PRE-PRINT

Women as Leaders and Managers in Sports: Understanding Key Career Enablers and Constraints in the British Horseracing Industry

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Introduction

Globally, women's participation in sport has reached some significant milestones, with around 45% of the athletes taking part in the 2016 Rio Olympics being women, the highest ever. Audiences have grown for female participation in football, rugby, cricket, hockey and other sports. However, women's involvement *off* the field has not progressed at the same rates, with women continuing to be underrepresented in sports management and leadership roles at national and regional levels. In 2016, women made up just 16.6% of decision-making positions within the Olympic movement, a decrease of 1% from 2014. Within Europe, numbers of women directors in national sport organisations remain low (Women on Boards, 2016). A paucity of women in leadership roles and national, governing board positions in sport has been recognised for some time and has attracted a range of studies demonstrating how men maintain privileged positions in sports leadership (see, for example, Sibson, 2010; Adriaanse and Claringbould, 2014; Adriaanse, 2016).

Yet, little empirical research exists on gender and leadership in the sport of horseracing. This is a complex industry which consists of many key participants. In the UK, the sport is a significant employer and comprises many diverse and differently-sized organisations. Given increasing interest in both women's role in UK sports and government-backed initiatives to raise the number of women on company boards, a study on the role of gender in this area was very timely. Against this background, the present chapter explores the issues encountered by women seeking career progression and senior leadership roles in the British horseracing industry. In particular, we present the results of a research study investigating key career enablers and constraints.

Women, sport and leadership

Women as leaders in the UK

In the UK, sport forms a significant part of the UK economy and in 2015 around 44% of this sector's employees were women (Eurostat, 2015). The goal to increase the number of women participating in sport has been a growing focus of policy and investment, for example, the UK-wide, 'This Girl Can'[1] campaign.

More widely, the issue of gender diversity in business has become increasingly prominent in the UK in recent years, reflecting ongoing government and business community concerns about loss of talent and having the best leadership capability to be globally competitive. Following the 2010, five-year strategy from the European Commission, which included addressing women's under-representation in key decision-making roles (European Commission, 2010), the UK launched a government-backed review and examined the underrepresentation of women on boards of the UK's Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) companies. The resultant business-led voluntary framework for action set out a need to collect and analyse data, act on feedback and learn to recognise unconscious bias which can cause decision-makers to make assumptions about women's ambition, preferences or personal circumstances. The subsequent period from 2010 to 2015 saw women's representation on UK's FTSE 100 boards more than double to 26% with no boards in the FTSE 100 having an

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[1] http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/ - launched in January 2015 and aimed at breaking down the barriers preventing women and girls from participating in sport and physical activity.

all-male board (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015). Targets are therefore identified as a "key catalyst to speed up the pace of change" and further goals have been set including a FTSE 100 target for 33% female representation in executive positions (Hampton-Alexander, 2016, p12). A goal of 30% female membership is widely sought as the minimum required to achieve 'critical mass', avoid tokenistic representation and impact board dynamics (Kanter, 1977; Konrad et al, 2008).

Similar initiatives have been extended into the sports sector where publicly-funded sports set a target of 30% gender diversity and are required to demonstrate "a strong and public commitment to progressing towards achieving gender parity […] on its Board" to be eligible for support (UK Sport, 2016, p26). However, reflecting global and European trends, women remain underrepresented in senior and governance roles. In 2016, half of 68 national sports governing bodies had less than 30% female non-executive directors and just 23% of chief executive officers were female. Moreover, from a high-point of 42% of women in senior leadership roles in national governing bodies in 2014, the percentage fell to 36% in 2016 (Women in Sport, 2017).

The 'case' for women in leadership roles

The inclusion of women in all roles within sport leadership is essential for increasing their influence in ways that will allow them to set agendas, contribute to decision-making and distribute resources. Those who campaign for change in the sports sector argue that more diversity in decision-making roles leads to improved economic results and improved governance for sports organisations (Women on Boards, 2016).

