gender equity messaging in those documents which are intentionally
436 applicable to a range of sports, meant they needed adjusting to the context of each NSO and its

437 specific initiative. A staff member at NSO 1 explained that the resources ‘aren’t cookie cutter, so
438 you always have to tailor them to the sport, the culture, the environment that’s realistic.’
439 Additionally, although assistance from PSOs and other organisations in the sport with
440 implementation or delivery of the NSOs’ respective initiatives was a critical element of
441 relationship/network capacity, and a strength, it also proved to be a challenge when there was
442 limited capacity for such assistance. A staff member at NSO 2 described its reliance on local
443 clubs and their leaders to come up with [events] for engaging women in the sport, which has
444 contributed to an inconsistent number of events planned across regions. Reliance on these
445 delivery mechanisms was a ‘weakness when [the PSO/CSO staff] struggle[d] or when they don’t
446 have time.’

447 *Environmental Factors*

448 All three types of environmental factors – broad constraints/facilitators, access to
449 resources, and historical norms, values, and assumptions – reportedly influenced the capacity of
450 NSOs to implement their gender equity initiatives. The factors are listed in Table 3 and presented
451 below.

452 [Insert Table 3 about here]

453 Several broad constraints and facilitators were common to all three NSOs, while others
454 were specific to one or two NSOs. The political climate was described as the opinions and
455 priorities of the current government, and particularly its focus (or not) on gender equity. NSOs 2
456 and 3 described it as a constraining force because the uncertainty about whether a focus on
457 gender equity, and thus related funding, would be sustained was a concern for their financial
458 capacity to maintain gender equity programming. A former staff member at NSO 2 discussed the
459 link between the political climate and the support available: ‘When [gender equity] is a bigger

460 political priority, then Sport Canada funds [gender equity initiatives] greater, therefore, there is
461 more of an emphasis on [gender equity]. When it is not in place, [extra funding] doesn't happen.'

462 Various aspects of the Canadian sport system itself both facilitated (NSOs 2 and 3) and
463 constrained (NSOs 1 and 3) capacity for gender equity initiatives. For NSOs 2 and 3, pressure
464 and expectations among sport organisations to pursue gender equity was identified as a positive
465 and driving force for the organisations to address gender equity, and specifically include the
466 initiative in their strategic plan. As one staff member described it, 'there is a social pressure for
467 [NSO 3] to do [gender equity programming], especially if other NSOs start to take the lead.'

468 However, the nature of the sport system in Canada means that there may be different priorities at
469 national, provincial, and community levels (Doherty and Clutterbuck 2013), in line with different
470 government (and thus funding) interests. This can constrain multi-level initiatives like gender
471 equity policy or programs. As a senior staff member at NSO 3 described it:

472 If an initiative is through the federal government... but it's not at the provincial level, it's
473 actually hard for us to roll out [the] program because for the provinces to get money, it's
474 not an initiative for them. This misalignment between federal and provincial funding for
475 sport can make or break something.

476 This was the case for both NSOs 1 and 3, where the capacity to implement their gender equity
477 initiatives was compromised by the challenges of working with the other levels on the delivery
478 of national sport initiatives.

479 The geographic expanse of Canada was a constraint unique to NSO 1's capacity to
480 implement its gender equity policy. The size of the country limited the NSO's ability to
481 effectively communicate the importance of the new policy in person (a felt need of the NSO),
482 across the provinces, through face-to-face meetings. Meanwhile, climate change was a unique

483 constraint for NSO 2, where uncertainties in the weather and climate, broadly, hampered its
484 ability to make long-term plans for hosting events to support the increased engagement of
485 women.

486 Regarding access to resources, availability of avenues to procure additional funding for
487 the initiative was identified as an important environmental influence to capacity for the gender
488 equity initiatives across all three NSOs. However, participants referred specifically to the limited
489 availability of discretionary funds from sponsors and donors, and competition with other NSOs
490 for these resources. A staff member at NSO 3 described the Canadian sport landscape as ‘very
491 competitive,’ and noted that though ‘[NSO 3’s sport] is growing and people are more engaged
492 within the sport, it is the sponsorship dollars within the market [for which NSO 3] is competing
493 with other sports.’ Meanwhile, being a non-Olympic and non-premier sport, NSO 1 faces a
494 ‘brand recognition issue’ in the competitive sponsorship market, according to a board member. A
495 senior staff member at NSO 3 attributed the lack of resources for women’s specific programming
496 to sponsors’ tendency ‘to want to sponsor the men’s program [because] it’s on a more populated
497 television spot, [making] the value of the sale higher.’ Lack of access to these additional
498 resources limited each of the NSOs’ capacity to plan for and implement their gender equity
499 initiatives.

