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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS – THE CASE OF ISRAELI SPORT ORGANISATIONS

By

MORAN BETZER-TAYAR

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the Award of Doctoral of Philosophy of the Loughborough University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses discourses about the roles and barriers to access for women to decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations. In particular it focuses on the exploration of discourses of masculinity and femininity that underpin the relatively recent construction of Israel society and the institutions of sport within it. It is observed that for the most part, Israeli sport organisations are governed by men and have served the interests of forms of hegemonic masculinity. In order to understand and explore the social construction of these gendered discourses in Israeli sport, two innovative and significant policy initiatives toward gender equity in sport were explored through the perceptions and discourses of key actors. These include the establishment of a Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG) and the creation of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS).

The theoretical framework for this thesis is informed by poststructuralist feminism, which provided an alternative way to understand and analyse voices of the (predominantly female) ‘other’ and thus to explore the historical contextual construction of current discourses of masculinity within Israeli sport organisations and society as a whole. The process of narrative revisions and production of gendered knowledge revealed how discourses produce and reinforce gender inequities in Israeli society, such as the discourse of militarisation or the unique political affiliation system in the sporting arena which continue to implicitly exclude women (and some men) from gaining access to leadership positions in sport organisations.

Within this theoretical frame, Critical Discourse Analysis was employed as a methodological approach to analyse how female and male interviewees, all considered to be ‘insiders’ within their organisations, explained the process of the construction of gendered roles and barriers. Included in the interview data was also the auto-ethnographical accounts of the author, who was a primary actor in the process of developing policy in the two case study initiatives addressed. Dominant discourses of femininity (such as the discourse of sisterhood and of the processes of mentoring), and of masculinity (and how these promote uniformity) were identified as mechanisms for reproducing the gendered reality of sport leadership in Israel.

The implication of a critical theoretical approach is that it should be emancipatory in its ambitions and impact, and the study is intended to contribute to enhancing the understanding of how discourse not only reflects but also creates barriers and opportunities so that the construction of such barriers can be challenged in progressive policy discourses.

Key words: Israel, policy, deconstruction, gender equity, critical discourse analysis, volleyball, feminist theory, poststructuralist, auto-ethnography, decision-making, gender, masculinity, sport, organisational.
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GLOSSARY

IDF – Israeli Defence Forces
NPWS – National Project for Women and Sport
NF – National Federation
IF – International Federation
AD – Athletic Directors
NGO – Non Governmental Organisation
NPO – Non Profit Organisation
IOC – International Olympic Committee
NOC – National Olympic Committee
INOC - Israeli National Olympic Committee
FIVB – Federation International Volleyball
IVA – Israeli Volleyball Association (also Federation)
VAYTG – Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls
VAYTB - Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Boys
ISSA – Israeli School Sport Association
PWB (LACHEN) – Promoting Women's Basketball
NCAA – National Collegiate Athletic Association
DC – Discourse
DA- Discourse Analysis
CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis
IWF- Israeli Women Foundation
IWSF – Israeli Women and Sport Foundation
Chapter One - The Contextual Structure of Gender and Sport in Israel

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this thesis is on gender equity and sports policy and might thus be seen as focusing on an area of policy and a set of concerns which are by no means prominent and which have only recently registered on Israel's list of priorities. However, it is worth acknowledging that Israel as a state is a relatively recent construction, born into a period of on-going conflict. Hence, sports policy and even more generic equity policies have occupied a relatively lowly position in terms of political salience, given the priority of national survival particularly in its early years of existence.

However, notwithstanding the relatively unpromising start in relation to this policy area, a number of initiatives have developed which address key aspects of gender equity in sport. These include the establishment of a Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG), and the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS), which form case studies within this thesis. The thesis aims to explore the historical and socio-cultural contextual structures in these Israeli sport organisations / projects and the socially constructed gendered discourse and discursively constructed barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations which are illustrated by these two key cases.

The study is informed by poststructuralist feminist theory, which, according to the literature (e.g. Shaw and Frisby, 2006; Shaw, 2001; Hoeber, 2007), provides an alternative to the dominant liberal feminist approach to gender research in sport management, and addresses the complexities of gender relations through processes of narrative revisions and critique. Poststructuralist feminist theory in this case, also provides a lens through which to perceive the substantial changes that will be required in the context of Israeli sport in order to re-frame the socio-historical gendered discourse that prevent [some] women and [some] men from accessing decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations.
Furthermore, the research has adopted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodology in order to focus on the socio-linguistic aspects of the gendered discourse evident in the two case studies. This in some cases implies considering broader issues relating to the socio-cultural contexts of the discourse within the two case studies. I am particularly interested in how language and discourse are used in the Israeli sport context to achieve social goals and the roles this use plays in social maintenance and change (for example, maintaining the status quo of gender inequities in Israeli sport as opposed to gender equity policies).

To conclude, in this introductory chapter we trace the historical development of gender and sport policy in the Israeli context (which is, of course, my own discursive account). However, before engaging in this historical account, two preliminary points should be made. The first relates to the nature of historical analysis and our particular approach to it. The second will sketch out some key considerations in relation to gender and equity.

### 1.2 Approaches to historical analysis

To further the understanding of the account of this chapter, three approaches to inquiry in relation to history (as identified by Munslow, 1997, cited in Booth, 2004), will be presented and described. The three approaches are: ‘reconstruction’, ‘construction’, and ‘deconstruction’. The reconstruction approach, and to a lesser degree the construction approach, prefer empirical methods and accept historical evidence as proof as they seek to ‘recover’ the past.

The key difference between the two is that constructivists welcome the concepts and theories of others as tools to explain relationships between events. Reconstructionists oppose theory on the grounds that it subjects historians to 'predetermined explanatory schemes'.

The third approach is the deconstructionists' view of history. This approach is highly sceptical of the claims to truth made by objective empirical history. It perceives history 'as a constituted narrative', devoid of moral or intellectual certainty. Deconstructionists argue that in order to understand history relativism is unavoidable. Therefore, deconstructionism promotes examination and interpretation of *history* from
different perspectives, e.g. women and gendered sport projects, women's exclusion from the Israeli sport context and its institutions such as the National Federations (Booth, 2004).

In this sense, deconstructionists acknowledge that each group and sometimes each member of a group has his/her/its own unique perspective and ‘facts’, and experiences his/her/its own struggles and pressures. Furthermore, they analyse the production of historic texts, reading them to uncover in-depth meanings to understand the intentions of the authors. According to deconstructionists, historians necessarily impose themselves on the reconstruction process of the historic text (Munslow, 1997). In this sense, deconstructionism poses major challenges for reconstructionism in that it places confidence in the power of narratives as a way of explaining and exploring realities.

The deconstructionist approach to history, shares some common ideas about critical reflection with the poststructuralist approach to femininity and masculinity, (see also Knoopers and Anthonissen, 2008). Both embrace the primary assumptions that language 'constitutes the content of history' and that it provides the 'concepts and categories deployed to order and explain historical evidence' (Munslow, 1997, p. 181).

Social and cultural historians increasingly understand language as giving meaning to social life, acknowledging its power to build communities, to demarcate social, political, and cultural struggles, to genders, propositions and ideologies (Hunt, 1989). In that sense, deconstructionists examine the form and structure of narratives and search for what they claim are the power relations inherent in narratives. Reconstructionists, on the other hand, regard language as a generally transparent medium and recognise a close correspondence between the language found or texts and past reality. Thus, deconstructionists question the degree to which language corresponds to the social world in the past and the present (Booth, 2004).

To conclude, the essence of deconstructionism is the process of text creation and of ‘seeing’, in other words, giving form to subjects that historians analyse, and thereby begin their reflection on the nature of their own efforts to represent history (Hunt, 1989). Some researchers incorporate language analysis into their studies of women and sport (e.g. Shaw and Slack, 2002; Hoeber, 2007; Shaw and Frisby, 2006),
employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or Foucauldian discourse analysis (Kandall and Wickham, 1999). For some theorists linguistic structures are said to shape social structures and cultural practices, such as sport and the role of women in key positions within it, and therefore to constitute history (Booth, in Christensen and Bale, 2004).

In this thesis, I have adopted a post structural epistemology; such an approach seeks to deconstruct hegemonic, socially constructed assumptions about gender and to draw attention to the fluidity, multiplicity and complexities of discourse. As the reader will see, I have tried to explore dominant discourse within the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA) and the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS), which the interviewees (male and female) use to describe their ideas, experiences, conceptions of life, their ideas on Israeli equity policies toward a more holistic acceptance of both genders and on feminine leadership styles, within Israeli sport organisations.

1.3 Equity and equality

In order to discuss this issue, a baseline definition of what I understand as feminism is required: feminism as perceived in this study is an approach which recognises the existence of gender inequity in society, recognises also that this situation is not fair / appropriate / ethical, and therefore also recognises a moral imperative to strive to rectify this. In that sense, in earlier literature, discussion on gender emancipation tended to focus primarily on equality between male and female athletes, in other words “women having the same opportunities as men to do things” (Hoeber, 2007: 266). This approach reflected liberal feminists' understanding of goals for gender emancipation. The aspiration of (liberal) feminists that women be ‘equal’ to men, had led on the one hand to progressive legislation (in Israel, see Nir-Toor, 2001), and to the promotion of women in specific countries to high level positions, for example, within the IOC, or in a Canadian interuniversity sport organisation (Frisby and Shaw, 2006). However, on the other hand, these, ‘success stories’ were relatively isolated, and many women still struggle to access middle and upper managerial positions, and may face more barriers to employment than their male counterparts (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003).
This concern with equality, assumes girls and women are essentially the same as boys and men and thus should be provided with the same opportunities and treated in the same way (Hall, 1996). Feminist researchers and feminist advocacy organisations in sport, such as the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWs), have challenged the equality approach to gender, since the underlying assumption is that women are expected to assimilate the dominant masculine norms in sport (Hall, 1996). In response, other understandings based on gender "equity" have been developed and espoused. For example, CAAWS adopts a definition of gender equity based on Kent and Robertson (1995, p. 43):

*The principle and practice of fair allocation of resources, programs and decision-making to both women and men, and includes the redressing of identified imbalances in the benefits available.*

On the whole, sport organisations consistently demonstrate that they are far from being equitable. One reason noted by Hovden (2000) might be that the tightly protected white male networking circles exclude women from high-ranking roles. Furthermore, Hoeber and Frisby (2001), indicate that competing values in sport organisations have led to the marginalisation of gender equity. Acker (2000) suggests that there is a disjuncture between the development of gender equity policies and programmes and how gender relations or socially constructed ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman, are actually expressed and played out.

Gender equity has been conventionally conceived as a women's-only issue. It follows that if gender equity is a women's issue, then it is the women's responsibility to address it, rather than the responsibility of all members of an organisation (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000). This approach also ignores the inequities that men who are visible minorities (e.g. gay or disabled men) face in the workplace. Some researchers have suggested, therefore, that in order for gender equity to be more meaningfully supported, there must be a shift in its conceptualisation. Aitchison (2000) argues that post structural feminist theory challenges "binary divides and dualistic thinking" (p. 133), such as viewing gender as a women's issue, which dominates much of social theory and particularly liberal feminism. Rao et al (1999) argue that gender equity should be the product of deconstructing the socio-historical gendered discourse, and
that post structural feminist theory provides an appropriate lens through which to identify the substantial changes required.

It is therefore, proposed in this research to move from the narrow meaning of gender equality (equal opportunities, equal representation or in other words, women equal to men), to the broader and deeper meaning of gender equity policies, where a sport organisation and its members might comprehend the different individualistic characteristics, needs, values and beliefs their male and female members hold, and specifically those in managerial and leaderships positions.

The existence of gendered roles in leadership and management is viewed as a matter of concern by some feminists who fear legitimising the exclusion of women from some roles (for example liberal feminists), while poststructuralist feminists argue that the notion of gender allows the recognition of each actor's individual skills (including those associated with feminine leadership) which might contribute to an organisation.

Frisby and Shaw (2006) argue that the performance of men and women in managerial roles, might be described as feminine or masculine, however, both sexes are able to draw on either or both of these gendered styles. For example, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001: 783) characterise the distinction between gendered approaches to leadership as that between 'agentic' and 'communal':

*Agentic characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to men than women, describe primarily an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency - for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive. In employment setting, agentic behaviours might include speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions.*

*Communal characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to women than men, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people - for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle. In employment setting, communal behaviours might include speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others’*
direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems.

Hoeber (2007), found that many people have not addressed historical and systematic inequities embedded in the masculine culture of sport organisations, such as the devaluing of female athletes and of women's sport, which makes it difficult for men and women to achieve equity.

1.4 The context of women and sport in Israel

Feminist criticism of sport has developed in particular over the last three decades. Research published in the 1970s and 1980s revealed the differences between socialisation processes in male sport in comparison to female sport, while looking at sport as an institution which might neutralise the power and privileged rights which are given to men rather than women (Nir-Toor, 2001).

The findings of this research suggest that the trivialisation and marginalisation of female athletes are both part of the reproduction of society overall and particularly of male superiority. Nevertheless, even in later decades, sport researchers have continued to claim that sport, perhaps more than any other social institution, perpetuates male superiority and female inferiority. Such claims are derived from the notion of the deconstruction of biological and physiological legitimisation of male 'superiority'. Nevertheless, it is clear that significant advances have taken place during the last three decades regarding female participation in organised and competitive sport, despite the lack of progressive legislation.

According to a survey held by the Israeli Central Statistics Bureau in 1999, which dealt with "sport activity and visits to competitions among 14 year-olds and above", one can see that the percentage of female participation in sport is almost equal to male participation, and moreover, half of the population is involved in some kind of sport activity. However, while men tend to regard sport as worthy in its own right, women tend to participate mostly for health reasons. There is, nonetheless, a slight tendency among men to prefer team sports, while women tend to choose more individual sports (ICSB survey, 1999 in Diskin, 2002).
Women’s sport is in many ways less developed than men’s sport in Israel, and therefore, even in comparison with women’s sport in other countries, women in Israel have smaller chances of achieving successful results as athletes and have fewer opportunities to hold key positions in sport organisations. An example of this can be found in the Israeli women’s national football team, which was only established in 1999. Indeed this followed a direct instruction from UEFA, which demanded the development of a women’s National Football League and by extension, women’s national teams (Galon, and Noked, 2003) from 1997, as a precondition for formulating budgets and planning men’s team participation in European Cups and Championships. Despite this, in 2004, the Women’s National Football League was curtailed after the 11th round, due to lack of finance, and the players were obliged to take their annual vacations.

Most Israeli women’s successes in sport are in individual disciplines (e.g. Yael Arad, Olympic medallist in judo; Smashnova and Peer, Top 20 in the world in tennis). Achievements such as participation in the Pool Round in the Women’s Champions League (Maccabi Holon in football) do not attract the level of publicity and general public awareness which Israeli men’s teams do, even where the latter achieve much less. (Hofman, 2003).

The tendency toward low female participation and achievement in sport derives in part from a lack of attention to the issue of female participation during schooling, and since budget levels are generally a by-product of the number of participants, the system itself perpetuates the situation, where lack of female participation at an early age limits the possibilities and options of integrating more women into sport later on in life (Galon and Noked, 2003). The Chairman of the Public Committee responsible for recommendations on the criteria to be adopted in the division of income from Israel’s Betting Council, Attorney Ofir Katz (2004), has argued:

*We have accepted the standpoint claiming that, in regard to women’s participation in sport, it is not enough to support it on the basis of existing players; there is a need to build a broad infrastructure for women’s sport and support it on a continuous basis (p.1).*
This announcement was the first landmark for the National Project for Women and Sport in Israel, which was officially instituted at the end of 2007. Women’s participation in senior competitive sport has suffered from lack of sufficient representation ever since the establishment of the State and this has led to financial gaps in the relevant budgets. Nevertheless, the situation was perpetuated by the almost complete absence of women involved within the boards of sport organisations, or any other key positions in sport institutions in Israel.

If change is to be achieved women (and men) will need to stimulate it by bringing their voice(s), the voice(s) of the 'other', into the discourse on sport and resourcing in order to effect a more equal division of the national sport budgets. Such a move implies the reframing of hegemonic discourse that marginalises females and enhances male superiority in the context of local sport.