In the wider, corporate sector, many studies seek to justify the presence of women in leadership and board positions. Underpinning much of the research is a desire to support a 'business case' for them to be there. De Beaufort and Summers (2014), for example, argue that the different skills sets women can bring are a strength and create a "mixed power model" integrating masculine and feminine behaviours for positive impact (p101). Different leadership styles and qualities such as team-working, empathy and emotional intelligence are often associated with female board members. Other research has shown positive board member relationships arising from diversity. This work assesses the positive effects of women on board processes, for example, in their control of conflict or strategies for decision-making, with assumptions that women bring 'something extra' to the board through their personality characteristics and/or non-traditional skills-set (Carter et al, 2003; Nielsen and Huse, 2010).

Some also support a 'moral' case for gender diversity, based on the principles of equality, dignity and respect, or emphasise an integrated relationship between the individual, business and society which forms the core arguments of corporate social responsibility (Tatli et al, 2014, cited in Karataş-Özkan et al, 2014). Others argue that women on boards can increase organisational legitimacy and corporate reputation with both existing female employees and potential recruits (Terjesen et al, 2009).

Career barriers

A series of factors can act as barriers for women in achieving leadership positions and these may combine at different stages of their careers. Explanations for low numbers of women in leadership roles have often focused on the 'supply pipeline', arguing that a range of causes such as caring and family responsibilities, exhibiting fewer leadership traits and being less

motivated to attain high-level roles leads to a shortage of female talent to 'feed' senior levels. Within sport, the barriers identified are also attributed to the traditions, long-standing members and 'old boys' networks' which challenge any attempts to create a more inclusive environment (Shaw, 2006). Further, disincentives identified to women's aspiration included feeling pressurised to 'fit' with male-dominated culture (Claringbould and Knoppers, 2007) and overcompensate to prove themselves worthy (Inglis et al, 2000; Walker and Bopp, 2011) and facing persistent discrimination (Burton, 2015). Gender segregation and stereotyping, perceptions of women's leadership styles, work-life balance and the influence of different career paths, are further factors identified, and these are explored in the following sections.

Gender segregation

Many sectors and industries experience 'vertical segregation' along gender lines with men concentrated in more senior roles. This is often attributed to the 'glass ceiling', a barrier of prejudice and discrimination which, though unseen, prevents upward movement and increases as women ascend the hierarchy (Galloway, 2012). Eagly and Carli (2007) dispute the idea of a single obstacle, describing instead a 'labyrinth' which is a complex endeavour to negotiate different barriers at different stages in the work-life cycle.

Horizontal segregation can also exist, i.e., women and men concentrated in different types of jobs. Women, for example, are often pinned to 'motherly' roles (sometimes known as the '3Cs': care, concern and connection) which are often assigned a lower status (Charles and Gruskey, 2004). Within sport the 'glass wall' metaphor is sometimes used to describe an invisible barrier which obstructs lateral movement and places women in "female appropriate" roles affording men greater numbers of opportunities (Galloway, 2012, p55). Studies by Walker et al (2011) and Menaker and Walker (2013), for example, identified bias against hiring women to train male athletes, despite their being fully or over-qualified for the role.

Shaw and Frisby (2006) and Cunningham (2008) contend that masculinity and gender inequality can become institutionalised, with male behaviours and activities often seen as appropriate and required. Qualities associated with men can become normalised and prioritised within key organisational processes such as selection, recruitment and promotion (Gronn and Lacey, 2006). This takes place through a process, termed by Kanter (1977) as 'homologous reproduction' where a dominant coalition (i.e., men) works systematically to 'reproduce' itself, maintaining the status quo of male authority within the organisation's structures, and several studies (e.g., Whisenant and Mullane, 2007; Regan and Cunningham, 2012; Joseph and Anderson, 2016) have identified this as a phenomenon in the sports world. Anderson (2009), for example, identified how male leaders with responsibility for hiring "seek similar qualities in people they hire – appointing clones to reproduce the masculinized nature of their sport", often assuming that the best person for the role is the one who is least threatening to the current structure (p7). Transparency in hiring processes, organisational support for the inclusion of women and both men and women in sport leadership positions taking a role as advocates for change are some of the ways such gender bias might be addressed (Walker and Bopp, 2011; Walker and Sartore-Baldwin, 2013).