500 Access to volunteers was identified as an important environmental factor for NSOs 2 and
501 3 that directly influenced their capacity to draw on sufficient volunteers and engage in long-term
502 planning in support of their gender equity efforts. A board member at NSO 2 described the
503 difficulty finding passionate individuals ‘that can see past the financial gains and find other
504 perks’ from their involvement in sport. A former staff member at NSO 2 noted that ‘it’s harder to
505 find people,’ particularly individuals ‘who have their life already completely organized and

529 policy and practices, particularly around women in national sport governance. In doing so, the
530 findings address a need for insight to critical organisational considerations and practices for
531 enacting gender equity (Evans and Pfister 2020). The development and effective implementation
532 of the respective gender equity initiatives in each of the NSOs was dependent on critical
533 elements within all five of the Hall *et al.* (2003) capacity dimensions, and connections among
534 them were apparent. The NSOs were also aware of a range of environmental factors perceived to
535 impact that capacity. Together, the findings highlight the multidimensionality of capacity for
536 gender equity at the national level of sport.

537 Importantly, the findings also indicate that some critical elements deemed necessary for
538 the NSOs to successfully develop and implement their initiatives were common across the
539 organisations while some were unique to particular NSOs, highlighting the nuances of capacity
540 for gender equity in this context. Specifically, despite their different initiatives – a policy to
541 increase women coaches (NSO 1), events to promote girls and women as participants, coaches,
542 and officials, (NSO 2), and training programs to develop women coaches/officials (NSO 3) –
543 several common capacity elements and environmental factors were uncovered across the three
544 NSOs. This may be attributed to similarities in the type of organisation (i.e., national governing
545 bodies for their sport) and goals (i.e., gender equity). Meanwhile, findings specific to one or two
546 NSOs may be attributed to any differences in the organisations and their particular environments,
547 and the respective gender equity initiatives themselves (i.e., policies, events, professional
548 development programs). The capacities of each NSO to achieve its broad goals and mandate may
549 also help explain some of the variations observed. For example, the NSOs' human resource and
550 financial capacities (including constraints) in general provide a platform upon which capacity for

551 gender equity specifically is based, and may explain what personnel and financial resources can
552 be directed to these efforts in a given NSO.

553 The findings provide rich insight to the particular elements identified as critical to the
554 capacity of the focal NSOs to implement their gender equity initiative, and their ability to draw
555 on those elements, as well as the influence of particular environmental factors to the capacity for
556 gender equity. We consider those specific findings further. In the context of their respective
557 initiatives, the NSOs understood and acknowledged the value of having experienced staff and
558 leaders who were knowledgeable about the sport and its development and were personally
559 committed to gender equity. One or the other was not sufficient for being able to move their
560 respective initiatives forward. These were identified as strengths for the NSOs, yet by extension,
561 relevant experience and commitment may be expected to be challenges for gender equity
562 initiatives if they are missing. Indeed, across all three NSOs, sufficient support personnel (staff
563 and volunteers) to ensure the initiative happens was identified as a challenge. This echoes Lusted
564 and Fielding-Lloyd's (2017) observation about the human resource constraints to women's
565 programming.

566 Sufficient personnel appears to be influenced in part by the interest and availability of,
567 and thus access to, individuals from the broader environment. A general downward trend in
568 volunteering across several nations, including Canada, supports these concerns (Hoye *et al.*
569 2020). Several scholars (Shaw and Penney 2003, Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd 2017) also note a
570 long-standing preferential workforce allocation to men's programs makes it a challenge to
571 (re)direct personnel to initiatives like gender equity. The NSOs in our study did not identify roles
572 that were dedicated to their respective gender equity initiatives. Rather, initiative-related work
573 was only one part of other job-related duties. The NSOs indicated that 'our plates are [already]

574 full,’ – an indication of their broader human resource capacity – and this reflects the challenge of
575 shifting from existing priorities. The important role of ‘human agency’ in creating and sustaining
576 gender equity has been noted elsewhere (Allison 2017), and the current study further highlights
577 sufficient experienced and committed personnel as critical elements of human resource capacity
578 for gender equity.