Equity policy has, in part, taken into account that female participation in sport should be an important target to be achieved in striving for gender equity. A need for the appointment of more women in coaching positions and increased involvement of women in communication and broadcasting has been brought up by some key actors (for example, The establishment of the National Project for women and sport by a female within the Ministry of Sport) as has the need for increased involvement by women in decision-making processes regarding sport. It is worth acknowledging for example, that although many broadcasters employ women in different positions and not only as 'line girls', (the on-air broadcasters, who work the sports pitches during live transmission and conduct short interviews with athletes, coaches, etc. during time-outs) women are still almost completely absent from football, male basketball and sports commentaries in other high profile sports (Diskin, 2002).

A tendency towards improvement in female participation can be seen in high-performance sport, as evidenced in the Israeli Olympic Delegations for the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, where, of 35 athletes, 17 were women, and in the Beijing Olympics, 2008, 22 women athletes among the 44 athletes in the Israeli Delegation (INOC, 2009).

In order to further the discussion, one needs to consider the historical existence of what one can call 'the myth of gender equality' within the state of Israel. In other words, after looking in depth at the literature, it should be noted, according to Bar-Eli
and Kaufman (2005), that, throughout the history of the Hebrew Yishuv and the State of Israel, an ethos has been fostered of women who are completely equal to men and who carry an equal burden in all fields (including those domains which are considered to be “male”). Women, for example, fought in the underground military organisations which preceded the establishment of the state, and today they share compulsory army service and hold positions of training and command. A prime example of this phenomenon is Golda Meir, who served as Prime Minister between the years 1968 and 1973.

This ethos was created mainly during the formation of the Yishuv at the time of the British Mandate in Palestine (1918–1948) and was part of the image of the 'New Jew' — the fighting Sabra (native-born Israeli) who was completely different from the subservient and self-effacing 'Ghetto Jew' (whose women held the traditional female role at home). Historical analysis, however, has shown this description to be inaccurate and rendered it a myth. For example, Bar-Eli and Spiegel (1996, cited in Bar-Eli and Kaufman, 2005) investigated patterns of stability and change relating to women in elite sport in Israel. More specifically, they attempted to explore whether there was an increase over time in the participation of Israeli women athletes in the Olympic and Maccabiah Games (the ‘Jewish Olympic Games’) in terms of frequency, percentage, and proportion of participation, as well as the number and types of sports in which women participated.

In addition, the investigators attempted to follow the trends of (occupational) differentiation and segregation over time, as well as the specific patterns of women’s differentiation in Israeli elite sport, as represented in the Olympic and Maccabiah Games.

In general, the results of Bar-Eli and Spiegel’s study (cited in Bar-Eli and Kaufman, 2005) support the segmentation of the processes revealed in the sport context, as being quite similar to those characterised by the labour market in general, not only in Israel, but elsewhere. More specifically, the frequency, percentage, and proportion of Israeli male to female participation in both the Olympic and Maccabiah Games held between 1932 and 1996 were relatively stable (a relation of three or four men to every one woman), with a somewhat lower female participation rate for the Olympic Games. Although women were found to participate in a growing number of types of
sports over time, there remained a significant level of difference between Israeli male and female participation in the Olympic and Maccabiah Games until approximately 1996.

These amazingly stable tendencies were found to have lasted even up until 1996, in a later study conducted by Bar-Eli, Spiegel, and Yaaron, (1998, in Bar-Eli and Kaufman, 2005). Thus, the status of women in Israeli sport seems to have been quite inconsistent with the ethos of the 'New Jew'. On the contrary, it is much more consistent with world-wide trends, which are mainly a function of social forces wider than the Jewish religio-ethnic tradition affecting Israeli female lives in general and their athletic careers in particular.

One of the local realities of the State of Israel is the role of the military, as the 'Army of the People'. Women often are socially constrained and excluded from the mainstream due to many aspects of social public institutions, such as the army, political parties and posts, and jobs in industry or the public sector, and this is also the case in the domain of sport.

One explanation for this exclusion might be that it occurs due to the early strictures in social circles, which often start during the mandatory military service both for women and men within the different army units (for example, the combat units which are more related to men's military service or administrative units which are more related to women). Army service is central to the Israeli context in a way which is perhaps difficult to appreciate in other societies.

Moreover, during army service, there is a phenomenon of army language that not everyone can comprehend, and as most combat units consist of men, women can find themselves excluded from mainstream discussions (Sasson-Levi, 2003). Moreover, Sasson-Levi claims that women are explicitly excluded from the sub-textual conversations. Nonetheless, as men still hold the majority of decision-making positions in Israeli society, and because military service is a quasi-universal experience, the military discourse becomes the hegemonic language in the public sphere, and women once again find themselves excluded in the local reality of social circles (Sasson-Levi, 2003).
One might claim that it is possible to decipher the dual discourses of inclusion and marginalisation by which the existing reality of gender order is preserved. As a central institution of both state and patriarchy, the army has reconstructed the Israeli male, who serves in combat roles, as the prototype of hegemonic masculinity identified with 'good citizenship' (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999). This construction of masculinity is used as a major criterion in shaping the differential discourse of belonging to the state.

In order to put the issue of gender roles and sport and specifically, women in decision-making positions in sport organisations, in the wider context of the socially constructed situation of women in Israel, it is important to understand the discourse on the militarisation of Israeli society. To complement this discussion of the Israeli reality regarding women and sport, Chapter Two will present an in-depth exploration of the issue of women and sport in the international arena. However, before embarking on this discussion, and in order to introduce the reader to the theoretical framework of this thesis, we briefly outline below relevant considerations in relation to, (a) the construction of managerial roles in sport, (b) a contextualisation of the Israeli gender issue in sports within the broader discourse of the militarisation of Israeli society. Further discussion on the research methodology will be presented in Chapter Three.

1.5 Historical aspects in the Israeli world of sport

The development of Israeli sport in its early years has to be seen as interdependent within the broader political economy of what later became Israel, and in conjunction with the close relationship between the developing sport organisations and the development of an Israeli state. Sport in Israel was first assimilated into the ideological framework of Zionism when Zionist parties appropriated sport clubs as tools for partisan competition (Bar-Eli and Kaufman, 2005).

From the early 1920s, football clubs were incorporated into nation-wide sport associations that were affiliated with a specific political organization: Hapoel was an organ of the General Federation of Labour (Histadrut); Maccabi was affiliated with various bourgeois political parties; Beitar was associated with the right-wing
'Revisionists'; and Elizur was related to the religious-Zionist party (Ben-Porat, 1998). The early days of Israeli sport in the 1930s and early 1940s, were characterised by disunity between the two major sport organisations in Palestine at that time, Hapoel and Maccabi. The battle for hegemony between these organisations in many branches of sport delayed the establishment of national leagues and a national team.

The most substantial demographic increase during the British Mandate period occurred during the Fifth Aliya (1932–1939, Jewish immigration from Europe), when the number of Jews in pre-statehood Israel doubled from 200,000 to 400,000.

Compared with previous ones, this wave of immigration, included a major influx of Jews from Western Europe, especially Germany (about 60,000), who imported their established sports traditions to pre-statehood Israel. As a result, development intensified in the various branches of sport, the number of athletes and trained physical education teachers significantly increased, and higher professional standards were set.

Moreover, in that period, the Maccabiah Games were initiated, with two Maccabiah Games taking place — in 1932 and 1935. Considered to be the ‘Jewish Olympics’, these Maccabiah Games were originally conceived by Maccabi, the first world Jewish sports organisation. By 1997, the Maccabiah Games had been held 15 times (in principle, every four years). It should be noted that a substantial number of the participants in the early Maccabiah Games did not return to their native countries, but became active citizens and athletes in pre-statehood Israel.

The mass immigrations following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 also contributed their share to the development of sport (Bar-Eli and Kaufman, 2005). However, the hegemony established by the Histadrut and the Labour bloc, and the preferential access it gave to new immigrants, allowed it to recruit members, resulting in Hapoel becoming the largest sports organisation in the Yishuv, permitting it to build up its facilities and infrastructure. On the other hand, Maccabi, though older and more established (both inside and outside Palestine), was handicapped and marginalised by its lack of association with any large political bloc within the Yishuv. It survived because of its traditions and the great influx of middle-class supporters and professionals from Germany and Austria, who escaped from Hitler in the 1930s (Reshef and Paltiel, 1989).
In 1947, the struggle between the members of the various sports organisations reached its peak. It was the Maccabi organisation which dominated the Amateur Sports Organisation in Palestine, but the Hapoel organisation established its own programs for basketball and volleyball while trying to gain international recognition. It was the Hapoel organisation which eventually received an invitation to the Youth Sports Festival in Prague in 1947. Their appearance in the festival was of immense significance, not only at the sporting level but also at the political level. During the same period, the declaration of the establishment of the new State of Israel was about to take place and the team's appearance in the sports festival, along with 67 other countries, was of great propaganda importance to the State-to-be.

The War of Independence (1948-1949) brought sporting activities in Israel to a halt. The athletes, like the rest of the population (both men and women), were drafted into the recently established army and helped defend the country from the invasion of the Arab forces. Surrounded by enemies and faced with the task of integrating thousands of immigrants into the new state, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, attempted to make the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) the new unifying symbol of the fledgling state. He realised that the socialist ideas of the Histadrut were not adequate to solve the problems the new state was facing.

Above all, Israel needed a unity of purpose, which in Ben-Gurion's thinking, could only be provided by a strong army that would defend the country against its enemies and help assimilate its culturally diverse immigrants. Consequently, Ben-Gurion added to the socialist ethos of the Histadrut and Kibbutz movements an aggressive Israeli nationalism, spearheaded by the IDF. Two of the 14 players who were members of the first Israeli basketball team in Prague, Eliezer Shevet and Joshua Weisman, were killed in the War of Independence (Galily, 2003).

The State sport institutions established in the 1950s continued to enhance party affiliations established during the British Mandate period. This was reflected in the attempt to preserve a consensus regarding representation of the federations in the sport organisations. At first, this consensus was characterised by the equal representation of the Hapoel and Maccabi federations, though during the 1950s, this consensus became based on the proportional size of the federations. This system created a clear advantage for Hapoel. Not only was it the sport federation of the ruling
party, but it also sought to establish a foothold in as many communities as possible. This policy was one part of a larger world view of the Labour Movement, i.e., sport for the masses, as opposed to achievement-oriented sport (Kaufman, 2005).

Another ideological aspect expressed through policy, was the emphasis placed by the Labour movement on pioneering and on a move from the urban centres to the peripheries. During the 1950s a status quo was reached by which Maccabi would be the lesser of the two federations, but would take part in the management and organisation of sport. The co-operation between the two major federations reflected the balance of power and coalition politics between the patron parties within the political system proper (Nevo, 2000).

The direct control of sport in Israel by politicians is still very evident. In general, all the different sports are governed by a number of political bodies. The appointments for key positions are political in origin; therefore sport is often controlled by politicians who know very little about it. Moreover, sports clubs are funded by four main bodies: The Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport, the Sportoto lottery, local municipalities and membership fees. Since these sources of money are limited, club managers often turn to their political patrons in order to obtain additional funding. This, of course, strengthens their dependency on and commitment to these sources.

Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a tendency to separate sport from politics in Israel. Until the late 1960s, political parties effectively saw sport organisations as agents of ideological-political socialisation. Today, however, they understand that sport organisations no longer fulfil this purpose. Since the beginning of the 1980s, sport organisations with no political affiliation began to form (e.g. "Golden Gloves" in boxing and the Israeli Tennis Association (Kaufman, 2005). These processes were supported by the discourse that proliferated around the many disappointments (with the lack of success in official international competitions).

The decisions made were more political than professional. In addition, the professionalism of sport (mainly in basketball and football), reinforced the need for big budgets, something political parties could no longer provide. Furthermore, the international processes in global sports are such that one might say that sport today is no less than the 'religion' of the 20th century. As such, sport became one of the leading processes in wide-scale globalisation phenomena and deeply influenced Israeli sport.
(Kaufman, 2005). For these reasons among others, one can see the growing autonomy of sports clubs in relation to political organisations. In men's basketball and football the management of sport reflects professional and economic considerations more than political ones (Reshef and Paltiel, 1989).

1.6 The lack of female representation on the boards of sport organisations

According to former Knesset member, Ms. Yael Dayan (2002), female representation on the boards of sport organisations is less than 10%. Nonetheless, even in competitive sports, where women constitute a high percentage of the athletes, sometimes even greater or equal to that of men, it is likely that only a few women, if any, will be found on the board. After the 2000 elections for the National Federation boards in Israel, women constituted not more than 10%.

Figures show that, until 2000, among 33 board members of the Israeli Basketball Federation, there was just one woman, and among 18 members of the presidency (18 board members that make the day-to-day decisions) there was not a single woman. In the volleyball and handball federations there were no women on the board, gymnastics included two women, track and field, swimming, shooting and taekwondo all included only one woman in each discipline (Nir-Toor, 2001).

Some of the NFs lay claim to 'appropriate representation'; however, there is no general definition in Israel of the exact percentages referred to by that term. An example of representation (even if partial) can be found in the Swimming and Volleyball NFs in the 2000 elections regulation: "in cases where the number of women athletes is 10% or more of the general number of registered athletes in the NF, the winning party in the election must include among its representatives at least one woman, instead of one additional male representative". According to a survey carried out by the IWF (Israeli Women's Foundation), up to 2002, 40% of registered swimmers were women. However, on the board of the federation there were only two women members out of 11 (Kraus, 2004).

According to the new regulations, led by former Knesset member, Yael Dayan, daughter of famous military commander Moshe Dayan, and following the IOC announcement in 1997 of a 20% minimum target of women on executive committees
and boards by 2005 for NOCs and IFs, (Samaranch 2000), all Israeli NFs had to include at least one woman on their boards (Dayan, 2002). Despite this regulation, by 2001 the percentage of women on NF boards stood at 6% (37 women – 2 without voting rights – out of 234 members). Another example can be found on the board of the Israeli NOC, where only 6 women (out of a total of 92 members) were members of the General Assembly and only 2 women (out of 32) were members of the Board of the NOC (Nir-Toor, 2001). In 2002, the High Court of Justice ordered the Basketball Federation to change the number of female representatives in its institutions. This legislation was a result of long resistance and petitioning of the court by the IWF (Israeli Women’s Foundation) and the IWSF’s (Israeli Women in Sport Foundation).

The petition argued that without appropriate representation of women on the board of the federation it would be impossible to extend women’s basketball activities and infrastructure, and fulfil the target of involving women and girls in the field of basketball. Following this petition, the decision of the General Assembly (mostly men) was to add 4 more places on the board, and as a result of that, on the next board there would be five women and two more in advisory positions without voting rights (Dayan, 2002).

The vision of some leading key actors (e.g. Nir-Toor, 2003) in Israeli sport in relation to women is to establish appropriate representation (40%-60%) of women in sports organisations, NFs and sports clubs in order for them to take an active part in decision-making processes and therefore, in resource distribution. Nonetheless, the vision aspires to having at least 40% of all athletes as female; to increase the number of female coaches; to extend the communication, electronic or written coverage of women’s sport in order to create role models for young girls; and to work for better preparation of more women to hold decision-making positions. Furthermore, they have sought to stimulate awareness in the public, especially among men, of the right of women to appropriate representation in decision-making positions in sport.

1.7 The struggle for equity in sport

In the verdict of the High Court of Justice, no. 5325/01, the case of the non-profit organisation Lachen (established for the advancement of women’s basketball) and
others against the local authority of Ramat-Hasharon, Judge A. Rivlin stated: "it is indeed the case that women’s sport suffers from structural inferiority in comparison to men’s sport… one can weigh this inferiority, in essence, in the lack of sufficient resources allocated to women’s sport" (Ronen, 2002, translated from Hebrew by the author). And indeed, the judges did not accept the criteria of the local authority and ruled that A.S. Ramat Hasharon (the women’s basketball team) would receive 150% of the financial resources allocated to the men’s teams. According to the Levin Committee (1997, translated from Hebrew by the author), the second recommendation in relation to women’s sport was for resource distribution for teams and sport clubs at the same professional level, to be undertaken on an equal basis and without discrimination on grounds of gender or sex.