Many organisations identify as meritocracies, though it must be recognised that 'merit' can be constructed in both objective and subjective ways (Thornton, 2015, cited in Rodgers, 2015). Objective aspects relate to verifiable factors such as qualifications, work experience and so on. However, subjective factors are open to interpretation by those involved in the recruitment

and selection processes, and may be evaluated against the prevailing norms of the organisation. This can disadvantage candidates whose profile does not match existing norms and values, with 'merit' exercised using 'cultural fit' as a veil for pre-existing (possibly subconscious) prejudices which ultimately reinforce the status quo (McNamee and Miller, 2009).

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes can lead to women being perceived differently to men. Underlying social perceptions, on encountering others, relate to both 'warmth' and 'competence'. The 'warmth' dimension engenders impressions about friendliness, trustworthiness and helpfulness, whereas the 'competence' dimension reflects traits such as respect and efficiency (Fiske et al, 2007). Based on these, some hold strong beliefs about the attributes of men and women and their social roles and acceptable behaviour which in turn sets internalised, stereotypical expectations about what women do and what they *ought* to do. 'Communal characteristics' (pertaining to 'warmth') describe a concern with other's well-being, sympathy and nurturing and are often ascribed to women. 'Agentic' characteristics (pertaining to 'competence') such as assertiveness, ambition and confidence are ascribed to men.

Eagly and Karau (2002) identified that the dissimilarity, or incongruity between ascribed, often idealised female roles and leadership characteristics can lead to prejudice against women in senior roles. Furthermore, they highlight that women are subject to prejudice in two respects. Firstly, females are considered less qualified for leadership because expectations are set for women to be more communal than agentic. Secondly, women who do display the qualities considered important for leadership are judged less positively than a man in the same position because typical leadership traits are incompatible with the acceptable female attributes. This has been described as the 'double bind' situation where women leaders are criticised for being less agentic, but more agentic women are seen as uncaring or lacking empathy. Within the sports sector, Burton et al (2009) found that women in director positions were judged capable of possessing 'masculine' managerial characteristics such as delegation or problem-solving skills, but that these are not seen as the way women should act.

Gender differences are widely perpetuated throughout sport. Women athletes, for example, face 'gender marking' which verbally and visually presents male athletes and men's sports as the norm with women athletes and competitions as secondary (Fink, 2015). Arguably, this context makes it easier to undermine women's leadership capabilities (Sinclair, 2013, cited in Ladkin and Spiller, 2013), thus trivializing women's accomplishments. Furthermore, female sportswomen and athletes are objectified through sexually suggestive coverage (Clavio and Eagleman, 2011); their appearance taking precedence over their athletic performance or skills (Trolan, 2013); infantilized by being described as 'girls', which can position them as weak or unsuited to the physical demands of sport (Bernstein, 2002; Butler and Charles, 2012); or portrayed as being the wrong shape and therefore less resilient than males (Butler and Charles, 2012). Muscular and strong female bodies are portrayed as 'manly' or 'unfeminine' (Godoy-Pressland, 2016); or female athletes depicted in heteronormative roles as wives, girlfriends and mothers (Cooky et al, 2013).

Leadership styles

Women in leadership positions may also be perceived less favourably than men, simply because of their differing styles. While masculine leadership styles may emphasise the end-result and 'quick wins' of relationships, more feminine styles often focus on the means of reaching the outcome and the quality of relationships (Annis and Gray, 2013). Carli and Eagly (2011) found that women might look for input from others in an effort to make people feel included and create open communication channels. Such softer communication styles, however, can be interpreted as a lack of self-confidence or a failure to effectively exercise authority, rather than an attempt to be respectful or considerate. Furthermore, Kumra and Vinnicombe (2010) highlighted how women within masculine organisational cultures are expected to perform at a high level whilst maintaining 'impression management techniques' to ensure they fit the key organisational norms of being ambitious, available and likeable whilst dispelling negative stereotypes attached to their gender. Hampton-Alexander (2016), also argue that demonstrating 'stereotypically feminine' traits of showing concern and care can lead to being liked but not respected, producing a trade-off between competence and likability.

These factors can feed prejudicial views regarding women's suitability for leadership. Within sports organisations, for example, managers have been shown to give more challenging interviews to female applicants because they assumed them to be less well-suited to the role than a man (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003).