579 Having a dedicated line item in the NSOs’ budget highlights the importance of protected
580 funds for the gender equity initiatives considered in this study. It represents an organisational
581 commitment to gender equity in general and the initiative specifically, especially in the face of
582 fluctuations in government funding that may reflect the political commitment to gender equity, or
583 other priorities (Myers and Doherty 2007). The importance of protected funds to maintain the
584 gender equity initiative was further evident with NSO 3’s user pay system to ensure operating
585 costs are covered. Having sufficient funds was a financial capacity challenge for two of the
586 NSOs, yet having at least some protected funds in a dedicated line item enabled them to maintain
587 their commitment to the initiatives. NSO 2 described its reliance on program-specific
588 sponsorships, however across all three NSOs, the lack of access to resources for *additional*
589 funding (beyond government support and user pay) was identified as an important environmental
590 factor, and a negative influence, to their capacity for the particular gender equity effort. Few
591 avenues to procure additional funding is a function of limited discretionary funds, and
592 competition for those funds, from alternative sources like corporations and foundations, coupled
593 with both an environmental and organisational historic preference for supporting men’s sport (cf.
594 Myers and Doherty 2007, Skirstad, 2009, Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd 2017). Taken together, our
595 research highlights the importance of accounting for the context of social, political, and historic

596 priorities when considering the financial capacity for new endeavours like gender equity
597 initiatives.

598 We found most variation among the NSOs with regard to the elements of
599 infrastructure/process capacity for their gender equity initiative. A diverse governing board
600 focused on strategic direction (NSO 1), effective business operations (NSO 2), and integrated
601 technology and quality facilities (NSO 3) were found to be particularly important elements that
602 likely resonated with the organisations' respective initiatives and implementation mechanisms.
603 Yet, having a collaborative organisational culture was beneficial to all three NSOs, where gender
604 equity was a unifying point for staff and volunteers engaged in those initiatives. A collaborative
605 culture may be a key part of the NSOs' infrastructure capacity in general, and our findings
606 emphasize its particular importance for successful implementation of gender equity initiatives.
607 Effective communication beyond the organisation was another common element of infrastructure
608 capacity for gender equity efforts, yet a challenge across the NSOs, and particularly with the
609 PSOs and CSOs in their sport. This challenge also likely extends from NSOs' infrastructure
610 capacity in general, and was particularly notable with regard to the gender equity initiatives. The
611 ability to communicate clearly and extensively about their initiative was influenced at least in
612 part by the NSOs' financial capacity to support the cost of such communication. However, it was
613 also linked to the hierarchical Canadian sport system as a whole, where distance (NSO 1) and
614 different priorities (NSOs 1 and 3) reportedly compromised the NSOs' ability to effectively build
615 awareness, and thus secure buy-in and ensure consistent implementation of their initiative.
616 Despite these common elements, differences among the NSOs and their respective gender equity
617 initiatives appear to play out particularly in the organisations' internal infrastructure capacity
618 around those initiatives.

619 Embedding the gender equity initiative within the NSOs' strategic plan was a critical
620 element of planning/development capacity, indicating the importance of aligning the initiative
621 with the organisation's overall goals and direction (cf. Skirstad 2009). This action was
622 encouraged and reinforced by broad social and political emphases on gender equity, and the
623 related actions of other NSOs, as well as an underlying ideology of equity in all three NSOs (cf.
624 Skirstad 2009, Norman 2016). The findings suggest, by extension, the challenge of initiating and
625 persisting with gender equity initiative planning and implementation if such powerful, supportive
626 environmental forces are not present. Further, as Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd (2017) and others
627 (Shaw 2006, 2007, Hoeber 2007) note, historic and sustained cultural practices can be constraints
628 to meaningful organisational change around gender equity. Our findings indicate that despite an
629 underlying organisational commitment to gender equity, and staff and leader dedication to the
630 promotion of women in their sport, entrenched norms and practices represent a barrier to action.
631 This was evidenced in the continued dominance of men in decision making roles in all three
632 NSOs that reportedly slowed the development of the initiatives (cf. Shaw and Penney 2003).
633 Thus, an underlying ideology of equity may be a critical environmental influence to NSO
634 capacity for gender equity; however, sustained historical practices may compromise meaningful
635 advancements, highlighting the complexity and dynamics of an organisation's immediate
636 environment and its impact on capacity for change. The ability to build out the initiative beyond
637 the strategic plan was an additional capacity challenge of note, because of difficulty identifying
638 specific, future needs and using KPIs. Pinpointing specific outcomes to be achieved from gender
639 equity initiatives and measuring progress towards them was a critical action yet a particular
640 capacity challenge (cf. Shaw and Penny 2003, Skirstad 2009, Lough and Guerin 2019).