The committee's findings were thus seen to have supported claims about inequality in the distribution of budgets and, discrimination on gender grounds. Such inequalities are also evidenced elsewhere, for example. In the Israeli sports budget proposal of 2001, less than 10% was to be dedicated to developing women’s sport (NIS 7.9 million) (Fishman and Ben-Dror, 2001).

In 1994 the ISSA (Israeli School Sports Association) was established. Special long-term programs had been planned in a few NFs in order to advance young women and girls in competitive and elite sports (Kraus, 2004). In addition, the Unit for the Advancement of Women in Sport was established in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in order to advance gender equality in sport. The Unit also helped raise resources for different targets; however, over the years, the Ministry of Sport has drastically reduced financial support for the Unit. It was thus excluded from the mainstream agenda of the Ministry, and came to represent an example of the "lip service" being paid to gender equity rather than an influential and active Unit within the Ministry of Sport and within the Israeli sport arena (Diskin, 2002).

Following the recommendation of the Judge Ben-Dror Commission, it was decided in 1995 that money from the Betting Council in Sport would be distributed equally between male and female sports teams (Kraus, 2004). The Attorney Katz Commission reached a similar decision in 2004.
1.8 The research questions

If this work were being undertaken from a traditional liberal feminist perspective, the key research questions to be addressed might be expressed as 'what are the barriers to female access to decision-making positions in Israeli?' However, for reasons presented in Chapter Two (literature review) and in Chapter Three (which provides a rationale for the methodological approach), I will explore this issue from a poststructuralist perspective. Thus a more appropriate expression of the research question is "what are the barriers to female access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport, and how have these barriers been discursively constructed?"

In order to locate our analysis in specific contexts I have chosen to focus empirical work on two case studies, which represent critical events relating to gender equity and sport. The first case study (presented in Chapter Four) investigates the process of the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG) in Israel, trying to explore the decision-making process in the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA) with regard to the Girl's Academy in terms of female executives' experiences in decision-making positions, the extent of their influence on the decision-making process with regard to this gender equity project within their organisation and the barriers they encountered during the process of obtaining these executive positions and during their period in post (e.g. the recruitment policy, experience of being a minority on the NF board etc.).

The vehicle for exploring such accounts will be both life (career) history interviews and an auto-ethnographical investigation of the author's own experience. Auto-ethnography is used (in ways outlined in Chapter Three) because I have a uniquely central perspective on the issues raised in those case studies. It is therefore, worth acknowledging that I, as author of this thesis, am one of the key figures in one of the cases studied, as the only female member of the board at the time of the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA) was investigated. This approach is consistent with the research epistemology of the poststructural feminist approach, which will also be discussed in Chapter Three.

The second case study (discussed in Chapter Five), explores the process of the creation of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS), which is one of the largest projects in Israel relating to sports in general and certainly the largest project
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relating to women and sport. This case and the interviews undertaken in relation to it focus on the experiences and perspectives of key individuals involved, their personal background/histories, the process of their recruitment, their impact on decision-making and the barriers they experience in seeking to influence policy in our cases.

In order to realise the context within which these case studies took place, the next part of this chapter will explore different aspects of Israeli society, and within it of the Israeli sporting arena, and more specifically, gender and sport in Israel.

The chapter outlines different issues in the study of women and gender in different levels of socially constructed institutions in Israel. Its content consists of contextual discussion on the development of the local realities of women in sport in Israel, up to the official establishment and approval of the NPWS (National Project for Women and Sport). Discussion will then continue with the broader, but nonetheless unique, discourse of the militarisation of Israeli society, exploring implicit and explicit impacts on gender roles and equity policies in Israeli society, where socially constructed sport institutions are also included.

1.9 Some introductory theoretical considerations

Managerial work has changed a great deal since the beginning of the twentieth century. These changes include an increased emphasis on the need for managers to possess and use good communication and interpersonal skills. These changes have often been associated with the feminisation of management, with managerial leadership styles, and with the necessity of employing more women as managers (Kerooft and Knights, 1998; Moore et al., 2001). However, such changes have mainly come about at the middle management level, where most, although still not many, women managers are located (Knoopers and Anthonissen, 2007). Senior managerial work in most sport organisations is still primarily a male domain (Acosta and Carpenter, 2006).

In Israel, nowadays, the local reality is described in one of the latest reports submitted by Israel to UNECE (United Nation Economic Commission for Europe) in March 2009, entitled: "Women in Israel: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”. It cited a woman currently serving as the Chief Justice of the
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Supreme Court, a woman who had served as the Speaker of the 17th Knesset (Israel's Parliament), a woman who currently heads the largest political party, after having served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a woman who is the current Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

Of all of the judges in Israel's judicial system, no less than 51% are women. In 2007, 15.1% of all women had an academic degree, in contrast with 12.3% of all men; 8.0% of the women had a Master's degree, while this was true of 7.4% of the men. About 50% of those currently completing medical studies and studies in accounting are women (IMFA, 2009).

The principal achievements in the status of women in the State of Israel are expressed in extensive legislation intended to advance women, and in the mechanisms established in various areas of activity. The legislation and its implementation constitute the foundation stones for the advancement of women. In the last two years, emphasis has been placed on issues concerning gender mainstreaming, legally obligating government ministries and bodies to provide gender disaggregated data.

Various laws stipulate the obligation for appropriate representation of women at specific foci of decision-making. However, there is difficulty in applying these legal obligations. Furthermore, looking at official figures of women's representation in sport in Israel indicates that sport is lagging behind other public arenas, such as the army, academia or politics, in terms of female representation. For example, in 2001, only 15% of the competitive athletes in Israel were women, and less than 15% of the NFs (National Federations') board members, were women (Nir-Toor, 2001).

This data led me to the further assumption that some of the discursively constructed barriers to women's access to decision-making positions are rooted in dominant gendered discourses (such as the discourse of militarisation) that has historically socio-culturally constructed the Israeli sport context. It is, therefore, an aim of this research to explore and understand the barriers to women's access to decision-making positions in the Israeli context and the place, influence and role of women in decision-making positions in the process of attempts to change the existing situation.
In order to explore the social practices that frame these particular discursive processes, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be employed. Its close and detailed analysis will seek to shed light on ideologies (explicit and implicit), social structures and power relations that shape the contextual social structure of women in Israeli sports organisations.

The use of CDA also allows continuous interaction of socio-cultural knowledge and inter-textuality in the discourse. In other words, as Fairclough (1995, in Titscher et al., 2000:147) explains, texts produce social interactions between participants in discourse and therefore also display an 'interpersonal' function. Nonetheless, he continues, texts also have a 'textual' function in so far as they unite separate components into a whole and combine this with situational contexts. Discourse Analysis is thus the analysis of relationships between concrete language use and the wider social and cultural structures. This might be the relationships between a specific discursive event, such as the establishing of a committee and the holistic contextual structure of an order of discourse, as well as modifications to the order of discourse and its constituents and genres.

The case studies (the establishment of the National Project for Women and Sport and the establishing of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls) will be dealt with in detail in Chapters Four and Five of this work. In the context of the case studies, it will be important to understand that we theorise gender as a "situated social practice" that is "rooted in the doing and saying of organisational actors" (Pogio, 2006, p. 225). Examining gender, amongst other factors, includes practices of power that support or challenge domination of men and subordination of women (Knoopers and Anthonissen, 2007).

Some researchers claim that gender not only shapes identity but is an axis of power that also plays an influential role in interactions, structures, and processes of sport organisations (Shaw and Frisby, 2006). Therefore, if one agrees with the assumption that gender is an axis of power, it means that an analysis is required that goes further than liberal feminist approaches which suggest that a simple increase in the number of women members involved in an organisation is all that is required to challenge the
male dominated nature of such bodies. Liberal feminist theory focuses largely on increasing the numbers of women in managerial positions without changing prevailing discourse, structures, and operating norms, thereby dealing with the symptoms rather than with the causes of inequity. Research informed by liberal feminism thus fails to acknowledge the influence of gendered discourse and does not encourage a full examination of the assumptions, values and beliefs about men and women that are deeply entrenched in organisations. (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000).

Shaw and Frisby, (2006), suggest that in respect of equity, sport is not a special field that needs its own theory. Rather, they suggest that sport management can engage with poststructuralist theory, which articulates a dialogue that represents the increasing breakdown of disciplinary boundaries within the academic debates. Analyses that use a poststructuralist approach will be appropriate to our study.

Such an approach seeks to deconstruct dominant assumptions about gender and to draw attention to the discursive practices of managerial work and leadership roles in sport organisations that contribute to skewed gender representation (Knoopers and Anthonissen, 2007) which to some extent brings organisations to serve certain socially constructed historical gendered discourses.

1.10 The construction of the discourse on women in Israel

A. Women's rights in Israel

The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, issued in 1948, stipulates that the State of Israel will provide full equal rights for all people without distinction of religion, colour or gender. In other words, according to the law, women in Israel will have full and equal rights. This formal declaration has been anchored, over the years, in different sets of legislation.

The first of these was legislated in 1949, which dealt with obligatory army service for all Israeli citizens, women and men equally, and in 1951 it was determined that every woman and man would enjoy the same status in the eyes of the law. However, according to Hertzog (2006), these laws were constructed in terms of gender generalisation. Under these laws, women were first and foremost cast in their
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domestic roles, and motherhood was considered to be their main contribution to the collective.

Nonetheless, that was the rationale for the justification of the promulgation of legal equal rights of women in the new Israeli society. Other specific legislation would determine the right for equal opportunity in acceptance into, and promotion within the labour market, equal remuneration and equal age of retirement. The courts have since further expanded gender equality by providing women the right to be elected to the religious councils in municipalities, and the right to present oneself as a candidate, for example, for the prestigious Air Force pilot’s course (Sasson, 2006).

The reality is, however, that women in Israeli society do not enjoy full equal rights and opportunities. The difficulties might partially attach to the legal situation itself (Kamir, 1999). In this context, Paragraph five of the Declaration of Independence deals with equal rights for all citizens; however, the law limits women regarding their legal status in relation to marriage and divorce, by subjugating them to religious, rather than civil laws. The implication is that, according to the law of Israel, women are supposedly allowed full equal rights in family life. Every woman in Israel is, however, subjected to her religious family court in these matters (Jewish women to rabbinic courts, Muslim women to Muslim courts etc.), and none of these courts accepts full equal rights for women (Kamir, 1999).

In other words, even though the law is not explicitly subject to specific discriminating arrangements, the underlying realities of the directions and instructions are clearly inequitable for women. For example, many instructions within the IDF marginalise women, thereby creating inequitable conditions for many young Israeli women during their obligatory army service. For example, women are still excluded from serving in certain field units and encounter obstacles in advancement in the military hierarchy and are thus disadvantaged in following prestigious military career routes.

In the Israeli context, even today a military career can be a springboard for management positions in the business world, and by extension, in the local and national political arena. Therefore, the IDF, consciously or otherwise, limits women’s opportunities to integrate into civilian life. Even in places where law and civil society’s practices are non-discriminating against women, one can still find prejudice,
stereotypes, conservatism and fear of changes, all of which might reinforce norms, behaviour and habits that prevent full equal rights for women.

Examples can be found in the patriarchal structure of organisations, in politics, the army, industry, higher education and in many other areas, where one can barely find female representation in decision–making positions. These phenomena, which militate against qualified and talented women performing in such positions, deny women the possibility for equal representation in mainstream societal leadership positions.

B. Women and the army in Israel

In Israel, the implicit gendering characteristic of civilian life is expressed in the basic laws which provide equal rights for women – Mandatory Military Service (1949) and the Equal Rights Law for Women (1951). However, even though 60 years have passed, there are still wide gaps in society on a background of ethnicity, class and gender. Despite progressive legislation regarding women’s rights, Israeli society is still a long way from achieving social and political equality for all its citizens. In Israel, nowadays, there is a formal discourse on equity; however, it is not practiced in everyday life (Hertzog, 2006).

The ethos of the army and the deep identification with it as the "Army of the People" is structurally rooted in the Israeli psyche. It gives the Army great influence in granting direct and indirect privileges to those who serve and command within it, by virtue of their cultural capital (Izraeli, 1999). The Army is one of the main collective symbols of Israel, and it has great influence on the structure of Israeli culture. The flow between civilian and army cultures is significant and it is almost impossible to differentiate between them. Kimerling (2001) claims that this mixed military culture pervades all areas of Israeli society, interconnecting them.

The IDF equality ethos is indeed implicit to a different reality where the Army not only preserves civil inequality, but in specific cases even increases it in order to maintain the status and power of the controlling elite, selecting and maintaining other social groups in accordance with the amount of loyalty it receives from them (Sasson-Levi, 2006). Israel is the only country in the world in which the need to undertake obligatory military service applies equally to women and men, creating an illusion of equality for Israeli society in general and for the military system specifically (Izraeli,
1999; Ben-Ari and Levi-Shraiber, 2001; Sasson-Levi, 2006). Adopting the myth of equality can provide grounds for ignoring the contribution of women and their resultant exclusion (Safran, 2006). Additionally, the 'macho' culture in the Army maintains and perpetuates the myth of male 'superiority' and the dependency of women.

According to Izraeli (1994), as the most dominating organisation in the Israeli society, the army embeds gender inequality more than any other institution and thereby perpetuates it.

The discourse of women’s integration into the IDF is characterised by internal contradictions. On one hand, women, like men, are called to serve. On the other hand, along with this discourse of equality, there exists another discourse which differentiates women's participation and contribution to the armed forces from those of men. They (women) are construed as 'others'; however, this 'otherness' does not exclude them completely from the collective, but it subtly reinforces domestic roles. For example, married women and also women who appeal on religious grounds are easily released from obligatory service. However, as married men are obliged to continue their military service, and only a limited and authorized number of religious men may be released from service, this controversial treatment indicates the inequalities that persist in Israeli society (Helman, 2006).

From a socio-cultural and historical point of view, the army is conceived as an organisation which relies on dichotomous definitions of femininity and masculinity, in order to exist. In the army, unlike most other organisations, gender is one of the formal principles that authorise the placing of citizens (soldiers) in different employment positions during their service (Sasson-Levi, 2006). Thus, Izraeli (1999) claims, the army conception is based on gendered power structures which, when reproduced, stereotype women's roles. As a result of this, the army emphasises gender differences, using them in order to justify their conception from the beginning, hence perpetuating gender inequality (Izraeli, 1999).

Soldiers who serve in the most prestigious combat units are generally men, while women are mostly placed in support and instructive positions, (Hertzog, 2006). Changes initiated in the 1990s are still unfolding, establishing new positions and roles
for women in the army, but have not changed the image or reality of men as the fighters and the spearheads of the collective effort.

The old conception, of males as fighters and females as playing supporting roles in the army, in many respects still lives on (Robbins and Ben-Eliezer, 2000).

Sasson-Levi (2006), points to the dilemma of integrating women into the military. On the one hand, elimination of women's participation in the IDF would lead to the exclusion of women from this central sphere of Israeli discourse, while on the other, the adoption of traditionally male conceptions, generating a sense of empowerment, would contribute to the reduction of the stereotyping of women’s subjugated roles in the army.

It is therefore suggested, somewhat optimistically, that a possible solution might be a more peaceful and less militant society, where the soldier is not the core symbol of society. This might enhance the chances of women's inclusion into public institutions and organisations. Hooks (2002), for example, claims that one should imagine a world without suppression, a world where men and women, while not necessarily similar, would enjoy a relationship based on mutuality and vision. Hooks (2002) further suggests that the feminist movement obviously cannot generate comprehensive change in society, since, racism, imperialism, and other forms of superiority and inferiority in addition to patriarchy in society would need to end.

However, it would give women and men the opportunity to fulfil themselves as human beings who, having the power to reconstruct a caring and inclusive community would be able to live according to their own visions. It would seem that Hooks’ vision is unlikely to be reached in an Israeli society dominated by military-based values.