Work-life balance

Women often bear the role of primary carer, and family responsibilities which can be incompatible with organisational practices that demand a separation between career and life (O'Neil et al, 2008). This can bring about a challenge of competing priorities for women, where job, childcare and other domestic responsibilities struggle to find an equilibrium (Zilanawala, 2016). In the sports sector, family responsibilities have been seen by women as a primary obstacle to leadership success through the influence on their career decisions and work capacities (Pfister and Radtke, 2009). Dixon and Bruening (2005) and Adriaanse, (2016) argue that some specific elements of the sport sector make it particularly susceptible to work-life conflict, including a need for long and non-standard hours and extensive travel. The need to be available in addition to working longer than a normal working week may also be a factor which deters women from applying for leadership roles that involve dealing with complex and competing demands (Billing, 2011).

Career paths

Traditionally, men have followed a linear career progression pattern, advancing through the ranks of the organisational hierarchy, working steadily, 'full-time', with vertical advancement, external rewards, organisational loyalty and job security (MacDermid et al, 2001, cited in McDonald et al, 2005). In general, career patterns, however, are becoming less linear, with a change to more 'boundaryless' or 'protean' careers, i.e., driven by individual values and emphasis on a self-directed approach (Briscoe et al, 2006).

Women's careers can also be strongly influenced by change and compromise (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006), and they often find themselves at 'priority junctions', where certain family responsibilities (pregnancy, raising young or teenaged children, eldercare) take priority over other commitments. Therefore, their careers may be interconnected with their lives in more

complex ways as they attempt to balance work and non-work issues with other personal and societal factors (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005; O'Neil et al, 2008). This may be perceived as a lack of commitment and a move away from normative pathways which can limit rewards and reduce the chances of success (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006).

Career enablers

Several factors have been identified as enablers in developing women's careers. These include the importance of accumulating social capital (e.g., professional networks) and mentoring or sponsorship from senior and influential colleagues (De Vries et al, 2006; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010).

Social and human capital

Fugate et al (2004) identify adaptability as an essential component for career success in times where the pace of change is high, boundaries between jobs, organisations and life roles are increasingly blurred and individuals must negotiate a variety of role transitions. Both social and human capital are important elements of remaining employable and realising opportunities in the job marketplace.

Social capital provides individuals with career-enhancing opportunities through information, influence and reciprocity along with access to formal and informal, social networks which in turn can feed professional and personal development (Fugate et al, 2004). Studies on the success factors of women in sports organisations showed social capital, such as networks of peers, being less available to women and having greater impact on men's careers in sport leadership, with the differences between the two having negative impact both on women's aspirations and their access to opportunities (Anderson, 2009; Walker and Bopp, 2011; Burton, 2015). Women with strong social networks and identifiable models identified this as career-enhancing (Inglis et al 2000; Dixon and Bruening, 2005).

Human capital encompasses a range of factors which include work experience and training, knowledge, skills and abilities, possession of which demonstrates an individual's commitment and ability to meet employers' performance expectations. In addition, developing human capital allows employees to be more adaptable, and able to negotiate changing and dynamic environments (Fugate et al, 2004). Studies in the sports sector have identified the importance of human capital in relation to career development which might include education, formal training, on-the-job training (Sagas and Cunningham, 2004) and developing intrapersonal skills such as self-confidence and self-motivation which create a competent leader (Brown and Light, 2012). O'Neil et al (2008) found that human capital is critical for women's careers. However, taking time out for childbirth and caring responsibilities can impact women's human capital, having a negative effect on their careers.

Mentoring and sponsorship

Sponsorship from within personal networks is a consistent success factor for both men and women in achieving board appointments. However, whilst men are more likely to receive proactive sponsorship, women tend to have advisers and individuals who encourage them, including head-hunters, peers or colleagues (Brown et al, 2015). Ibarra et al (2010) identify mentoring as a potential success factor, but this takes different forms: where there is 'sponsorship' the mentor goes beyond giving feedback, advice and counselling, and uses their

influence to advocate for their mentee. Women are more likely to be promoted and apply for senior roles if they receive this type of sponsorship within their mentoring relationships.

Women in British horseracing industry study

Context and background

British horseracing is a very broad industry, having strong links with and supporting a variety of economic sectors including horse breeders, trainers and owners, jockeys, stable staff plus event-planning, media, catering, veterinary medicine, betting and racing governance. The industry has modernised and expanded significantly in the last few decades, and racecourses diversified into mainstream entertainment venues. As such a multifaceted industry, it contributes significantly to the wider economy.