641 Finally, leaning on other NSOs and sport organisations for advice, direction, and material
642 resources, as well as delivery of the plan, characterized the NSOs' relationship and network
643 capacity. Though NSOs may initiate and maintain relationships with external organizations for a
644 variety of reasons, our findings illustrate the value of the NSOs' 'horizontal partnerships with
645 other [NSOs] if they have interests in common' (Bayle and Robinson 2007, p. 263). They also
646 highlight the role of other sport organisations beyond simply modelling gender equity practices.
647 However, other organisations' broad focus on gender equity, or capacity limitations for delivery,
648 notably constrained that capacity. The importance and complexity of accounting for *partners'*
649 capacity to engage with others was made apparent in this study, while potentially diverse
650 priorities at different levels of the Canadian sport system (Doherty and Clutterbuck 2013)
651 highlighted an environmental factor that further framed the capacity of these relationships to
652 support the NSOs' gender equity initiatives.

653 **Implications**

654 General implications for practice may be drawn from the findings (Patton 2015). NSO
655 capacity in general (including constraints) provides a platform for the organisation's efforts and
656 achievements (cf. Hall *et al.* 2003), and for building needed capacity. From that basis,
657 expectations for gender equity initiatives, to meet policy directives and strategic goals at the
658 national sport level, should acknowledge the nature and potential complexity (including
659 variation) of NSOs' capacity for achieving related outcomes. An organisational capacity
660 perspective provides a relevant framework for NSOs, by highlighting the multidimensionality of
661 capacity to implement gender equity initiatives and the range of environmental factors that may
662 play an important role in shaping that capacity. Indeed, Robinson and Minikin (2011) encourage
663 NSOs to analyse the 'gap' between what they have and what they need – their own specific

664 capacities – to successfully implement initiatives. Understanding the strengths and challenges of
665 critical capacity elements can guide NSOs in building their capacities to address gender equity
666 within their sport, and in the context of influential environmental factors.

667 Our findings have specific implications for the NSOs in this study to build capacity to
668 enhance their respective initiatives. The process of capacity building should unfold from
669 identifying specific capacity challenges to respond to some stimulus (such as implementing
670 gender equity initiatives to address social/political pressures and organisational imbalances), to
671 determining ways to strengthen or build those capacities, and acknowledging the organisation's
672 readiness to do so (Millar and Doherty 2016). The NSOs in the current study may, for example,
673 turn to some of their identified capacity strengths, such as partnering horizontally (Bayle and
674 Robinson 2007) with other NSOs for advice and non-financial resources, to help build and
675 maintain the capacity necessary to address their gender equity goals.

676 Our study also has implications for organisational capacity theory with its extension, and
677 support, in the context of NSOs. The organisations examined draw on a variety of elements
678 within different dimensions, and with different effect, for specific goal achievement, which is
679 shaped by a range of environmental factors (Hall *et al.* 2003).

680 **Limitations and Future Research**

681 This study has several strengths but there are avenues for future consideration. First, the
682 study was delimited to NSOs engaged in a gender equity initiative, to understand the elements
683 required and forces experienced. NSOs that were not engaged, or had failed attempts, with
684 gender equity were not studied, and thus our findings are limited to active cases of gender equity
685 efforts. Second, the data were collected at one point in time, permitting only a cross-sectional
686 view of perceptions of capacity for gender equity initiatives and the influence of environmental

687 factors. Third, our investigation was delimiteded to Hall *et al.*'s (2003) capacity framework, yet
688 other dimensions and environmental factors may be important in the context of gender equity in
689 sport. For example, Kasale *et al.* (2018) call for the consideration of political, economic, socio-
690 cultural, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) factors as critical environmental
691 influences to NSO performance management.