C. Women and politics in Israel

Politics is a defining feature of a democratic society, and gender equality is a core component of democracy. The Declaration of Independence of Israel, drafted in the same year as the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which also incorporates gender equality, is one of the first legal documents to present the concept of equality for women in explicit terms (Radai, et al, 1995). In the fundamental laws of the first government of Israel, which were approved in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) on March 18, 1949, women’s rights were also referred to in the following terms: "full and
complete equality for women – equality of rights and obligations, in the life of the state, in society, the economy and in all legislative rules" (Aloni, p.1, 1976. Translated from Hebrew by the author). Nonetheless, the representation of women in Israeli national politics is disproportionately low in comparison with their numbers in the general population, and also lower than the proportion of women involved in national politics in other countries (Sasson Levi, 1997).

One might argue that under-representation of women in Israeli politics, in comparison with countries like Norway and Holland, might have evolved as a result of the fact that Israel is more embroiled in military conflict than these other countries, and therefore, the processes and politics of decision-making on military and security issues are central in the Israeli case. This involvement introduces militarisation into other aspects of society, influencing the patterns, norms and basic values that might influence citizens’ choices when voting in an election. Israeli society is subject to a process of adopting military norms based on male values, where women are situated on the periphery of this moral system.

The political discourse in Israel is ideological in principle. The discourse includes questions often bearing a strategic and military impact, especially during the years following the Six Day War. The result of this war created a new emphasis in political discourse, giving impetus to the military, and pushing aside other forms of social discourse. Levi (1993: 260) claims that:

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Following the 'Six Day War' in 1967, the military became more significant than diplomats and politicians in dealing with political issues. Thus, the change in the character of the discourse, created the conditions for the entry of retired military personnel into key political positions. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the introduction of these officers within the political system, along with their enhanced status following the victory of 1967, had a repeated and cumulative influence on the reinforced patterns of the discourse of militarisation.
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Following Maoz (2000), drawing a distinction between militant and pacifist countries, one may claim that Israel fits the description of a militant country. It is a powerful country in economic and military terms in comparison with its neighbours and furthermore, its surrounding regional area is characterised by a high level of violent
conflict. In contrast, countries like Holland or Norway, which are indeed economically very strong, have relatively weak military power, as they are situated in a highly stable international milieu. Nevertheless, the level of democratisation in those countries is high, which is also reflected in the high level of women's representation in politics. The core questions on the political agenda in Israel belong to the "security" category, and these often exclude women from active participation within the political arena.

Algazi (1992) describes the 'belonging' structure of Israeli society as consisting of different radii around the core of the 'absolute Israeliness'. Arabs are less 'Israeli' than Jews, Talmudic college Jewish males who do not serve in the army are less 'Israeli' than the non-religious who do serve. However, serving in the army is not, of itself, sufficient; it is the particular form of service that creates another foundation for this classification. Thus, those who participated in the 'right' war and in the 'right' unit receive higher prestige and enhanced status. From this viewpoint men are seen as more 'Israeli' than women. This method of classification provides different rights in relation to the relative status, as defined by the cultural code that is accepted in the State of Israel.

The importance of the Army's practice of gendering, and the continuity of gender relations in the army as well as in civilian life, is derived from its penetrating influence on every aspect of Israeli society; from the symbolic importance of obligatory military service, to citizenship in a civil society and above all, the fact that women, as well as men, are recruited into the army (Izraeli, 1999).

Until the beginning of the 1990s, 25% of the national budget was spent on security (Kimerling, 1993). The close relationship between the army and civil society is reflected in the popular description of Israel as a “nation in uniform” (Horowitz and Lissak, 1989: 4) or in the description of the army as the 'army of the people'. These expressions, relate to the fact that the IDF relies heavily on reserve duty, internalising the myth that every citizen is a soldier, with everyone sharing the burden of service. This myth fulfils an important role in the legitimisation of the centralisation of the army within Israeli society (Ben-Eliezer, 1995). Furthermore, it conceals the fact that women, generally, are not part of the reserve duty forces.
Kimerling characterises this relationship as "civil militarism", in the sense that from a structural and cultural point of view militarism penetrates the state of mind (Kimerling, 1993: 129) and therefore, becomes part of the reality of everyday life. The essence of civil militarism is that security and military considerations which are defined as 'national security' will be almost always prioritised over political, economic, social or ideological considerations. Moreover, they become part of the organising principles of the collective.

The centralisation of the Israeli – Arab conflict strengthens the importance of the military world and everything relating to it. Women's opportunities are deeply influenced by the centralisation of the army within Israeli society (Izraeli, 1994). The political parties' differentiation derives directly from the military dimension. Social issues are not the centre of attention.

Fundamental social questions, and specifically women’s social status, do not usually exist on the public agenda. Faced with these facts, it is difficult, under present conditions, to create public opinion which is sympathetic to the idea of gender equality and how to achieve it (Gerbi, 1996: 22).

The significance of women's exclusion from senior officer ranks receives its validation from the idea that, while for men military service relates to masculinity, for women the relationship between army and sexual identity is more contradictory and complicated. In other words, while for men, military achievements empower their masculinity, for women in prestigious positions in the army, personal military reputation is connected with the rejection of a certain form of femininity (Sasson – Levi, 1997). The army increases the contradiction between achievements and femininity, by placing value predominantly on the relationship between achievements and masculinity (Izraeli, 1999). Women do not take part in the decision-making processes in relation to army priorities. Even up to the present day, there is not a single female officer who has sufficiently high rank (such as Major-General) to be allowed to participate, permanently, in Special Staff Meetings.

In order to explore the sub-texts and discourse within the Israeli sport organisations, it is important for the reader to understand the contexts within which the local realities of gender equity in the Israeli sport context are socially constructed. Thus, as
previously indicated, in addressing the consumption of gendered reality[ies] in sport organisations in Israel, we will draw on poststructuralist feminist methodology.

1.11 The struggle for equality of women’s basketball in Israel – the pioneers

A. Introduction

The rationale for presenting the case of women's basketball in Israel as pioneers in the struggle for gender equity in Israeli sport organisations might be explained by the first women's revolt against hegemonic masculine sets of values in the context of Israeli sport. According to Dinerman (2006), the first revolutionary act against gender prejudice in sport in Israel, was in the 1986 Maccabiah basketball games. The final women's basketball game was to take place before the men's game at Yad Eliyahu Hall - the premier facility in Israel.

The heads of the Maccabiah decided a day prior to the games that the women would play in a less prestigious facility away from the public and media. Israeli basketball players together with some activists decided not to play unless the game was to be played at the original venue. American basketball players joined the protest in solidarity with the Israelis. The women did not show up for the game and the Israeli Basketball Association decided to punish the women by putting an end to the existence of the women's national team thereby also punishing any future players of such a national team.

This triggered the establishment of 'Lachen', a non-profit organization, to fight all forms of discrimination against women in basketball. 'Lachen' - which is a Hebrew acronym meaning Promoting Women's Basketball (PWB), was founded by Lea Melamed, Orna Ostfeld, Anat Draigor, Ronnit Yanitzky and Tali Birkan. They appealed in the law courts and after several discussions, the Israeli Basketball Association retracted their decision. Since this incident the women who form the organisation of 'Lachen' have carried the torch in the fight for equality in women’s basketball and sport in general in Israel.
B. The struggle

The failure of the women’s team in the international arena discouraged the basketball leadership from sending the team to more international meetings, and it was not until 1968 that the women’s national team was back in international competition. In the 40 years since the establishment of the state of Israel, from 1948-1988, the Israeli women’s team had played only 51 International games (21 wins and 30 losses).

39 of these games were official European games (15 wins and 24 losses), and 12 were friendly games. The men’s team had played 303 games from 1952-1982 (Paz and Jacobson, 1982).

Since 1968 the Israeli Women's National Basketball team had tried to qualify for the European National Basketball tournament, but until 1991 had never succeeded. In 1991, Israel was elected as the host for the Championship itself, and, the 23rd European National Basketball Tournament was held in the city of Tel-Aviv. Israel won only one game (against Czechoslovakia), and finished in the 8th place. The fact that the tournament was held in Tel-Aviv had a dramatic effect on the attention women’s basketball received. As described by one of the players: "I remember the fact that suddenly I became noticed, and people, other than family members, showed interest in the fact that my team-mates and I were playing basketball" (Dinerman, 2006, p.44).

In the 1990s, more women’s clubs, such as 'Yes' Ramat-Hasharon, Elizur-Ramle, Maccabi-Ra'anana and Maccabi Ramat-Chen established themselves on the Israeli basketball scene (Dinerman, 2006). By the 1990s, the beginning of the struggle for equality in Israeli basketball was evident.

"The dominant pressure in sports feminism is the desire for equality of opportunity with men. It is based on the belief that, although male power in sport predominates, it is not inviolable. It represents a struggle by women, and by men on their behalf, to get more of what men have always had". (Miles and Middleton, 1989).

In 1994, 'Lachen' representatives participated in a committee established in order to set criteria and guidelines for the allocation of money from the Council of Gambling Regulation in Israel (CGRI), led by Judge Ben-Dror.
As a result, the committee decided that the support for men’s and women’s sports should in principle be equal, though it even gave women a 10% preference in budget allocation, employing the use of affirmative action (Kraus, 2004).

It is important to emphasise that sport in general, and team sport in particular, established its status among the public as a useful asset, where the people who are involved gain public appreciation and social and economic rewards. However, when one examines the sport arena closely, one soon finds that it is mostly dominated by men. This is a reflection to some degree of the traditional male conceptualisation that women are the 'weaker sex' and they are not supposed to concern themselves with physical effort, or difficult sport activities (Pilpel, 1994).

Although it seems that there has been some progress in women’s basketball and sport overall, and women’s participation has grown due to legislation, an overview of the sports arena in Israel reveals that it remains in fundamental respects a male dominated area in terms of management, coaching and participation at elite and non-elite levels (Dinerman, 2006). For example, women's soccer teams in Israel are almost non-existent, although men's soccer continues to receive considerable public funds. Representation of women even in basketball remains very low when compared with men as for every female basketball player there are almost 4 male players (Dinerman, 2006).

The lack of representation of women in competitive team sports is not a matter of chance, but a product of a world view which favours the interests of men since it regards women as having little or no significant place within the world of sport, and as a consequence, women receive fewer resources to facilitate their participation.

It seems that because participation in sport is seen as an activity that enhances participants’ physical skills, power, initiative and striving for achievement, this is a domain which is more relevant to men than to women (Pilpel, 1994).

In order to make a change in the status of women's basketball in Israel, especially within local authorities and their financial decisions regarding male and female sports clubs, the Lachen organisation appealed in July 2001 to the Supreme Court of Justice in Israel against Ramat Hasharon municipality’s significant preferential treatment of the men’s team. The appeal focused on the discriminatory nature of the allocation of
public funds and the lack of sufficient or transparent criteria for the support of the municipality for representative team sport and sport in general. For example, in Ramat Hasharon, women’s sport received 20% of the total public funds allocated to sports.

While the court hearing was in progress, and due to an interim decision of the court, Ramat Hasharon municipality had to increase the funds given to their women’s basketball team. At the beginning of November 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the guidelines the municipality followed regarding allocation of funds to sport activities in the city were invalid and that they would have to adopt a new and equal standard for the budgetary support of sport in the city. The Supreme Court also stated that in December 2002, it would review the new standards before ruling on final decisions.

However, in the local Israeli context, despite the progressive legislation and public committees that have ruled that there is no room for discrimination in sport, that equal opportunity should be created for all, and that budgets should be allocated equally, the municipalities, governmental offices, sport associations and other sport organizations, continued to ignore this legislation. Sport culture is, in part, a reflection of culture in general, and so the status of women in sport tends to mirror their status in society. One might thus expect the changes occurring in women’s status in the labour force to be reflected in their sports.

An interim decision was handed down by the court which stated that at least one more woman should be appointed to the executive board of the Israeli Basketball Association (IBA) (Dinerman, 2006).

Women have fought for equality in all significant walks of life for a number of years (Dinerman, 2006) including the workplace, politics, family and sport. There are many concerns relating to the quantity and quality of opportunities available for women in sport. Women struggle with issues related to sexism, ageism, and racism. The socio-economic status of women in general is lower than that of men; women are paid less than their male counterparts in like occupations, which denies them equal buying power and/or access to certain activities including sport (Cohen and Bailey, 1993).

Discrimination against women in sport is of course not only an Israeli phenomenon. Until 2002, in the Grand Slam Tennis Tournaments, for example, women used to
receive less money and were subjected to poorer conditions (Rosewater, 2002). In Israel this situation still holds and women in sport experience discrimination at all levels and disciplines, from athletes, through budgets, to membership of management and boards.

Navratilova (1996) described the issue of discrimination in sport as a modern version of the 'chicken and egg' for, as long as women athletes’ abilities and achievements do not improve, private sponsors or communication tools are unlikely to be developed to enlarge budgets and resources. Therefore, specific rulings that will enforce changes, paradoxically, might be a way to create a situation where legislation would be unnecessary for gender equity.

1.12 The Israeli National Project for Women in Sport (NPWS)

A. The establishment of the Public Council for the Advancement of Women in Sport

Finally, this section and Chapter Five in detail aim to investigate the gendered discourse which evolved during the process of the establishment of the NPWS. This will thus present an attempt to introduce holistic change in the perceptions and positions of and in regards to women in the Israeli sport context.

In 2005, the Minister of Sport announced the creation of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS). In accordance with this Government Decision No. 3416 of 23/5/2005, the Public Council for Advancing Women in Sport in Israel was established. The Council advises the government on all matters pertaining to the setting of criteria for supporting women’s sport, and acts to promote policy for developing women’s sport in Israel.

The Department for the Advancement of Women’s Sport at the Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport deals with developing awareness of the importance of physical activity as a healthy way of life among women in their daily routine. Furthermore, it operates a new "national program" for developing competitive and achievement sport for young girls, teenage girls, and women. The program's budget is NIS 80 million for eight years (IMFA, 2009).
B. Introduction to the Public Council for Women and Sport

The first step taken in this initiative was the establishment of the Public Council for the Advancement of Women in Sport. As a result of the struggle for gender equity, discussed above, the establishment of the Public Council was a very important stage in the growth and developments of the status of women in sport in Israel and thereby, the successful longevity of the NPWS.

The chairwoman of the Public Council is nominated by the Sports Minister, and its members must also be approved by the Minister herself. The main roles of the Council according to Nir-Toor (2003) were as follows:

1. To be used as an advisory body for the Government, and the Sports Minister in relation to the development of girls and women in sport in Israel.

2. To work towards the development of a women’s sport policy in Israel.

3. To formalize a long term programme in order to create a wide infrastructure of women’s activities in sport, in elite sport amongst sport bodies, educational institutions, governmental bodies, local authorities and to monitor supervision and inspection of the implementation of these programs.

4. To formalize recommendations for the development of women’s leadership in Israel.

5. To work towards the transformation of standpoints among Israeli society relating to women in sport in Israel.

6. To promote comprehensive legislation related to the council's objectives and to advise the governmental offices on ways to enforce this legislation, in order to encourage equal opportunities for women in sport and sport organisations.

1.13 Concluding remarks

It seems that military service in the Israeli context is an issue that influences a whole range of different levels of socio-cultural contextual structures. Some of the masculine discourse referenced in this chapter, might be perceived as unique barriers to women
in access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport that must be taken into consideration when investigating these socially constructed phenomena in Israel. For instance, the discursively constructed notion of ‘militarisation’ within the Israeli social context represents a barrier in the sense that it goes beyond the military service itself and flows into civil discourse as well.

In order to challenge this socio-historical gendered discourse, I have employed a deconstructionist approach to investigate history, and this is related to the poststructuralist feminist theory I adopted in this research. Exploration of the meaning of 'equity' rather than 'equality' led me to look at two gender equity initiatives that seek to challenge male hegemony.

Studying the processes and discourse around the creation of different gender equity initiatives in relation to the two case studies (see more in Chapters Four and Five), will highlight the barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions and how they are discursively constructed, and learning from the narratives and perceptions of different actors will, in principle, allow us to understand and to counter historical discourse which promotes the barriers for women to access decision-making positions in sport organisations.

It therefore seems that in order to understand the gender equity initiatives regarding the two specific case studies, we will, within this research, be required to deconstruct the different historical socio-cultural linguistic processes relating to gendered discourse. I attempt to achieve this by using my own and other actors' perspectives, experiences and narratives. This might help us counter women’s exclusion from decision-making positions in sports organisations through deconstructing and challenging the discourse per se.

