Sport Management Review 20 (2017) 522–534

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Sport Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/smr

Lifting the veil on allowing headscarves in football: A co-constructed and analytical autoethnography

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online 23 August 2017

Keywords:
Islam
Sport
FIFA
Politics
Constraints
Women's football

ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors provide an analytical, co-constructed autoethnography of the first author's efforts to change Law Four of the Laws of Football. Law Four did not allow players to wear clothing or equipment that was dangerous or made any political, religious, or personal statement. The contentious issue was head coverings, and more specifically, the headscarf, an article of female clothing common to hijab within Muslim communities. The co-constructed approach required the first author to write her story. The co-authors role was to probe the emerging narrative, using related theory. Underpinned by an interest in micropolitical exchange process within a multi-level governance structure, the first author's experiences showcase passive resistance, rhetoric, problem framing, expert knowledge, insider knowledge, coalition building, and punishment by exclusion.
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1. Introduction

In this paper, we focus on the change process underpinning a more inclusive interpretation of Law Four of Football. Law Four of Football includes the statement: "A player must not use any equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewellery)" (Federation of International Football Associations, 2015, p. 22). Decision 1 of Law Four further states: "the basic compulsory equipment must not contain any political, religious or personal statements" (p. 24). Interpretation of the Law and related decisions was left to the discretion of individual referees. Consequently, an inconsistent application of this Law allowed female footballers to wear headscarves whilst playing in some countries but not in others. In many instances, the Muslim footballer elected not to play rather than play without a headscarf.

Changing the interpretation of Law Four would certainly be a political process. The process would be an intersection of not just sport, gender, and leadership (Ryan & Dickson, 2016), but also religion. The political nature of the process would also be compounded by the multilevel structure of international football (Dickson, Phelps, & Waugh, 2010). Micropolitics refers to "the ways in which individuals attempt to influence others in order to attain desired goals" (Spaulding, 2000, p. 1). We consider micropolitics to be the art and science of getting your way in a world that wants something different. Understanding micropolitical exchange processes is necessary for comprehending the organisational change process (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl, 1996). Researchers have long explored organisational change and its significance within sport organisations (Casey, Payne, & Eime, 2012; Dowling, Edwards, & Washington, 2014; Girginov & Sandanski, 2008; Kihl,

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.08.005
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Leberman, & Schull, 2010; Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle, & Giauque, 2015; Skille, 2011; Skirstad, 2009; Stenling, 2013; Stevens, 2006; Wagner & Pedersen, 2013; Weight, Cooper, & Popp, 2015; Welty Peachey and Bruening, 2011; Welty Peachey and Bruening, 2012; Bruening, 2011, 2012).However, previous sport management researchers have not addressed the micropolitical exchange processes utilised as part of the change process. Moreover, there are no first person narratives from practitioners describing their change process experiences. Accounts of practitioner experiences can strengthen sport management claims to be an applied field (Doherty, 2013).

To address these concerns regarding micropolitical exchange processes and first person narratives, we employed an autoethnographic approach in this study. An autoethnography describes and systematically analyses (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). There is increasing use of autoethnographies to understand a variety of sport-related experiences including those of athletes (Dashper, 2015; Douglas, 2014; Garratt, 2015), referees (Schaeperkoetter, 2017), fans (Knijnik, 2014; Parry, 2012), major event volunteers (Kodama, Doherty, & Popovic, 2013), sport for development/peace workers (Chawansky, 2015), fitness enthusiasts (Baker, Zhou, Pizzo, Du, & Funk, 2017) and charity sport-event participants (Coghlan, 2012). Insider perspectives from female sport management professionals are conspicuous by their absence in the academic literature. Indeed, Kempster and Stewart (2010) lament "an absence of auto-ethnography from practising managers" (p. 206). Whilst some scholars have utilised autoethnographic approaches, they are usually written by academics about their academic experiences (Humberstone, 2009) or their leisure interests. These leisure interests include volunteering (Kodama et al., 2013), being a sport fan (Hoeber & Kerwin, 2013), or a sport participant (Fleming & Fullagar, 2007).

In this study, we employ a co-constructed and analytical approach to the autoethnography. In a co-constructed approach, the role of the author is to write a narrative about her experience, which is then interrogated and developed with the assistance of the co-authors (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012; Kempster & Stewart, 2010). The co-constructed approach should not be confused with collaborative autoethnographies, whereby two or more ethnographers gather data on a similar or shared social phenomenon (Allen-Collinson, 2012; Kerwin & Hoeber, 2015). In this co-constructed autoethnography, only the lead author was immersed in the change process. This is identical to Erin Kodama's autoethnography of her volunteer experience, but differs in that she never embraced the co-constructed approach, despite multiple authors (Kodama et al., 2013). Analytical autoethnographies refer to research where the researcher is fully immersed in the research group or setting, visible as such a member in published texts, and committed to theoretical developments (Anderson, 2006). Consistent with the call for more imaginative and innovative qualitative research (Shaw & Hoeber, 2016), this is the first sport management article to integrate co-constructed and analytical autoethnographic approaches.

We employed the co-constructed and analytical autoethnographic approach to examine the micropolitical process within the multi-level governance network that is the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). The specific context was the decision to change the interpretation of Law Four of the Laws of Football, which would consistently allow all Muslim female footballers to wear a headscarf during play. This was important because removing a headscarf to play football creates a major barrier to participation. Amongst the many lines of academic inquiry related to sport participation by Muslim women, many focus on constraints or barriers (Ahmad, 2011; Benn, Dagkas, & Jawad, 2011; Benn, Pfister, & Jawad, 2011; Dagkas, Benn, & Jawad, 2011; Maxwell, Foley, Taylor, & Burton, 2013,Maxwell, Foley, Taylor, & Burton, 2015; Maxwell & Taylor, 2010). However, amongst all of the perspectives and within the sport-participation-constraints research, there are no known efforts showcasing a decision-making process to remove a participation constraint.

In the following paper, we briefly review literature on micropolitics, multi-level governance and the nexus between Muslim women, sport, and hijab. We then describe the research context and outline our co-constructed and analytical authoethnographic approach. This section is followed by the lead author's narrative. We conclude with a discussion of the key micropolitical exchange processes, and suggestions for future research.

2. Background literature

2.1. Multi-level governance and FIFA

The concept of multi-level governance was introduced and developed in the context of European integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Marks et al., 1996). European integration is "a polity creating process in which authority and policy making influence are shared across multiple-levels of government – subnational, national and supranational" (Marks et al., 1996, p. 342). In the context of international sports governance, multi-level governance refers to "a system of continuous negotiation between and amongst organisations at several territorial tiers – international, national, regional, and local" (Dickson, Phelps, & Waugh, 2010, p. 113). Sport managers frequently adopt federated network structures as part of their sports' multi-level governance structures (Dickson, Arnold, & Chalip, 2005; Dickson et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2015). The key feature of a federated network is a governing organisation with the overarching responsibility to coordinate, manage, and control the interdependent activities of its affiliated members.

FIFA is the international governing body for football (or soccer). At the time of the Law Four debate, 209 Member Associations (e.g., New Zealand Football, Football Federation Australia) and six Confederations underpinned the multi-level governance of FIFA (Waugh, Dickson, & Phelps, 2014). The six Confederations (year of inception and current number of affiliates are listed in parenthesis) are: the Asian Football Confederation (AFC, 1954, 46), Confederation Africaine de Football

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