692 Future research may consider several possible directions to address these points, and to
693 build on the knowledge generated in the current study. Future investigations may consider a
694 further sample of NSOs engaged in their respective gender equity initiatives, to determine
695 whether the critical elements of capacity and environmental factors uncovered here are common
696 across other organisations and initiatives. Alternatively, and where possible, NSOs' common and
697 contrasting capacities for the same initiatives may be considered, to control for variety in the
698 gender equity activities. Scholars may also consider the capacity, and environmental influences,
699 associated with NSO gender equity efforts that have not been successful, or never got off the
700 ground. Insight to this aspect is also invaluable to understanding capacity for gender equity
701 (Evans and Pfister 2020). Longitudinal research may be useful to uncover the relative importance
702 of various capacity elements at different stages of developing, initiating, implementing, and
703 sustaining gender equity initiatives. It may also be interesting to capture any capacity building
704 that is undertaken by NSOs to address their gender equity goals.

705 Future research may also examine the capacity of NSOs to engage in initiatives,
706 including policy development and implementation, targeting other underrepresented groups such
707 as Indigenous youth, or athletes with a disability (cf. Kitchin and Crossin 2018), uncovering the
708 critical elements of capacity, and corresponding environmental influences, for those efforts.
709 Further, an examination of the capacity of PSOs and CSOs to engage in gender equity (or other)

- 710 initiatives would help to generate insight to the broader system capacity of the organisations
- 711 within a sport as they address gender equity.

References

- AbouAssi, K., Makhoul, N. and Tran, L., 2019. Association between organizational capacity and scope among Lebanese nonprofits. *Public performance & management review*, 42, 461-482.
- Allison, R., 2017. From oversight to autonomy: Gendered organizational change in women's Soccer. *Social currents*, 4 (1), 71-86.
- Baldock, A. L., et al., 2015. Organizational capacity and organizational ambition in nonprofit and voluntary sports clubs. *VOLUNTAS*, 26 (5), 2023-2043.
- Bayle, E. and Robinson, L., 2007. A framework for understanding the performance of national governing bodies of sport. *European sport management quarterly*, 7 (3), 249-268.
- Canadian Women and Sport, 2022. *Benefits of gender equity* [online]. Available from: <https://womenandsport.ca/gender-equity/benefits-of-gender-equity> (Accessed 10 October 2022).
- Caprais, A., Sabatier, F. and Rubi, S., 2020. Electoral competition and gender quotas: Dearth of female applicants or structural resistance? *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 12, 349-364.
- Clutterbuck, R. and Doherty, A., 2019. Organizational capacity for domestic sport for Development. *Journal of sport for development*, 7 (12), 16-32.
- Doherty, A. and Clutterbuck, R., 2013. Canada. In: K. Hallman and K. Petry, eds. *Comparative sport development: Systems, participation and public policy*. New York: Springer, 323-342.
- Doherty, A. and Cuskelly, G., 2020. Organizational capacity and performance of community sport clubs. *Journal of sport management*, 34 (3), 240-259.
- Doherty, A., Misener, K. and Cuskelly, G., 2014. Toward a multidimensional framework of capacity in community sport clubs. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 43 (2_suppl), 124S-142S.
- Evans, A.B. and Pfister, G.U., 2020. Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative Review. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 56 (3), 317-342.
- Government of Canada, 2018. *Backgrounder: Gender equality and a strong middle class* [online]. Available from: https://www.fin.gc.ca/n18/data/18-008_1-eng.asp (Accessed 10 June 2019).
- Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S., 1989. *Fourth generation evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Hall, M. H., et al., 2003. *The capacity to Serve: A qualitative study of the challenges facing Canada's nonprofit and voluntary organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (distributor), Toronto, ON. Available from:

http://sectorsource.ca/sites/default/files/resources/files/capacity_to_serve_english.pdf (Accessed 10 June 2017).

Hallman, K. and Petry, K., 2013. *Comparative sport development: Systems, participation and public policy*. New York: Springer.

Hoerber, L., 2007. Exploring the gaps between meanings and practices of gender equity in a sport organization. *Gender, work & organization*, 14 (3), 259-280.

Hoye, R., et al., 2020. *Sport volunteering*. London: Routledge.

Kasale, L.L., Winand, M., and Robinson, L., 2018. Performance management of National Sports Organizations: A holistic theoretical model. *Sport, business and management: An international journal*, 8 (5), 469-491.