Nonetheless, although Israel is a unique case, it is to some extent influenced by the international socio-cultural trends, perspectives and narratives, such as for example, the IOC's minimum targets for women’s representation in related sporting bodies. In order to be able to challenge the existing realities of gender [in]equities in Israel, it is important to understand the different contexts and discourses within the two cases that are taking place. The next chapter, the literature review, will try to shed some light on the different international historical perspectives on gendered discourse.
Chapter Two - Literature Review – Women in Sport Organisations

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I provided an introduction to some of the key historical and socio-cultural contextual structures that constitute Israeli society and the institutional sport arena within it. It was suggested that for the most part, Israeli sport organisations are dominated by men and men's interests. As a consequence, there may be several reasons for women's under-representation in leadership positions in sport organisations. However, in Israel as a unique context, a central feature of the historical contextual construction of gendered roles and discourse is the socially constructed discourse of militarisation within Israeli society, and thus within sport organisations as part of that society. As we have seen, it is suggested in the literature (Sasson-Levi, 2003, 2006) that the discourse of militarisation reinforces gendered roles, values and language in different layers of Israeli society.

These socio-cultural contextual structures will invariably have implications for power relations which militate against many women and some men gaining access to managerial positions in Israeli sport organisations. The assumption that gender relationships are based, to some extent, on power relations which are continually shifting reinforces the notion that exploration of the implications of the management of Israeli sport organisations is far from complete. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to outline some significant perspectives found in the literature relating to the implications of gender similarities and differences and the implications of gender equity policies within sport organisations. Through these explorations we attempt to shed some light on the barriers in women’s access to decision-making positions in sport organisations, how these barriers are discursively constructed in that context and thus how they may be appropriately explored in this research.

In order to identify and explain the barriers, explanations of the theoretical perceptions taken within this research will be needed. Kugelmann (2002) suggests that by referring to biological differences, ‘social facts’ have been created and gender hierarchy established. In that sense, research and theorising has drawn attention to
The role of women in decision-making positions – The case of the Israeli sport organisations

masculine organisational cultures as contributory to the explanation of the persistence of phenomena such as the glass ceiling (Cassell and Walsh, 1997).

Although a male-dominated culture has for a long time been referred to in the discourse on institutional barriers for women’s careers, it is only recently that the characteristics and consequences of organisational culture have been described and investigated. Thus, the lack of women in senior management and leadership functions in sport may be attributed, in part, to dominant discursive managerial practices in sport organisations (Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008). Pfister (2006) further argues that throughout a range of societies, power appears to be in the hands of men, especially if one considers situational power, i.e. the influence connected with positions of leadership in the main areas of society. In relation to this contention, Hartmann-Tews, Luetkens, and Pfister (2003) have noted that men dominate the senior levels of politics, industry, and research, and this is also true of sport organisations.

Thus, research into gender-related diversity in sport organisations suggests that management or leadership in sport organisations is far from being equitable for a number of reasons (Hovden, 2000; Whisenant, Pederson and Obenour, 2002). Hoeber and Frisby (2001) for example, claim that competing values in sport organisations have led to the marginalisation of gender equity in relation to other organisational values which have been perceived to be more important, such as winning performances. However, as Hoeber (2004) points out, it is important to realise that in those cases where women's teams have had a longer history of winning than men's teams, inequities in budgets for, and promotion of, sport still persist, and lack of access by women to administrative positions has continued.

Another explanatory factor for this might be found in the gendered hierarchies that are rooted in the culture and values of the organisations. One of the current perspectives on the image of the sport leader according to Pfister (2006) is that of a person who is able and willing to invest much time in voluntary work. Although it was also suggested by Hoeber (2007) that performance of a management or leadership role is not necessarily better if more time is spent in work, a lack of time seems to be one of the barriers which prevent women's advancement in decision-making positions. Another barrier identified is that of the nature of election systems (e.g. Shaw and
Frisby, 2006) with, for example, unlimited terms of office allowing leaders (largely men) to hold their position for many years. In addition, in Israel voting rights are left disproportionately in the hands of clubs’ owners or chairmen, and politically related bodies (Maccabi, Hapoel, etc.), and even if they perceive equity as an important issue in sport in general, they are unwilling to invest time and energy in this issue. As Pfister (2006, p.1) argues,

_Because changes in the organisational culture are not seen as a necessity by the majority of the “insiders”, analyses and perspectives on the gender hierarchy from outside are necessary._

Hovden (1999) suggests that the dominant situation is characterised by power and gender relations, which often result in reinforced misperceptions between women and men in a cycle where the relative subordination of women continues. In that sense, it may be suggested that even when male dominance is not seen it might be there, taken for granted. This, according to Hoeber (2007), may lead to a situation in which women blame themselves for inequalities and their lack of influence.

In relation to this, Hovden (1999) has argued that from the perspective of gendered power relations in institutions, a common women’s response to this context - dropping out - is problematic, because it draws attention away from the need for consciousness-raising and thus reinforces the notion that women withdraw because they are not able. An implication in this case is that women in the Israeli sport context would need to be able to generate situations where they can act collectively against discriminating practices, as well as to develop new, reasonable alternative accounts of the organisational context in line with their needs and interests.

Such alternative accounts might thus suggest that masculine cultures, or contextual substructures, consist of implicit assumptions, tacit norms and organisational practices that promote forms of communication, views of self, approaches to conflict, images of leadership, organisational values, and definitions of success and of good management, which are stereotypically masculine. However, women’s sport continues to be fraught with conflict; not only in terms of an ideological struggle related to the meaning of female sporting experiences, but also to contest for positions within the regulatory institutions that govern women’s sport. (Theberge (1989) and Birrell (1988), cited in Costa and Guthrie, 1994).
These relationships within sports organisations might in part be a product of their historical roots. This is explained by Shaw (2001), as views that are exclusionary to women who have been expressed by historical figures in sport. For example Hargreaves (1994) argued that people used to perceive as the 'natural' order of things that men and boys participated in sport and women largely did not, and therefore, biological ideas were used to construct social ideas about gender and by that to defend inequities between men and women in sport.

To some extent, such beliefs might be seen as old fashioned to contemporary readers and no longer representative of views about women and sport, particularly since the advent of 'Title IX' in the USA, the 'Brighton Declaration on women and sport' endorsed by the 82 countries representing governmental and non-governmental organisations, national Olympic committees, international and national sport federations, educational and research institutions (Houlihan and White, 2002), and the IOC adoption of minimum targets in relation to female representation in executive decision-making positions in NOCs and International Federations (Henry et al., 2004).

However, according to Whisenant et al. (2002), despite such initiatives, such accounts do little to challenge the inequities that have been created within the historical and social construction of sport organisations.

Furthermore, Shaw (2001), argues that in order to fully analyse and thus challenge the inequitable nature of gendered discourse in sport organisations, it is necessary to progress from analyses which focus only on what occurs within sport organisations, to an examination of how and why they continue to be arenas in which issues of gender inequity persist. In that sense, the core research aim addressed in this study is not only to identify the barriers to women's access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations, but also to explain how such barriers are discursively constructed in Israeli sports organisations.

In our account we acknowledge that although a considerable amount of research effort has been expended on the under-representation of women in senior decision-making positions, such gender research in sports management and leadership, has largely been dominated by liberal feminist theory, which is criticised as having done little to challenge or alter dominant gendered discourse and power structures within sports.
organisations (Shaw and Frisby, 2006). Thus, there has been relatively little research focused on the exploration of historical socio-cultural contextual structures that might deny women access to managerial positions and more significantly on, how these 'structures' were constructed.

Thus, in this thesis, we attempt to focus on the specific case of women in decision-making positions within Israeli sports organisations through in-depth investigation of the gendered discourse in Israeli sport organisations. We analyse narratives, perspectives and discourse of women and men holding decision-making positions in specific Israeli sport organizations (e.g. the Israeli Volleyball Association and the National Project for Women’s Sport). The approach adopted in examining the ways in which this gendered discourse is constructed and/or contextually challenged draws on a poststructuralist feminist position, which allows us to develop new knowledge for deeper understanding of the gendered barriers in sport organisations in part by challenging the binary way of thinking of what is feminine and masculine. Such an approach implies that concepts of gender and gendered behaviour are not simply fixed concepts socialised into men or women, but should be seen as fluid and socially constructed experiences within the specific culture of Israeli society and Israeli sport.

2.2. Theoretical considerations

Male hegemony in the past has often traditionally been ascribed to women's biological and anatomical differences from men in may be characterised as an ‘anti-feminist’ mind set. Weedon (2000) explains this as the meanings given to femininity and femaleness in order to determine and limit the social and economic spheres to which women had access. However, inspired by the French Revolution, feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft in the late 18th century and in the 19th century (Weedon, 2000) argued that women were different from men not by reason of 'nature', but as a result of inadequate education which favoured men over women. On the other hand, some first wave feminists at the beginning of the 19th century, mainly in Germany, embraced ideas of women's intrinsic difference. Instead of arguing that women 'should be like men', they argued that women's special qualities lay in 'natural' differences.
In this sense, motherhood was, for example, much more than a biological capacity and should not necessarily imply that women are inferior. This argument, which to some extent accepts difference as 'natural', was rejected by other feminist contemporaries, mainly Anglo-Americans, who struggled for access to education and the professions on the basis of women's sameness with men. Nevertheless, Weedon (2000) argues that the need to respect differences and choices and to reflect traditional hierarchies of what counts as important and to whom, remained a key factor of the different feminist movements.

Liberal Feminism, for example, which has its roots in the liberal tradition of the Enlightenment, embraced the ideas of justice, rationality, citizenship, human rights, equality and democracy, and argued that attitudes regarding women in society, run counter to many of these values (March, 2000). Weedon (2000) argued that, in theory, the individual for whom liberalism legislates is an abstract individual untouched by social relations of class, gender or race. In practice, for many years all women and some men (for example, men of colour in the USA) were excluded from education, and management opportunities until the 1960s and even later.

The feminist battle for inclusion within liberalism can thus be traced back over more than 300 years. In this struggle, liberal feminists have argued for women's equality with men on the basis of their 'sameness'. However, it might be suggested that liberal feminists in the 'developed countries' today have achieved the formal extension of most civil rights and duties to women, but that their strategies led to the burdens of women's dual role and what become known in the 1980s as the ideology of the 'superwomen' (women were expected to participate in fully in all spheres).

Furthermore, liberal feminists' disregard for the gendered nature of bodies, and their emphasis on 'sameness' is related to another aspect of modern liberal society: the division between the public and the private spheres. Marsh (2000) for example, noted that liberal politics tends to argue for as little state involvement as possible in the lives of individuals (private sphere). However, for many liberal feminists, choice within the domestic sphere is promised only if women have an income which enables them to pay other individuals (mainly women) to carry out their 'domestic duties' (child care, cleaning etc.). This may be seen as a tendency to devalue the private sphere, and to imply the failure of much liberal feminism to challenge the deep-rooted socio-cultural
structures of contemporary societies (Pateman, 1987). Furthermore, according to Williams (1985), this dual expectation ensures that the female subordinated group conceptualises masculine hegemony as ‘normality’ or a ‘common sense’ view of reality. Sage (1998) argues that sport represents one of the most hegemonic social institutions and sets of cultural practices associated with a dominant role for men and boys.

In contrast, traditional Marxist feminists regard it as essential to recognise that the oppression of women is explicitly linked to the capitalist order. This contention led to a core criticism of this approach in that it failed to account for the oppression of women prior to capitalism and in non-capitalist societies. It was argued that in 'so called' socialist societies, women often found themselves holding secondary positions in comparison to those held by [some] men. Core contradictions have been evident in the treatment many individual socialist women have received from socialist men of power in regard to the socialist values of equality and solidarity (Phillips, 1987).

Thus some socialist women have questioned the adequacy of the Marxist account of women’s subordination, suggesting that it fails to acknowledge the role of men in women's subordination, and emphasises economic class relations as of primary significance with gender relations a secondary concern. However, since the 1970s, socialist feminism has represented a shift from orthodox Marxism and has focused attention not only on the economic but also on the ideological conditions of women's oppression. Socialist feminists claim that it is not only the economic needs of capitalism but also patriarchal gender ideology that explains why women continue to be seen as responsible for the family–household. The social system controls women's access to [some] paid positions by tying them to the roles of reproducers of children, of unpaid workers in the household economy, and of sexual objects for male needs (Barrett, 1980 in Marsh, 2000). Weedon (2000) summarised the differences between traditional Marxism and socialist feminism as an attempt to resist privileging one category of oppression over another (for example, capitalism over patriarchy).

A central tenet of radical feminist theory was the principle that 'the personal is political'. Radical feminists challenged the public/private divide implicit in the liberal feminist account, and stressed the importance of the body in sexual politics. Radical
feminists thus rejected the theoretical frameworks and political practice of both liberalism and traditional Marxism.

It is further argued by Marsh (2000) that radical feminism perceives men as fearful of women's power to create independent life. Gender in that sense might be seen as a system of male domination of women's minds and bodies, and, radical feminists see women's oppression by men as the core form of oppression in society, and a product of patriarchal ideology.

Radical feminists use the term patriarchy to refer to a system of domination which exists in aspects of social life and culture, found in all societies and at all moments of history. For example, Weedon (2000) argues that male sexuality is forced on women by institutions and practices as different as sexual violence and literature (for example by rape, wife beating, arranged marriage, forms of pornography). Since the 1970s there has been a shift in much feminist theory and criticism as radical feminists argued that patriarchal meanings and values pervade all aspects of culture and reinforce forms of female subjectivity in regards to how they experience patriarchy.

Thus, even in recent years, when there has been a significant increase in the number of opportunities for female participation in sport (supported largely by liberal feminist arguments and policies) there still remains a low percentage of women in administrative and leadership positions, even within women's sport programs. For example, Acosta and Carpenter (2002) found that in the year 2000, women ran only 18% of women's athletic programs and held only 17% of the athletic director positions within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States. Nonetheless, Henry et al. (2004) found that despite a rapid growth of women recruited to NOC Executive Committees in 2001, only 62% of NOCs had met the minimum targets of the NOC (at least 10% women by the year of 2001). Furthermore, at the 4th IOC World Conference on Women and Sport (2008) the figures on women's representation on the IOC in 2008 were 14.5% of IOC members and 12.7% of the IOC commissions' members. From a range of other feminist perspectives, the argument is made that in order to achieve gender equity within sport organisations, a discourse needs to be developed which reflects less of a binary way of thinking about 'men' and 'women' and more of a focus on what roles are discursively constructed, and how they are so constructed.
Such an approach means that female differences became the main interest of researchers and feminists. Some radical feminists, for example, began to posit the existence of a unique female or feminine language and/or epistemology (Weedon, 2000; Marsh, 2000). Gendered language is often rooted in the nature of biological or social female experiences and thus enables women with different but related experiences to articulate different identities freed from contextual homogeneity amongst women as a group. The significance of difference and of language was welcomed by the third wave of feminism, which incorporates both 'postmodern thought' and poststructuralist feminist theory.

It is worth acknowledging at this point that postmodernism according to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002:85) represents a general term which has been applied to the poststructuralist writings of French theorists and philosophers such as Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and further developed by thinkers (such as Lyotard or Rorty) labelled with the general term 'postmodern'. However, it is believed that there are significant differences between poststructuralism that sees language and competing discourse as the core for social institutions and power structures and postmodernism which reject modernism, by recognising the meaning of 'difference', opposing unity, homogeneity, universalism and in our case, male hegemony (Amara, 2003).