The industry provides a wide spectrum of career opportunities through the variety of career paths and role types which are available, attracting increasing numbers of women. However, women remain underrepresented in the leadership structures of the sport. As British horseracing does not attract any public funding, there is no government-led incentive to set targets for gender diversity. Equestrian sports are unusual in that men and women compete on equal terms, however, the relative success of women in equestrian sport is not replicated in horseracing. Amongst notable women athletes in horseracing none were represented in the list of top ten flat or jump jockeys during 2015 (British Horseracing Authority, 2017).

Methodology

The study was designed using a mixed methodology, which encompassed both a quantitative and a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to provide a broader perspective, and help achieve greater confidence in the research findings (Webb et al, 1966). For the purposes of this chapter, the qualitative element comprising free-format commentary from responses to a survey questionnaire and interview data was extracted as these provided a particularly rich data set allowing deeper analysis of participants' perceptions and experiences.

Existing literature and policy materials relating to women and leadership set the context for initial discussions with a small steering group of horseracing industry stakeholders. Using these discussions to identify key issues specific to women's roles in the horseracing industry, we developed and disseminated an online questionnaire. This explored the career constraints and enablers of individuals involved in all areas of horseracing, and involved men and women from a variety of roles to obtain the greatest possible spread of perspectives.

Overall, 393 people participated in the survey, representing a wide range of individuals from the horseracing community. The distribution of survey participants can be seen in Table 1. Alongside this, we conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews with senior figures, nine of whom were male and seven female, to explore their individual perspectives on gender and leadership across the industry. These individuals were invited to take part by the steering group on the basis of long-standing industry experience and comprised representation from many areas of horseracing including breeding, racehorse training, racecourse management, equine and human welfare, jockeys, stable staff, governing bodies, media and education.

Extensive qualitative data was collected, in the form of interview transcriptions and survey participant text which we coded thematically. To achieve this, we developed a small number

of pre-set categories for analysis based on the initial findings of the literature and policy review. In addition, open coding was used based on grounded theory procedures to inductively develop further categorisation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, cited in Silverman, 2005), and allowing any previously unidentified themes to emerge (Charmaz, 2004, cited in Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). Systematic and reiterative reading and discussion within the research team produced a set of key topics and primary areas for focus, under which we could group our findings and further develop discussion.

Please insert Table 1 about here

Empirical findings

Working environment

Our findings indicated a wide range of factors which had an impact on career progression for women within the horseracing industry. It was notable that career structures can be extremely complex, with many successful individuals in the industry having a life-long interest in the sport and holding (or having held) multiple paid and unpaid voluntary roles which helped them develop an understanding of how the industry works. Racing is seen by many as a 'way of life', so those with conflicting priorities such as childcare are often portrayed as not taking their role seriously: working flexibly or part-time can be viewed very negatively with ramifications for career opportunities.

In some parts of the industry, particularly small businesses and/or roles working with animals, there is less scope for flexibility as there is no colleague to cover or the working day must meet the animals' needs. In addition, some employers are based in rural or remote locations, at a distance from the areas where racing activity is concentrated. Other, larger employers, though such as racecourses, allow for a wider range of opportunities and more flexible job roles.

Stereotyping and segregation

These were widely evident, with specific areas categorised as particularly successful for women, such as breeding and bloodstock work, and strong perceptions that women have greater empathy with animals than men and are better at nurturing and caring roles. Some roles were reported as particularly male-dominated and/or 'traditional', including professional jockeys, aspects of print and television media, trainers and stable staff. One female survey participant stated: "*Sexism is still a big issue and people consider elements of the job / roles in industry as [a] male or female role. Woman can nurse foals men can do stallions etc*".

Popular 'narratives' were evident regarding the different roles women take. One such was that women choose to focus in particular career areas – animal care, HR, etc, for example, one (female) interview participant stated that: "*I think women were always interested [in stud farming], because women are always interested in animals*", and another highlighted "*a perception that women understand horses or animals better. They're more empathetic*". Another view was that the physical nature of some roles, working in yards and in the open air, for example, means women choose to move on whilst men tend to 'survive' and progress to more senior roles.