King, N., 1998. Template analysis. In: C. Cassell and G. Symon, eds. *Qualitative methods and analysis in organizational research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 118-134.

Kitchin, P. J. and Crossin, A., 2018. Understanding which dimensions of organizational capacity support the vertical integration of disability football clubs. *Managing sport and leisure*, 23 (1-2), 28-47.

Knoppers, A., Spaaij, R., and Claringbould, I., 2021. Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport governance: Sport as a unique field? *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 517-529.

Lough, N. and Guerin, A., 2019. *Routledge handbook of the business of women's sport*. London: Routledge.

Lusted, J. and Fielding-Lloyd, B., 2017. The limited development of English women's recreational cricket: a critique of the liberal "absorption" approach to gender equality. *Managing sport and leisure*, 22 (1), 54-69.

Millar, P. and Doherty, A., 2016. Capacity building in nonprofit sport organizations: Development of a process model. *Sport management review*, 19 (4), 365-377.

Misener, K. and Doherty, A., 2009. A case study of organizational capacity in nonprofit community sport. *Journal of sport management*, 23 (4), 457-482.

Myers, J. and Doherty, A., 2007. A multidimensional critique of the Sport Canada Policy on women in sport and its implementation in one national sport organization. *International journal of sport management and marketing*, 2, 322-343.

Norman, L., 2016. Is there a need for coaches to be more gender responsive? A review of the evidence. *International sport coaching journal*, 3 (2), 192-196.

- Norman, M., Donnelly, P. and Kidd, B., 2021. Gender inequality in Canadian interuniversity sport: Participation opportunities and leadership positions from 2010-2011 to 2016-2017. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 207-223.
- Norman, L., Rankin-Wright, A.J. and Allison, W., 2018. 'It's a concrete ceiling; it's not even glass': Understanding tenets of organizational culture that supports the progression of women as coaches and coach developers. *Journal of sport & social issues*, 42, 393-414.
- Organista, N., 2021. Gendering of recruitment and selection processes to boards in Polish sport Federations. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 259-280.
- Patton, M. Q., 2015. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. 4th ed. London: Sage.
- Paynter, S. and Berner, M., 2014. Organizational capacity of nonprofit social service agencies. *Journal of health & human services administration*, 37 (1), 111-145.
- Röthlin, F., Schmied, H. and Dietscher, C., 2015. Organizational capacities for health promotion implementation: results from an international hospital study. *Health promotion international*, 30 (2), 369-379.
- Robinson, L. and Minikin, B., 2011. Developing strategic capacity in Olympic sport organizations. *Sport, business and management: An international journal*, 1, 219-233.
- Scelles, N., 2021. Policy, political and economic determinants of the evolution of competitive balance in the FIFA women's football World Cups. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 281-297.
- Scelles, N. and Pfister, G., 2021. Policy and politics of women's sport and women in sport. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 201-206.
- Scheerder, J., Willem, A., and Claes, E., 2017. *Sport policy systems and sport federations: A cross-national perspective*. London: Springer
- Sharpe, E.K., 2006. Resources at the grassroots of recreation: Organizational capacity and quality of experience in a community sport organization. *Leisure sciences*, 28, 385-401.
- Shaw, S., 2006. Scratching the back of 'Mr X': Analyzing gendered social processes in sport organizations. *Journal of sport management*, 20 (4), 510-534.
- Shaw, S., 2007. Gender in sport management: A contemporary picture and alternative futures. In: V. Aitchison, ed. *Sport and gender identities: Masculinities, femininities and sexualities*. London: Routledge, 84-100.
- Shaw, S. and Penney, D., 2003. Gender equity policies in national governing bodies: An oxymoron or a vehicle for change? *European sport management quarterly*, 3 (2), 78-102.

Skirstad, B., 2009. Gender policy and organizational change: A contextual approach. *Sport management review*, 12, 202-216.

Stake, R.K., 2006. *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guildford Press.

Svensson, P.G. and Hambrick, M.E., 2016. 'Pick and choose our battles'—Understanding organizational capacity in a sport for development and peace organization. *Sport management review*, 19 (2), 120-132.

Svensson, P.G., Hancock, M.G., and Hums, M.A., 2017. Elements of capacity in youth development nonprofits: An exploratory study of urban sport for development and peace organizations. *VOLUNTAS*, 1-28.