Thus in this case we consider only the implications for feminist social research of 'postmodern thought', in which we loosely group it with poststructuralism as a focus on the postmodern. In line with this claim of commonalities between the postmodern and the post-structural, Best and Kellner (1991) characterise postmodern theorists as trying to deconstruct the binary way of thinking of the knowing-self and thus providing the 'other' (most women and some men) with an inclusive space within the social structures. Furthermore, they reject the modernist notion of the unified, rational, and expressive subject and attempt to make possible the emergence of new types of decentred subjects, liberated from what they see as the "terror" of fixed and unified identities. In that sense, Shaw (2003) argues that regarding gender power relations, poststructuralism resists modern views about women's and men's abilities and roles that for many years remained accepted and largely unchallenged. Furthermore, it rejects any universalism, for example, the search for universal truths such as 'all men' repress 'all women'.
According to Richardson (1994), although 'postmodern thought' doubts that any method, theory, or discourse has a universal general claim to truth, or to a privileged form of authoritative knowledge, it does not automatically reject conventional methods of acquiring knowledge by stating that they are false or archaic. 'Postmodern thought' opens those standard methods of inquiry and introduces new methods, which are then also subject to critique.

In relation to feminism, 'postmodern thought' establishes knowing feminists and their critics as particular subjects, with particular histories, and as engaged in particular struggles around claims to authoritative knowledge. In order to achieve authoritative knowledge, the postmodern approach demands that identities be interrogated, in the sense that their histories should be questioned, the constitution and crossings of their boundaries examined, thereby enabling a multiplicity of different identities to be explored in order to establish what makes some identities powerful in relation to others, and how this power is exercised (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

These same authors further claim that the process of interrogation is not natural because it is not free from the power relations that shape processes of knowledge production and political mobilisation in a more general manner. Postmodern researchers have attacked the legitimacy of ‘modern’ claims to “universally true” knowledge, and also those universal claims of feminism, on the grounds that these theorisations are dependent on grand narratives of emancipation, science and progress. These claims are said to have achieved an ‘omniscient’ standpoint, which takes precedence over the other stories that people have related so far (Lyotard, 1984; Noris, 2000). In place of the claim to universal knowledge, Lyotard (1984), argues that all ‘truths’ are local rather than general, because they are produced within the rules of particular, limited language games.

Therefore the ‘truth’ of ‘women’s subordination’ cannot hold up firmly in other ways of thinking, with other rules. This relativist tendency is a critical challenge for poststructuralist feminism.

Put in other terms, Featherstone’s (1995) emphasis is also placed upon a more complex combination of differences, local diversities and otherness. The voices that are ignored or suppressed, for example in the unified models of globalisation and the world-system process, are potentially given more attention with postmodern theory,
where women and the individual experiences of women, are at least potentially more equally represented than in modernisation accounts. However, postmodern theory, even if welcomed by feminists, is still critical in relation to politics, ethics and practice, but nevertheless offers us freedom from claims of limited knowledge (Hekman, 1992; McNay, 1992).

In the case of this thesis, poststructuralist feminist theory has been adopted to frame the empirical work, as described in Chapter Three which outlines methodology. We are assuming that by using this theory, new knowledge and understanding will be developed regarding the dominant gendered discourse that socially constructs the barriers facing women in terms of access to decision-making positions in sport organisations.

In order to meet these aims, we consider competing and complementary discourses and perceptions of the interviewees and also my own auto-ethnographical account in relation to the two case studies presented in Chapters Four and Five. Adopting a poststructuralist feminist perspective allows us also to challenge the binary opposition of femininity and masculinity because poststructuralist feminist theorists tend to see gender as a fluid and changeable rather than a fixed phenomenon. Thus, focusing on the fragmentation of the language of the interviewees allows us to focus more attention on situations and their construction through language as much more diverse and culture-specific.

Language is central to poststructuralist perspectives, and as an approach to language analysis we have employed Critical Discourse Analysis to help us in to identify historical socio-cultural structures and substructures discursively constructed in the organisational set of values and gendered discourse in Israeli sport. CDA allows us to understand the relationships between different discourses, such as when discourse of masculinity is linked to that of leadership or management serving to undermine the discourse of femininity which may be associated with subordinate roles and women (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004).

More specifically within this research, we aim to explore the relationships between and within the discourses of the author’s auto-ethnographical account and those of interviewees with regard to the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls, presented in Chapter Four, and moreover between the different
interviewees' discourses with regard to the process of the establishment of the National Policy for Women’s Sport presented in Chapter Five. In doing so we will critically explore the contextual construction of the discourses of femininity and masculinity embedded in the sets of values, beliefs and the socio-cultural context of Israeli sport organisations as identified through the discourse of the interviewees which represent their understandings and constructions of the discourse in those organisations.

2.3. Historically socio-cultural contextualised construction of gender roles in sport organisations

Shaw (2001) has identified sport as an arena of considerable influence within contemporary society. National newspapers have a number of pages devoted to sport and TV companies compete for the right to screen sport matches. For example the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) spent US$35 billion to televise the summer and winter Olympic Games until 2008 (Mitchell, 2000).

Given the significance of the domain, gaining a high managerial administrative position (for example, IOC President) can generate publicity, fame, influence and power within the global society. Yet, few women have been able to access the highest level of power in sport organisations (Moore et al. 2001; Hovden, 2000; Pfister, 2001, 2006).

There is an explanation for this. Whisenant, Pedersen and Obenour (2002) have explained masculine hegemony as a condition in which certain social groups gain authority through manipulation and imposition over other groups. The maintenance of power by consent on the part of subordinate groups to what appears inevitable leads to an acceptance of the status quo in society. Such hegemonic relationships in sport are rooted within the historical context of sport organisations and more broadly, within the historically socio-cultural construction of gender within society.

As we have seen, many commentators have argued that sport constructs, reflects and reproduces gender relations and these relations disadvantage women. This has been experienced in many ways. Women, for example, have undervalued their own
sporting achievements which have been marginalised and ignored (White, 1994; Pfister, 2001).

Until the emergence of feminist and other studies of gender in sport in the 1970s, knowledge about sport tended to be based on studies of white males (Ferris, 2000). Sport and its associated values, which have been emphasised in sports studies, had traditionally been those relevant to males, not females. Research that did include gender typically assumed that there was an inherent conflict between female gender identity(ies) and participating in sport (Hall, 1988; Klausen, 1996; Duval, 2003). This has been an implication of the way that sport has tended to celebrate the achievements of men while marginalising the status of women by placing them in expressive, supportive roles, or ascribing women's participation a secondary status. Sport, according to Ferris (2000), has been treated as a result largely as a 'male preserve' supported by institutional practices of discrimination against women.

Moreover, in the past, women might have been prevented from full and equal participation because of formal restrictions and cultural predispositions. Several myths have evolved with respect to the participation of women in sport (Duval, 2003). These for example, according to Fray and Eitzen (1991) include the idea that sport is harmful to the female reproductive system and thus a threat to child bearing; that sport compromises a female’s appearance; that the development of masculinity is threatened if girls outperform adolescent boys in sport; that human and economic resources are wasted because the performance levels of females are perceived as lower than those of males; and that sport is not important for the social development of women because the values of achievement, aggressiveness, and competition are irrelevant to the life experience of women. These myths are to some extent, still influential, causing stigma and role conflict for some women in sport.

However, although women may experience role conflict, research comparing women athletes and non-athletes suggest that women athletes have a better self-image, a better body image, and a better outlook toward life than non-athletes (for example, Fray, 1991). In effect, according to Thompson (1990), women expend more time and energy catering to the leisure of others than in achieving their own leisure fulfilment. Thus, while some women participate regularly in sport and physical activity, the energy of the majority is more often directed into facilitating the participation of
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others, particularly the members of their immediate families. However, these examples could be a product of selection, not necessarily socialisation, and the outcome of strong in-group bonds formed by a sub-culture of athletes who acknowledge their differences from most women.

Nevertheless, sexist, racist and classist practices within sport, it is argued, have alienated women from what is a powerful and influential social institution. Thus, one of the serious problems many women face in sport involves discrimination. An example of this can be found in the denial of access to the control of sport by women (see for example Ferris, 2000; Hovden, 2000; Hoeber, 2007). It goes further; in some countries educational institutions are offering more sports for women (e.g. USA since the introduction of Title IX), and participation by women as athletes has shown a dramatic increase. However, according to Whisenant et al. (2002), the proportion of women who are coaches or administrators has declined significantly. For example Thompson (1990), cites evidence that in the USA before the introduction of Title IX in 1972, 90% of women’s teams were coached by women; by 1989, 47% were coached by women and similarly, the non-coach administrators of women’s sports programs tended to be men).

Discrimination against women in sport has been documented in many areas and continues to be evident (Acosta and Carpenter, 2002, 2006). Since sport is a cultural form, emergent, changing, and subject to the influence of gender and class, the meanings attached to sport participation cannot be properly assessed with traditional empirical methods. Therefore, in the view of critical feminist theorists, a feminist view should be cultural, humanist, interpretive, phenomenological, and value-oriented, and as such will depart from the requirements of traditional empiricism.

2.4. Gender and sport organisations

Some researchers (e.g. Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1989) argue that to some extent, no matter what the organisation, it is gendered. Most, if not all, organisations possess a distinctive gender structure, with men typically occupying the more powerful positions and women the less powerful ones in organisations which exert most influence (Whisenant et al., 2002). Under-representation of women in senior
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行政职位在体育组织中是一个持久的特征，是体育场景变化的许多国家以及国际体育组织的特征，如显示在许多研究（White and Brackenridge, 1985; Slack and Kikulis, 1989; Sharp, 1998; Acosta and Carpenter, 2002; Shaw and Penney, 2003）。

Moreover, Henry et al. (2004) found in their report to the IOC that although there is a recognition of the issue to some degree, and there is an attempt to take some action in order to challenge the existing situation (for example, the IOC minimum targets), the achievements are very limited (only 62% of the NOCs had met the minimum target of 10% women's representation and 20% met the minimum target of 20% women's representation by 2004). However, in the case of the IOC, further investigation of why this should be the case is taking place (Henry and Robinson, 2010).

Much of the literature on gender and organizations emanates from what may be termed the women in management perspective. One of the themes within this approach sees women’s progress in organisations as a specific problem for women, both individually and collectively. According to Whisenant et al. (2002), for example, most of the literature in this tradition has been concerned either with demonstrating that women and men are not different in their managerial abilities, or with teaching women to make their way up the corporate ladder.

This literature is problematic in that it accepts as a given the structural conditions that form the context of organisational behaviours as well as the internal dynamics of the organisations. It fails, therefore, to address the historical patterns of power and domination that pervade organisations and allow certain segments of society to reach senior administrative levels while others are relegated to support roles (Shaw, 2001). The logic that underpins this type of approach to women’s involvement is nevertheless frequently used by members of sport organisations to explain the disproportionate under-representation of women in management positions (Hall et al., 1989).

Another and supposedly more useful perspective in the women and management approach to understanding the inequalities that exist in sport organisations is what has been termed the organisation centred perspective (Hall et al., 1989). This perspective essentially focuses on the structure of organisations and the manner in which this
structure enables or (more usually) constrains women’s progress towards senior management positions. This approach is exemplified in the organisational literature by Rosabeth Kanter’s 1977 book, *Men and Women of the Corporation*. Kanter’s main argument is that because of stereotyping, women in organisations are placed in positions of low power and low opportunity with limited possibilities of advancement. Kanter further argues that for those few women who do reach the senior levels of an organisation, there are further barriers in that their limited numbers make it difficult for them to function effectively in a male dominated domain (Slack and Kikulis, 1989).

More recently Ferris (2000) has argued that despite the progress in the field of sport in relation to female athletes’ participation, it is not the same in the senior positions in sport organisations, where still very few women occupy leadership positions in the world of sport. This might be explained in the small number of opportunities that are open to women to bring their skills and ideas. Shaw and Penney (2003) have argued that even if gender equity is a 'hot topic' in a sport organisation this does not necessarily mean that things will change dramatically either in terms of numbers of women or of gendered discourse. For example, in 2001 less than one third of the Council members in Sport England were women although all National Governing Bodies have to 'commit to' gender equity policies in order to receive funding.

However, one might question the adequacy of these kinds of actions and/or the impact that they may have on gender equity policy may be questionable. As we have noted, a number of authors have argued that sport is one of the most hegemonic social institutions and cultural practices in society (Whisenant et al., 2002; Shaw, 2001), and that the current under-representation of women in sport leadership positions, is rooted deeply in the production and reproduction of this hegemony. This implies that a broader gender equity policy may be required in order to bring about a change in the current situation.

Shaw and Penney (2003) have contributed to this discussion arguing that gender equity policies represent part of wider gender relations in sport organisations in which many women and some men face discrimination based on their gender (see also, Hartmann-Tews and Pfister, 2003; Shaw and Slack, 2002).
In that sense, gender equity policies may be investigated and examined by analysing the interaction of the significant discourse involved during the establishment and implementation phases.

Gender equity in decision-making positions in sport organisations is not only a demand for social justice or democracy. According to Ferris (2000) it is also essential for good governance achieving transparent and accountable government in the sense of providing a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society. These views were reflected in the Brighton Declaration in 1994 and at the subsequent IWG quadrennial conference in 1998. Shaw and Frisby (2006) continue this idea by noting that there may be a disjuncture between the development of gender equity policies and initiatives and the ways socially constructed forms of gender relations are expressed and played out.

For example, if the aim of some gender equity policies is to increase the numbers of women in decision-making positions, it might do little to change the dominance of deeply and historically rooted masculinity in sport. Ely and Meyerson (2000) have indicated that dominant organisational discourse (such as gendered discourse) is promoted in sport through contemporary conceptualisations of gender equity that to some extent limit and undermine the possibility of organisational transformation and social justice. This therefore leads us to consider an alternative conceptualisation of gender equity in sport management based on a poststructuralist feminist approach that provides significantly different ways to identify and analyse the different discourses of gender relations in Israeli sport organisations through a process of narrative revision and experimentation.

In the more practical aspect, Moore et al. (2001) point out that those gender inequities shown in the managerial ranks of sport organisations may be affected by human resource management (HRM) systems, and the tendency to reinforce gender inequity is well documented. HRM systems are established by employers sometimes explicitly to reflect values such as equity, but the results have often tended to be sex segregation of the labour force and a substantial earnings differential between women and men (Reskin and Roos, 1990). This is often the case in the sport industry, where the male-dominated leadership has created a gender-segmented contextual work structure that
places the majority of female employees in low-paying jobs with minimum advancement potential (Frisby and Kikulis, 1996; Shaw and Hoeber, 2003).

Moore et al. (2001) also found, that women did not perceive as much moral support (top management’s attitudinal support) for gender equity in their organisations as men did. One explanation for this might be that men interpreted organisational actions as showing strong support for gender equity, which women interpreted as indicating only moderate or weak organisational support. The authors suggest there is a need to develop more extensive gender equity programmes and greater female manager representation in sport organisations. As such, the authors claim, the administrative and socio-cultural contextual structures could then reflect sincere efforts to promote gender equity, not manipulative attempts to legitimise the status quo.

2.5. Women holding leadership positions in sport organisations

A. Characteristics

Hovden (1999) argued that in her study of Norwegian sport the majority of women in leadership positions had come from a coaching background. Many of them had held positions at both the local and central levels. They were involved in a broad range of organisational experiences. She also found in her study of women in sports organisations in Norway that 47 out of 54 respondents had studied for a university degree or undertaken vocational education. This level is far above the average level of education among the general female population in Norway in the same age group. She also found that all her respondents were fully employed or students; the majority were in their twenties; 75% were married or common-law wives and two-thirds of the women had children, mostly under the age of seven.

Sachs, Chrisler and Devlin, (1992) also found in their research that women in managerial positions had some shared biographical characteristics. The majority were from middle class families, had close relationships with their parents; had mothers who were employed outside the home; had mostly male role models and had played a sport in their youth. According to the same research, the majority of the women managers supported the goals of the feminist movement, and had strong pro-feminist attitudes; however, they would not want to define themselves as feminist.
In order to simplify the need to define behaviour, McLellan, Shinew and McCoy (1994), examined whether significant differences existed between male and female managers based on McClelland’s trichotomy of needs: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation. No significant differences were identified between male and female resource managers regarding forms of behaviour. However, there were more significant differences within the male and female groups concerning the three needs. Nevertheless, in relation to the influence of gender on managerial behaviours, Whisenant (2004) found no significant differences among women who had previous careers as athletes and women who had no sporting career in their past.