Women from across the industry reported being patronised, not being taken seriously or being denied opportunities because of their gender, and several female participants reported facing hostility when considering more senior roles. One female survey participant described how: "*I often get asked to do secretarial work by the older men in the company [despite being an account executive]. They are just very old school and so don't see that I could deem this as derogatory".* Another female survey participant: "*was discouraged from moving forwards into pupil assistant type role based on my sex*" and instead "*pigeon-holed into a secretarial role*". A further female survey participant, whose managing director had moved on leaving a vacancy "*did not feel that as his second in command [they] would consider a woman in the role. This was never overt however I was not encouraged to apply*".

Though high numbers of women are present at the lower levels of the industry, for example, through racing colleges this is not replicated at the top of the hierarchy which is predominantly populated by men. Although talented women were identified as progressing into key roles, including chief executives (albeit in small numbers), several participants described a bottleneck at senior level and underrepresentation of women in director and executive roles. Analysis of UK horseracing organisations showed that women are better represented on charitable boards than other types of board, with 34% of total trustee board membership being female. On other boards, including those integral to industry governance, women constitute just 16% of total membership with five boards having no women at all.

Pregnancy/maternity/caring responsibilities

Negative attitudes towards women during pregnancy, maternity leave and periods of childcare were widely reported. Younger women were seen as less desirable employees because they might leave to have children, and some reported views that motherhood is incompatible with a management or executive role. One male interviewee stated: "*I know it happens. A woman whose child is sick and has to go home early or come in late because there may have been a childcare issue. You know you can get the rolling of the eyes, can't you! But the same guy that might be leaving at 3pm in the afternoon for a game of golf with a colleague is almost a slap on the back and 'Go on! Friday! Off you go*!" A female participant shared her experience of poor treatment around maternity and childcare: "*Having been pregnant, I found the support and acceptance extremely poor. When trying to return to my post it was made virtually impossible and I have had to resign. My bonus was withheld as apparently I couldn't claim as I was on maternity leave.*"

Additional barriers were also identified for women with caring responsibilities. For example, the need to travel and shift work in some roles, particularly when working with horses, but also in the media, dictates where to live and can limit access to good quality childcare.

Career development

Access to *social capital* was limited for some as male-dominated structures and environments restricted the available mentoring and networking opportunities. In terms of *human capital*, training and development opportunities spanned the industry presenting opportunities for formal or structured learning, ranging from apprenticeship qualifications through to a management academy and an MBA programme. Some participants, however, identified that lack of opportunities for and understanding of training and development had constrained their careers.

Retraining opportunities were identified as particularly important for women with childcare responsibilities (either to switch roles, or to make up for 'lost time'), though were closed to some because of cost or an inability to access, for example, for those based in more remote or rural geographical locations. In addition, those in freelance or self-employed roles had less access to training and networking opportunities because of cost implications.

Mentoring was felt to be particularly useful for understanding the complexities of the industry and helping to build credibility. Many participants reported positive and useful experiences, and where no mentor was available this was a key career constraint. One female survey participant felt that "*the company I work for has very few women in managerial roles to act as mentors or role models*". Another "*just never really had the support and encouragement to go further. A good mentor would have helped, but [I] never found the right person.*"

Networks, including friendship networks and contacts outside of the industry, were identified as key for career development, and a significant career enabler. However, some networks, including male-only events and clubs exclude women and create an area of disadvantage. Furthermore, women who have taken time out for family responsibilities were often less able to build up contacts and industry knowledge. Several women highlighted the importance of women supporting one another, and one female interview participant talked about the importance of a women's networking group she belonged to: "*I think the dynamics of walking into a room full of women is just so different to walking into a room full of people of both genders … there's a very supportive network there. And I think for young women going into the industry … the confidence that that can give you, and the support they can give you is really important*".

Furthermore, female *role models* were seen as exceptionally important for showing younger women that success is possible. Senior women who have successfully balanced family life and career and can influence both male colleagues' behaviour and/or influence institutional practices were highly valued as inspirational figures. These women helped some to set career goals given the complexity of the industry and the range of potential career pathways.