Svensson, P.G., Kang, S., and Ha, J.P., 2019. Examining the influence of shared leadership and organizational capacity on performance and innovative work behaviour in sport for development and peace. *Journal of sport management*, 33 (6), 546-559.

Valenti, M., Peng, Q., and Rocha, C., 2021. Integration between women's and men's football clubs: A comparison between Brazil, China and Italy. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 13, 321-339.

Wicker, P. and Breuer, C., 2011. Scarcity of resources in German nonprofit sport clubs. *Sport management review*, 14 (2), 188-201.

Wicker, P. and Breuer, C., 2013. Understanding the importance of organizational resources to explain organizational problems: Evidence from nonprofit sport clubs in Germany. *VOLUNTAS*, 24 (2), 461-484.

Wicker, P. and Breuer, C., 2014. Exploring the organizational capacity and organizational problems of disability sport clubs in Germany using matched pairs analysis. *Sport management review*, 17 (1), 23-34.

Wicker, P. and Breuer, C., 2015. How the economic and financial situation of the community affects sport clubs' resources: Evidence from multi-level models. *International journal of financial studies*, 3 (1), 31-48.

Yin, R. K. and Davis, D., 2007. Adding new dimensions to case study evaluations: The case of evaluating comprehensive reforms. *New directions for evaluation*, 113, 75-93.

Table 1. Profile of participants interviewed

NSO	Role	Years at NSO	Involvement with Gender Equity Initiative
NSO 1	Senior Staff	9.5	Leads the policy at NSO 1
	Board Member	2.5	Shares project management insights
	Board Member	26	Shares experiences from coaching in home province
	Board Member	2	Shares experiences from coaching in home province
	Senior Staff	5	Final authority on policy but little daily involvement
NSO 2	Senior Staff	2.5	Final authority on policy but little daily involvement
	Senior Staff	12	Had led the program for over 10 years
	Board Member	8	Worked on program's inception
	Former Staff	7	Responsible for the program's success for 7 years
	Staff Member	2.5	Current leader of the program
NSO 3	Former Staff	5	Part of initial leadership group that shaped the program
	Senior Staff	6	Leading the development of the initiatives
	Staff Member	0.10	Coordinates different projects related to the initiatives
	Board Member	1	Working on the officials' initiative
	Staff Member	10	Working on the implementation of the initiative through the youth development program

Table 2. Critical elements, and whether they are a strength (+) or challenge (-), for NSO capacity for gender equity initiatives

Capacity Dimension	NSO 1	NSO 2	NSO 3
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Knowledgeable and experienced staff ✦ Committed staff and leaders – Sufficient staff and volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Knowledgeable and experienced staff ✦ Committed staff and leaders – Sufficient staff and volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Knowledgeable and experienced staff ✦ Committed staff and leaders – Sufficient staff and volunteers
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Dedicated line item for initiative – Sufficient funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Dedicated line item for initiative ✦ Sponsorships – Sufficient/sustained funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Dedicated line item for initiative ✦ Sufficient/sustained funding
Infrastructure/ Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Collaborative culture ✦ Governing board – Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Collaborative culture ✦ Operations – Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Collaborative culture ✦ Technology/database ✦ Quality facilities – Communication
Planning/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Inclusion of initiative in the NSO's strategic plan – Use of key performance indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Inclusion of initiative in NSO's strategic plan – Long term planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Inclusion of initiative in NSO's strategic plan – Long term planning
Relationship/Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ – Advice, non-financial resources ✦ – Mechanism for delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ – Advice, non-financial resources ✦ – Mechanism for delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ – Advice, non-financial resources ✦ – Mechanism for delivery

Table 3. Environmental factors influencing NSO capacity for gender equity, and their positive (+) and negative (-) influence

Factor	NSO 1	NSO 2	NSO 3
Constraints and Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canadian sport system (different priorities) - Geographic expanse of Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political climate (gender equity) + Canadian sport system (social pressure for gender equity) - Climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political climate (gender equity) + - Canadian sport system (social pressure for gender equity; different priorities) - Climate change
Access to Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avenues to procure additional funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avenues to procure additional funding - Access to volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avenues to procure additional funding - Access to volunteers
Historical Factors (norms, values, assumptions, practices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Equity is valued - Sustained dominance of men in the sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Equity is valued - Sustained dominance of men in the sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Equity is valued - Sustained dominance of men in the sport