Given McClelland’s (1985; cited in McClelland et al., 1994) assertion that motivated behaviour is a function of needs, it is suggested that in a given management situation, men and women might respond in more similar than dissimilar ways. It therefore seems that the disproportionately low numbers of women in leadership positions can no longer only be explained by the contention that women practice a different ‘kind’ of management from that practiced by men.

Doharty (1997) provides another explanation by considering transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. She found that female and young leaders were perceived to exhibit characteristics such as charisma, inspiration and individualised consideration, aspects normally the attributed to transformational leadership behaviour, and were perceived to have exhibited characteristics associated with management by exception (passive) less often, than their male and older counterparts, respectively.

### B. Motivation

In regards to the issue of officials holding elected posts, some women gave as their main motivation for seeking election to such posts, the desire to challenge themselves, and their recognition of the importance of the post. They also considered their declared organisational goals and work tasks as meaningful. A small number of women undertook elected posts out of a sense of duty, because there were no other appropriate candidates who were able or willing to stand for election (Inglis, 1997). Women, however, often reserved opinion in expressing how they contributed to an executive board. In that sense, Pfister (2006) noted that a possible perception among women is that their male colleagues have higher self-confidence and ambitions (a
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finding which is echoed in Henry et al. 2004, and Henry & Robinson 2010). One of Hovden’s (1999:33) respondents, for example, expressed the differences between men and women in the following words:

*Men who are asked to sit on an executive board say ‘yes’ because they feel they have something to contribute. Women who are asked, say ‘yes’, in the sense of perhaps learning something.*

Tasks connected to organisational development, planning and steering were reported as the most appealing and motivating. Furthermore, according to Hovden (2000) women maintained that they found the organising of work tasks on the boards ineffective, very time-consuming and often not directed enough towards the stated goals. Pfister (2006) on the other hand found that women maintained the same degree of satisfaction as men with regard to appreciation for their work in their organisation, interpersonal relationships, level of influence and the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions. This may be what is reflected in Hoeber’s (2007) findings, which suggested that female members of the sporting boards tend to deny any gender inequities within their sport organisations.

This might also be explained as perceptions and beliefs of both male and female members that the sport organisations are gender neutral (see also Pfister, 2006). However, some female and male members have rationalised the gender inequities in sport organisations by attributing them to factors other than gender, such as the popularity of teams, taking as given that men's teams attract media, spectators and sponsors and, in turn, generate revenue, while most women's teams do not (Hoeber, 2007). This emphasis on generated revenue (see also Whisenant et al., 2002) reinforces a discursively constructed gender order in the socially constructed gender roles of sport organisations.

C. *Barriers*

Directly questioned about why it is difficult to motivate women to take up centrally elected posts, three main factors were posited: first, women claim that the work is too time consuming (Pfister, 2006); second, women felt they were not qualified enough; third, strong male dominance often frightened women from accepting those positions, and especially militated against women holding the positions over a long period of
time (Hovden, 1999). It is thus perhaps unsurprising that when Hovden (2000) asked women who were active in sport organisations whether in the future they would consider leadership positions in sport organisations, two-thirds responded in the negative (Hovden, 2000).

Other possible reasons for that might be the time factor (Knopper and Anthonissen, 2007). Others stated the lack of positive feedback from their male counterparts as their main reason. Hovden (1999) also noted that women felt that their resources (knowledge, skills, experiences, life situations etc.) were poorly used.

Some stated that working hard, only to have men take all the credit for their work and a lack of shared understanding among men and women were also reasons for this negative response.

Treating women and men similarly, despite the substantial evidence regarding differential gender status within the organisation represents another potential barrier to women. For example, a study undertaken by Fitzgerald and Sagaria (1994), regarding career patterns of Athletic Directors in the USA, highlights collegiate coaching as the most common antecedent professional position for these points.

However, the number of women in professional coaching had been decreasing, and they therefore argued that in future this reducing source might be reflected in a lack of women advancing to Athletic Director positions, unless athletic departments began to value alternative experiences to coaching as relevant to such appointments and / or increased the representation of women coaches.

Further factors according to Sachs, Chrisler and Devlin (1992), include the contextual barriers constructed by society and organisations resulting in the glass ceiling effect, and personal and biographical characteristics that affect how well women are able to adjust to corporate culture.. Networking, visible and invisible, such as the "Old Boys Club" has been cited to explain the lack of women in decision-making positions by reference to male dominance in most of the positions where employment decisions are taken (Lovett and Lowry, 1995). In a similar vein, Hovden (2000) noted that the tightly protected 'White male networking' circles in Norway, have contributed to exclusion of women from high-ranking roles.
According to Hovden’s study (1999), many women have experienced a lack of power to raise their particular interests as women. Many women in leadership positions have become conscious about their conditions in male-dominated arenas through their experiences, but very few seemed to have the abilities to act according to those experiences and initiate emancipatory changes.

According to Hoeber and Frisby (2001) different competing values in sport organisations have led to the marginalisation of gender equity in relation to other organisational values such as winning performances.

Women, according to Hovden (1999), have also reported several other gender role–conflicts (see also Whisenant et al., 2002). Conflicts exist with traditional masculine role-expectations, so that when women hold elected posts, they report dilemmas relating to what they experience as all-consuming activities which impinge on other obligations. Such difficulties might signal a need for alternative organisation of work tasks within sport organisations, in the same way as the demand for working practices of the UK Parliament to be modified began to grow following the influx of female members in the 1997 election (Liberal Democrats, 2008).

Several women in Hovden's research (1999) reported that they were not asked to take on powerful positions and status-oriented work tasks. One reason for this they suggested was that women were seldom included in informal networks existing among the (powerful) males. These conditions resulted in many women having a sense of insufficient qualifications and lack of personal empowerment to define goals according to their own attitudes and needs. Such experiences are reported as evolving into an uncomfortable feeling of being ‘foreign’ within the dominant culture (Hovden, 2000). These kinds of barriers and dilemmas may well contribute to a high dropout rate among women.

However, Steel et al. (1987) found in their study that despite those barriers, men and women hold equal aspirations for managerial positions, and moreover, they demonstrated that women and men did not differ in overall managerial potential (see also in Scott, 1999).

Therefore, traditional arguments about inequity in sport organisations between men and women being a product of differences in aspirations or potential explaining the
gross under-representation of women in managerial positions are not supported by evidence.

This nonetheless might suggest that implicit power is also evident. For example, the liberal feminist emphasis on equal numbers of teams for men and women may, to some extent, deny women access to sport organisations, by providing little space for dialogue about the comprehensive nature of inequities and thus the need for other tactics and strategies (for example changing the gendered discourse in resource allocation). Such findings imply that some barriers to female involvement in decision-making positions in sport are socialised into traditional contextual gendered roles for men and women within the broader context of the sport arena.

2.6. The gender-roles in leadership positions in sport organisations

Sport organisations according to Clarinbould and Knoppers (2007) are often conceived as places that still reproduce traditional gender roles and male privilege and dominance. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore, that women in many countries are still under-represented in leadership positions and marginalised in the workplace (Acosta and Carpenter, 2006). Furthermore, according to Sartore and Cunningham (2007), sport organisations are contexts where men and masculinity are privileged and leadership positions linked historically with sex-roles stereotypes. Even when women do hold leadership positions in sport organisations, as Acosta and Carpenter (2006) note, they are often less well treated than their male counterparts. Shaw (2003) also suggests that informal networking, dress codes, and the use of humour serve to privilege men and masculinity within sport organisations.

Thus, according to Inglis (1997), an understanding of the roles associated with the governing of the sport organisations and understanding how men and women and may be similar or different, are essential to developing the necessary strategies to meet the challenges facing these organisations in implementing gender equity policies relating to representation of women in leadership positions. The existence of gendered roles in leadership and management is viewed through language, practices and to some extent, policies. This may be used to create gender relations that favour masculinity over
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femininity within sport organisations (Shaw and Slack, 2002) and to discursively construct gender roles in the boards of sport organisations.

Furthermore, Shaw and Hoeber (2003) argue that gender roles in relation to leadership positions, sometimes illustrate a commonly held belief that leadership roles entail assuming characteristics that are associated with male roles and masculinity. For example, there may be a commitment of time and energy beyond job requirements, in societies where women are often expected to deal with domestic responsibilities in addition to any public responsibilities. Hovden (2000) argues in that sense that men may be regarded as having fewer responsibilities regarding their family, and therefore, can invest more time and energy in public responsibilities beyond their ‘normal’ jobs.

In relation to gender differences in perspectives in executive committees, research undertaken by Doherty and Carron (2003), found, for example, that although there were no significant differences in perceptions of social cohesion, which in this sense represent the unity, togetherness and the tendency of a group to stick together and to remain united (in our case, volunteers in sport organisations) between members of more homogeneous or more heterogeneous committees, there was:

\[ a \text{ dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member-affective needs} \]

\[ \text{Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213 cited in Doherty and Carron, 2003).} \]

The authors found that committee gender composition was not a significant factor in the members’ perceptions of either task or social cohesion. The reason for this may be that what were identified as 'diverse committees' (only comprising one-third women at most) were not sufficiently distinct from homogeneous committees. In that sense Kanter (1977 cited in Skirstad, 2000), argued that groups do behave differently depending on their relative size. Kanter divided mixed groups into four categories: the 'uniform', the 'skewed', the 'titled' and the 'balanced' group:

- The uniform group, is homogeneous regarding sex (ratio of 100:0)
- The skewed group has a predominance of one group over the other up to a ratio of 85:15. The group in the majority dominates and controls
the rest, and the remainder may be regarded as ‘token’ appointments. They are often treated as representatives of their kind (gender) instead of individuals (as in many International Sport Federations and NOCs).

- The titled groups no longer have these extreme distributions, but a ratio of perhaps 65:35. Although this allows a clear majority, it has also a large minority, which will contain potential allies. For the first time, the minority may be individuals different from each other, while at the same time different from the majority.

- The balanced group is when the ratio is from 60:40 to 50:50).

However, in regard to sport executive committees, the findings showed that volunteering sport executives perceived greater task cohesion than social cohesion in their committees. Furthermore, in their research on organisational commitment amongst volunteer sport administrators, Cuskeley et al. (1998) found that this simply related to age group, occupation, years of organisational membership, and time spent on administration. These findings may not be surprising if we take into consideration that these committees are working groups that exist to pursue particular goals and objectives rooted in the masculine tradition of sport organisations.

Furthermore, although committees’ tasks appear to be the more attractive and integrating aspects of these groups, Doherty and Carron (2003) observed relatively high levels of both task and social cohesion. White (1994) also argued that by and large, sports organisations are usually run by male committees and managers and if women are involved at all, it is likely to be on junior and social committees. This situation keeps most women and some men away from influential positions, and as a result, the organisation is likely to remain homogeneous, i.e. to maintain the masculine organisational culture.

2.7. Gender-equity policies in sport organisations

The targets and quotas developed to increase the size and proportion of women’s and girls’ participation at all levels of sport, may be a necessary part of gender equity policy. For example, the IOC minimum targets aimed for at least 20% of the positions
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on NOC and IF Executive Committees or Boards, to be occupied by women by December 2005 (Pfister, 2001), and the English Sport Council aimed to achieve an increase of 20% among girls who participate in sport between 1997 and 2001. However, using minimum targets or some similar action by itself might be said to focus on one aspect of equality only, rather than on equity.

In the United States, Title IX has resulted in a significant increase in sport participation for women. It might be logical to assume that an increase in opportunities for female athletes to participate would also result in a greater number of females occupying coaching and leadership positions (Hums, Barr and Doll-Tepper, 1998; Staurowsky, 1995; Lovett and Lowry, 1988). However, based on several studies, parallels in employment opportunities for women have not been realised. In fact, while there have been an increasing number of opportunities in participation, the employment of women in leadership positions has actually declined in some contexts (Lovett and Lowry, 1988; Pastore, Inglis and Danyychuk, 1996; Hovden, 2000b). A number of authors have therefore proposed (for example, Hall, 1996; Hoeber, 2007), that rather than focusing on equality, effort should be shifted towards the notion of gender equity policies as a more comprehensive goal:

*Equality generally means ’equality of opportunity’...in sport, equal opportunities were designed to increase women’s overall participation...the shift to equity signals a more comprehensive view in which the focus is no longer exclusively on women (or any other group) but on a system...that needs to change to accommodate them (Hall, 1996:p.90).*

Equity implies a more comprehensive offset of changes within organisations, but is more complex, and thus more difficult to implement and monitor than a relatively simple measurement of the numbers of each gender who participate (Shaw and Penney, 2003). By claiming that the latter approach reflects equity, powerful individuals are able to exert influence over the organisation by creating a version of ‘truth’ that fits in with their aims. Decision-makers in sport organisations might understand that equal numbers of women and men within the sport arena is one element of gender equity, which also incorporates overall change within the organisations, the culture, the values, the attitudes, the education, the perceptions, the economic aspects and more (Staurowsky, 1995; Shaw, 2003; Hoeber, 2007).
Gender equity in sport organisations has traditionally been, and arguably remains, a ‘thorny issue’ often based on competing views as to what actually constitutes equity in the above senses (Hall, Cullen and Slack, 1989; Hoeber and Frisby, 2001). In the UK, for example, since 1984 the Women’s Sport Foundation (WSF) has sought to persuade public policy-makers to develop a positive attitude towards gender equity in sport.

These efforts have been manifested in initiatives such as the Brighton Declaration on Women in Sport (Hums et al., 1998), and policy initiatives in some other European countries. For example in Norway, a national women’s’ project was initiated in 1995, and was terminated after the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 because it was argued, the policy gains had been mainstreamed (Hovden, 1999) though this claim has been the subject of contention. This project aimed to increase the share of female leaders, coaches and other team supporters to 20% in Nagano and Sydney, as well as to improve the performance of females in top-level sport in order to increase the number of medals won internationally (Hartmann-Tews et al., 2003; Skirstad, 2000). In 2002, the Montreal Conference on Women and Sport developed a 'tool kit', designed to enable sport organisations to develop gender equity (Shaw and Penney, 2003).

The problems inherent in attempts to develop gender equity policies in sport organisations have been well documented by authors such as MacKay (1997; Shaw and Penney (2003); Skirstad (2000). Shaw and Penney (2003) suggest that problems of implementing gender equity policies reflect wider gender relations in sport organisations, in which many women and some men face discrimination on the basis of their gender (see also Hartmann-Tews, Luetkens and Pfister, 2003; Shaw and Slack, 2002).

To challenge this imbalanced situation, it is not enough to simply to generate local equality initiatives, it also important to combine this with a more holistic gender equity policy, where women might be more prepared, more committed, and more assertive in seeking and retaining positions of leadership in sport. Thus, for example, getting more women to study sport management could, in appropriate circumstances, contribute to an increase in women’s representation in the sport industry.
2.8. Gender and international sport organisations

The majority of international sports organisations follow a pattern that includes a mixture of men's and women’s sport. However, international sports organisations are still largely focused on men’s sports, reinforcing male sporting values and are made up of men in voluntary and professional capacities. The International Olympic Committee, arguably the most powerful sporting organisation in the world, has a long tradition of (disproportionately European) male privilege and power (Hartmann-Tews, Luetkens and Pfister, 2003, White, 1994).

Dating from Baron de Coubertin’s classic statement that the role of women was to place laurel wreaths around the necks of the victors, women’s position in the Olympic movement has always been secondary and subordinate. To succeed in being elected to executive positions on the IOC and International Federations, it is argued that women may require considerable patience and persistence. Monique Berlioux Kort (1983 cited in Davenport and DeFrantz, 1988:45) suggests that:

*Maybe (these women candidates) will lose one time, two times, three times, but the fourth time they will succeed in having one seat. They get discouraged too quickly I think. It is very difficult, but they must persist.*

For a number of years, it has been accepted that women should play an equal role in the Olympic Games as competitors. However this is only a start and women, according to Davenport (1996), will need to apply for leadership positions at all levels. Davenport and Anita DeFrantz, (1988) argued that the greatest need of sport at every level is leadership. Inclusion of women in this process is thus not just a matter of fairness or equal opportunity. The vitality of sport depends upon diversity of talent among those who lead sporting bodies and movements. It is not only women and girls who suffer from this, but sport as a whole is weaker for not having available the resources of all who care about sport. It may be that the push for improved governance is the key to the creation of opportunity and to the (de)construction of the structures that set the rules and gender roles within sport. Despite the obstacles women are facing, there should be room at the top, and the sport arena needs leaders, especially women, who aspire to excellence.
However, it appears that often in sport organisations, gender inequity is not treated seriously and women’s sport is implicitly regarded as inferior, peripheral and of low status compared with men’s sport. Pfister (2001) argued that the Olympic Games were created 'by men for men', and although by the 2008 Beijing Games women represented 42% of the athletes participating, in terms of the top levels of sport leadership positions women continue to play marginal roles.