Discussion

With the modernisation of the horseracing industry, women have become increasingly prominent. Diversification has broadened the skills-base needed, opening up opportunities for women, though often in more traditionally 'female areas' such as HR or the charitable sector. There has, though, been a breakthrough of women in previously 'male dominated' areas as becoming owners and, to an extent, trainers. Racecourse management was identified as a particularly progressive area driven by its commercial and customer-facing nature.

Our research identified polarised views about the difficulties or disadvantages women in the industry face. Some felt very strongly that there is prejudice and discrimination in many areas of the industry. Others felt equally strongly that the industry is a meritocracy, and that women who do not succeed have either 'chosen' family as an alternative or are not sufficiently committed or talented. Some powerful stereotypes remain, and women are often associated with caring and nurturing roles rather than strategic or governance-related jobs. Other women had faced hostility or struggled to be taken seriously in their work roles. As identified elsewhere in other sports, an 'old boys' network' was apparent, with practices which exclude women (specifically with male-only networks), feeding into a process of 'homologous reproduction'

with men protecting each other's interests and advancing the careers of those who reflect their own values or adhere to a perceived standard of 'merit'.

Clearly, issues remain which impact women's progression into senior and leadership roles. Low numbers of women in more senior and executive roles challenges the view that there is a consistent meritocracy. A number of structural constraints were identified which impact women in particular, such as restricted access to opportunities to acquire social capital, poor work/life balance, negative attitudes to pregnancy and maternity, and lack of access to childcare.

The higher representation of senior women in UK horseracing charitable organisations when underrepresented on other boards showed one area where women are concentrated in caring or empathetic roles and this is mirrored elsewhere in the industry. The prevailing view that women have greater talent for caring roles can be career-constraining if this labels them as being less 'business-like' and can lead to stereotyping, segregation and perpetuation of a 'glass wall'. Therefore, when reflecting on a narrative of 'choice', we must recognise the difficulties that women may face which can, as many other studies have found, guide and restrict their career choices and aspirations.

One aspect of the horseracing industry which is perceived to have evolved is the racing media, particularly televising of the sport. Although this was identified as mainly male-dominated, it was also felt that the gender balance is improving along with wider social trends and political interest in the subject of representation (though horseracing is a little behind other sports). This was attributed, in part, to the diversity focus of external organisations such as Ofcom[2]; voluntary initiatives which include monitoring gender balance and targets for gender-balanced presenting; and wider political interest in gender equality in the media[3]. Elsewhere, there has been mixed success achieved in the imposition of external targets: though the Davies Review has been the catalyst for increased membership on corporate boards, other initiatives, for example the UK Sport Code for Sports Governance[4] have been less successful. Such initiatives might require further exploration to inform development of a useful template for the horseracing industry as a whole.

Social capital, as elsewhere in the sports sector, is identified as extremely important, and the role of both formal and informal networks cannot be underestimated as a career enabler. Furthermore, whilst the complexity of the industry provides interesting and diverse career paths, a lack of career structure or conventional career paths can make the industry more difficult to negotiate. This presents challenges for those who take career breaks for caring purposes or who may be unable to undertake unpaid roles to gain experience and build contacts. Increasing opportunities for women to network and increase their social capital should be a priority.

However, care must be taken with any initiatives to avoid over-focusing on "fix the women … an organizational reaction to the view that women are less capable of dealing with management positions than men" (Shaw and Frisby, 2006, p487), encouraging women to

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[2] The UK's communications regulator, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/
[3] For example, the Select Committee on Communications, 2015, Women in news and current affairs broadcasting, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldselect/ldcomuni/91/91.pdf.
[4] http://www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/governance-code

simply learn to emulate characteristics seen as male. Knoppers (1987) describes a fixation on the different traits possessed by women and men as a belief that people need to be "repaired", an approach which often encourages the idea that women bring more deficiencies than assets (p11).

Organisational strategies for supporting women's career development

Horseracing faces challenges because of its diverse and far-reaching nature and also its traditional roots, all of which can make it difficult to enact systemic change. Smaller employers in particular were identified as needing support to provide access to initiatives, compared to larger organisations with more resources and more central locations. A series of industry-led initiatives (outlined in Table 2) was therefore recommended to both provide the necessary support and ensure any programme to advance gender equality is consistently addressed, with the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) - the industry's key governing body - acting as a key change agent:

Please insert Table 2 about here

Future research directions

In terms of contribution to future studies, we see this work as providing support for developing investigation into three areas for horseracing and sport.

Firstly, the diversity of career paths in the industry was striking. 'Portfolio' career patterns, for example, appeared to be widespread amongst both male and female participants. Developing a greater understanding of career patterns and trajectories, and ways in which these are gendered, might enable both horseracing and the wider sports sector to better understand these, to facilitate the provision of more structured career support and development strategies. The complexity of the workforce within horseracing also sets the scene for a range of inter- and cross-industry research, for example, for those engaged in hospitality or the betting sector.

Secondly, the role of social capital and networks was key, and the modes of operation and the way these are negotiated might, again, help develop a better understanding of ways to develop networking as career strategy.

Finally, participants gave some small insight into intersectional issues relating to gender and age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, and this would be a crucial area for future investigation.

Conclusion

This research was carried out at an exciting time both for British horseracing and those who wish to increase diversity and the number of women in leadership roles. It has contributed to the existing body of research on women and leadership in sport, as well as providing a benchmark for future studies.

There is optimism for the future of the industry, and our study identified change which could widen opportunities for women, including the growing prominence of social media in marketing the industry and the diversification into other sectors such as event management. 'Traditional' careers within horseracing might widen out into less male-dominated domains. Nevertheless,

addressing long-standing attitudes and industry features which see racing as a 'way of life' with distinct, gendered role segregation will present a challenge. However, the flexibility that many women have shown in dealing with different roles and priorities may be perceived instead as a positive aspect of their human capital which leaves them well-equipped to meet the demands of an adapting and evolving work environment.

Current word count: 8,442

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Table 1

Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

Gender	
Female	79.4%
Male	18.8%
Chose not to say	1.8%
Age	
Most highly represented groups for women were 35-44 (29% of female respondents); 25-34 (28.5% of female respondents).	
Most highly represented groups for men were 45-54 range (29.7% of male respondents) and the 35-44 group (18.9% of male respondents).	
Both men and women from were represented from 18-65+.	
Job experience	
The largest group represented were those with experience in racing administration (indicated in 21% of responses), followed by stable staff (14%) then being a racehorse owner (11%).	
55.9% had over 10 years' total experience.	
Many reported lifelong participation in the industry in a <u>variety</u> of roles both paid and unpaid.	
Employment types	
85% were in permanent employment.	
Some also combined this with temporary or self-employed work within the industry and in addition a number reported voluntary work, board positions, amateur status or honorary positions.	
Part-time employment was not particularly common for permanent employees (12%), though more so for those on temporary contracts (33%).	

Table 2

Organisational strategies for women's career development

Proposed intervention	Goals
• Explore industry-wide channels to achieve greater consistency in and increased access to career-based training. • Recognise the importance of mentoring and its different forms, from formalised relationships through to less formal, 'buddying'; develop industry-standard guidelines on mentoring which includes women from the early stage of their careers. • Explore different ways of *cross-industry* mentoring to give individuals greater opportunities for contact with a broader range of career experiences, in recognition of complex and 'portfolio' career structures.	Increase access to social and human capital.
• Raise the visibility of successful women in the industry; encourage successful women to share their career stories demonstrate strong role models and share ideas around career paths.	Raise visibility of role models and career possibilities.
• Support employers to explore different shift and working patterns, providing industry-led childcare solutions such as voucher schemes. • Ensure good practice is widely shared, for example, in maternity and pregnancy procedures and recruitment processes which minimise discrimination on the basis of gender.	Address structural, workplace barriers to work-life balance.
• Embed diversity training within wider leadership training industry-wide. • When involving executive search firms for appointments, set gender-based criteria.	Challenge stereotypes and existing structures; change perceptions of leadership; address unconscious bias in organisational processes.
• Establish industry-wide voluntary diversity targets in relation to gender equality in board representation; encourage different bodies and organisations to think about how they might diversify their board representation. • Encourage senior or executive stakeholders (both male and female) to sponsor or mentor a woman. • Arrange shadowing and mentoring opportunities for women below executive level.	Address issues of horizontal segregation; aim for a 'critical mass' of female leadership to avoid tokenism.