This includes the IOC itself which despite the minimum target adopted in respect of NOC and IF Executive Committees, had a female membership of only 19% in 2011 for the Committee as a whole and only one member of the Executive Board of 15 members is a woman.

2.9 Gendered discourse and its influence on the roles of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations

According to White et al. (1988) and Pfister (2001), it appears that, despite intensive lobbying by feminists and other sympathetic individuals over the last two decades, not a lot has changed in the higher echelons of sport management. The tendency of men to occupy to the influential positions in sport organisations is somehow understood as “natural” and thus accepted for the most part unquestioningly (see also Pfister, 2006; Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008). A number of authors have observed that senior management roles were heavily dominated by a discourse of masculinity (Shaw, 2001, Shaw and Frisby, 2006). In contrast, women and a discourse of femininity are associated with employment roles that are less valued within organisations. However, the potential for resistance to these discourses exists on a number of levels.

As described earlier, various attempts, focusing on increasing the numbers of women in management positions, have tried to challenge this unequal situation between women and men in the management of sport organisations (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003). This approach has been only somewhat successful. Although figures from IOC Commissioned studies (Henry et al., 2004; Henry and Robinson, 2010) indicate a meagre representation of women, but illustrate an increase in women’s involvement in senior management over recent years, nevertheless the current literature suggests that
there are still far fewer women than men in senior positions in sport organisations (McKay, 1997. Hoeber, 2007; Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008).

Relatively few authors have adopted approaches related to poststructuralist feminist theory to analyse how the discursive construction of organisational life is explained in relation to gendered identities of both men and women (Shaw and Slack, 2002; Saw, 2001; Shaw and Frisby, 2006). These authors suggest that gendered discourse in sport organisations embodies different forms of knowledge that are expressed in everyday organisational settings, and influence individuals in sport organisations to think about women and men differently. It is not that men and women are unable to act in similar ways or have similar traits; it is simply that this situation is described as outside the norm. This is a situation to which Shaw and Hoeber (2003) allude when they argue that 'a strong man is seen approvingly as 'direct' while a strong woman is seen as 'a bitch'.

According to Aitchison (2005), understanding the environment within sport organisations, helps us to understand why women are less likely to succeed in that environment, while men are perceived not to need special treatment and can succeed without equity policies in place. Women's and men's perspectives on managerial positions in sport organisations might imply few differences. For example Shaw and Hoeber (2003) found that in volunteer roles, which are central to the functioning of many sport organisations, women may not expect reward. Men, in contrast, have been found to expect and receive public reward and recognition, even as volunteers.

In that sense, the discourse of masculinity, often linked to leadership roles, are influential within sport organisations and to some extent serve to undermine the discourse of femininity that are frequently associated with subordinate roles and women (Knight and Kerfoot, 2004). In the management of sport organisations according to Whisenant et al. (2002), the differences between the discourses of masculinity and femininity are evident. Masculinities are also often associated with the aggression, strength, competition, and determination required for a successful playing career (see more in Hargreaves, 1990; Lenskyj, 1994), which may then be translated into a career in sport management after retirement.

Aggressive expressions of the discourse of masculinity are valued in organisations because they are often considered synonymous with dominant forms of leadership. On
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The other hand, women are typically associated with the discourse of femininity, which may include co-operative work practices or negotiation skills which are largely undervalued in organisations (McKay, 1997) and understood to be “chaotic” and “irrational” (Shaw and Hoeber, 2003), thus having no place in the development of rational organisations. Consequently, the expression of these discourses of masculinity and femininity usually limit the opportunities for women’s presence and influence.

It would be naïve to suggest that gendered discourse influences the creation of employment roles for women only at the lowest employment positions in sport organisations. In addition, some women are more than capable of manifesting values and approaches associated with masculinities. Researchers (see McNay, 2000; Pfister, 2006) have suggested that women who express masculine discourse are perceived by individuals in organisations as people who can adapt to the social hierarchy and access power. Women who want to succeed in an environment dominated by masculine discourse may also embrace some masculine work practices.

The appropriation of masculine discourse by women indicates its rational, or shifting, nature. By examining the sometimes-flexible relationship between masculinity and femininity, we will be able to examine how some women have managed to gain and maintain senior positions by adopting masculine styles. The expression of masculinities by women is not, however, straightforward. While women in sport organisations may be able to engage in masculine discourse in their employment roles, it has been suggested that women who express masculinities challenge assumptions about what is acceptable behaviour for women. They may risk accusations of “acting like men” and may not necessarily be taken seriously in their roles. As for example, according to Martin (1996 cited in Shaw and Hoeber, 2003:353):

> [t]he community of work to which men orient their behaviour...is...a world by and for men; women may fit uneasily in this community except in subordinate, supportive positions...[and] men may view women’s enactments of masculinities as illegitimate and/or unattractive.

Thus it can be argued that to some extent, masculine discourse is associated with influential coaching and senior management roles. In contrast, feminine discourse is
associated with less influential positions and teaching roles. These roles, and the
discourse that informs them, have been somewhat reified and taken for granted within
the organisations (see also McKay, 1997). Shaw and Hoeber (2003) illustrate the
perspective of many sports managers at the senior level, with the following quotation
of Trevor Steele, the former chairman of the Bradford City Football Club, a team that
was playing in the English First Division cited by Shaw and Slack. In 1990, after the
board elected two females as directors (Shaw and Slack, 2002: 86.), Steele said:

_They are nice people with a part to play, but at the end of the day, they are tea
ladies who do not understand the game._

Although, this evidence has not gone unchallenged, attempts to change the traditional
under-representation of females in positions of power in sport organisations have
primarily focused on increasing the number of women in management positions
(Shaw and Slack, 2002). This is evidenced by initiatives such as the 1994
International Conference on Women and Sport, where the delegates pressed for
women’s involvement in management. This conference, together with others
organised by the IWG in 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010 adopted a resolution that
‘urged’ the IOC to ensure that it maintain pressure in keeping with the decision of its
1996 session regarding their minimum targets.

However, while the intentions behind these policies may be positive, the continual
focus on increasing numbers of ‘women in decision-making’ does little to challenge
the organisational historical socio-cultural sets of values that have traditionally
marginalised groups of women within decision-making positions in sport
organisations. Nor does it acknowledge that some males, e.g. gay men or those from
ethnic minorities may also face under-representation in sport organisations.

These organisational and socio-cultural contextual structures, which ensure the
dominance of some individuals and / or groups over others, may be understood as
socially constructed power structures. They are highly complex and are partly a
product of the historical roots of the organisations to which they contribute. The
examination of sport organisations from historical and socio-cultural perspectives
may, therefore, aid us in developing an understanding of how socially and historically
constructed power relationships have developed and remain resilient over time (Shaw
and Slack, 2002).
However, while historical analysis may provide insight into contemporary gender relations, it also may serve to reinforce male-dominated historical discourse by focusing on these, rather than alternative views. It is thus appropriate to examine multiple histories rather than focus on one version of organisational history, usually that of men (Shaw and Slack, 2002). This approach enables researchers to indicate that language, practices and policies are all used within the setting of sport organisations in ways which create gender relations that favour hegemonic masculinity over femininities. Given their historical construction, these discourses become influential and problematic to challenge.

In terms of gender relations, this means that, while traditional practices may be highly influential, they may be changed by a willingness of individuals to create alternative knowledge about gender power structures that have previously been taken for granted. Yet, these power relations are not always stable and may therefore face resistance from those who believe that the traditional masculine dominated gender relations are preferable (Shaw and Slack, 2002).

To conclude, historical analysis of the construction of gender relations within sport organisations might indicate how power relationships have developed. Moreover, the analysis of multiple voices will also enable a deeper understanding of how these gender relationships may be challenged. Women, therefore, according to Bourdieu (1995), need to deal with male colleagues seen as formal equals, but in fact who hold a more valid symbolic capital than their own; a capital which in most cases gives male colleagues more opportunities. However, according to Cunningham and Sagas (2008) dealing with different negative effects of dominant masculine practices, seems to be a part of women’s everyday condition in male dominated-institutions.

2.10 Can a quota/minimum target provide the answer?

Gender equity in sport organisations has traditionally been and still is a contentious issue (Hall, 1996; Hoeber and Frisby, 2001; Hoeber, 2007). For example, in the USA, the Women's Sport Foundation has been engaged in efforts to persuade policy makers to develop a positive attitude towards gender equity in sport (Shaw and Penney, 2003). In Norway for example, the first 'Action Plan for Gender Equality', which was
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adopted by the Norwegian Parliament in 1981, maintained that a gender quota was a means of promoting the status of women in general, as well as increasing women’s participation in arenas where they were particularly disadvantaged (Skjeie, 1990 cited in Hovden, 2000). Following that, the NCS (Norwegian Confederation of Sports) has stated that:

[W]hen electing or appointing, representatives to councils, as well as members of boards, and committees at the NCS and its organisational branches, there shall be candidates/representatives of both genders. The distribution of the sexes in the memberships of the individual organisational branches shall be a guide to the proportions, but there must be at least two representatives of each sex. This shall not apply to boards and committees etc., which consist of three or fewer members. The executive committee of the NCS may, in special circumstances, make exceptions to this provision (cited in Fasting and Skou, 1994:60).

However, despite these actions within most sporting bodies in Norway, women are still under-represented in leadership positions while men still hold the important leadership positions. According to Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) this may be explained through the organisational culture which presents dominant meanings as neutral within the organisations. These dominant meanings often have subtexts that to some extent (re)produce existing social relations such as those of gender. Hovden (2000) argued in that sense that the selection criteria reported by the members of election committees were based on three main criteria: (1) incumbency; (2) personal- and performance-based leadership skills; and (3) agreement with stated organisational policies.

Incumbency was based on the principle that sitting members who wanted to be re-nominated, should be given the opportunity to do so. In that way, the re-nomination criterion could be seen as a way to maintain the traditional discourse of masculinity within sport organisations. Pfister (2006) noted also that in the Danish system for example, despite the fact that seemingly it has no official rules that advantage or disadvantage women or men, the lack of rules to oblige leaders to leave office after a certain period of time prevents new candidates (women and some men) from achieving access to these leadership positions.
The second criterion, which has been mentioned most frequently, regarding both candidates in general and leaders in particular, was that of individual performance. This trait was often couched in terms of a person’s time and availability, which included the expectation that candidates should always be available for important meetings and telephone calls. Furthermore, candidates, especially those applying for leadership positions, were expected to be orderly, result-oriented, courageous, determined, not directed by special political interests, loyal and have a good reputation.

Other distinct preferences were having an extensive social network, contacts in business and politics, broad organisational experience and a capacity to cooperate (Hovden, 2000; Pfister, 2006). Although, neither the male nor the female respondents mentioned gender as an issue regarding this criterion (see also Hoeber, 2007), it is likely that this requirement would restrict the selection process mainly to executive managers or other persons who already sit in, or have experience of leadership positions.

A. Selection strategies

Hovden (2000) describes the three most common selection strategies in Norwegian Sport organisations as, (1) networks, (2) team-building, and (3) strategic implementation of the gender quota regulation. The most extensive selection strategy was to search for candidates among friends, acquaintances and colleagues. Consequently, most of these search networks were male-dominated. Pfister (2006) found that although both males and females who held national level executive positions began their careers at club level, significantly fewer females started their careers as chairpersons of committees. This might be explained as part of women's (and some men's) marginalisation or exclusion as a result of traditional organisational socio-cultural gendered hierarchies.

In this regard, when questioning how leaders and sport organisations implement gender quota regulations in their selection process, the respondents emphasise its importance in ensuring that women are adequately represented, rather than as an issue of gender justice and democracy. At the local level, the regulation was mainly conceptualised as an external and central decision that required minimum compliance as indicated by one of Hovden’s interviewees:
We have of course tried to be loyal to a central political decision...and we have been on the look-out for women during the whole process (Hovden, 2000:79).

Thus, according to Hoeber (2007), the (under) representation of women was a consequence of the organisational logic of apparent gender neutrality. For example the images of the ideal leader were considered gender neutral, but the ideal leader characteristics were shaped by implicit masculinity (Acker, 1990). Hovden (2000) noted that it is worth acknowledging that women in leadership positions in sport organisations often represent privileged women, with family support, highly educated, with high income and to some extent with social networks to which only few women had access.

According to Pfister (2006) because the ideal leader’s abilities were interpreted as gender-neutral and related to professional and personal qualifications, it is possible to explain gender under-representation by reference to women’s lack of the ‘right’ abilities as individuals rather than explaining it as an organisational and gender-related problem. The existence of a few exceptional women who succeeded in accessing higher positions also ‘proved’ that there was nothing unfair or wrong with the selection procedures.

The reproduction of this andocentric culture was facilitated by the tendency of predominantly male selection committees to rely on friends, colleagues and club veterans to find ‘appropriate’ candidates. As underlined in other studies, men in organisations seek advice, first and foremost, from their male colleagues (Hovden, 2000; 1999). These relations between men within the networks are usually characterised by confidence and security, as the organisational culture appears natural and self-evident to those who benefit from it:

*by selecting persons who in their best judgement share identical interests, goals, perceptions and biases...organisational controllers assure the continuation of their own advantaged position (Martin, 1980: 142, cited in Hovden, 2000).*

Shaw (2001) found that, in the literature, equity policies are identified as favouring existing, ‘acceptable’ management practices. Moreover, these organisational practices are often identified as masculine, embodying discourses such as competition,
confrontation and aggression in management style. Hovden (2000) thus argued that the team-building strategy discovered in this context illustrates an extreme example of this process of homo-social reproduction, and helps to explain why the quota (or minimum targets in the case of the IOC) regulation was considered to be a peripheral issue. Therefore, by ignoring other management styles within a comprehensive gender equity program, such as those which embody discourses of co-operation and other communal characteristics, the creation of gender equity policies tends to reinforce, rather than challenge, existing influential masculine discourse within sport organisations.

To summarise, the most desirable candidates for positions in sporting organisations were action-oriented leaders who had the professional-managerial skills that could open corporate doors. A corporate masculine image reflects the valorisation of heroic masculine norms in contemporary organisations (Kerfoot and Knights, 1998). The normalisation of this rendered the organisations ‘gender-neutral’ entities, thus masking the fundamental interconnections between masculinity, power and leadership. Therefore, according to Shaw (2001), equity policies may not have reached their potential to change the current organisational practices, because their direction and construction is often in the hands of those whose interests may be advanced by the failure of equity policies.

Furthermore, Hovden (1999) argued that she found quite distinct signals that attempts to reach formal equality are insufficient in order to integrate women as equals in male-dominated arenas. For example, despite attempts at equalising salaries, differences between males and females within the organisation persisted (Smale and Frisby, 1992). To be effective, equity policies need to challenge the perceptions that gender hierarchies are organising principles that possibly shape social structure, identities and values within sport organisations (Cunningham and Sagas, 2008), as Shaw and Frisby (2006) put it:

> [t]he discourses and assumptions that make gendered hierarchies and practices appear normal are disrupted with the aim of creating space for the development of new meanings and understandings to guide the implementation of alternative policies and practices (p. 490)
Brown and Frisby (1991, cited in Smale and Frisby, 1992: 25) recommend some key action points concerning the career development of women in recreation, which are relevant to our case:

- **Create opportunities for lateral mobility within the agency to broaden the range of experiences, to maintain interest, and to generate awareness of alternative opportunities for career changes within the agency.**

- **Use a collaborative process when implementing or changing policy within the agency to reduce uncertainty and to ensure that everyone’s concerns have been met.**

- **Perceived differences in managerial styles of men and women should be viewed as strengths within the agency, and women should not be encouraged to adopt “male-oriented” styles.**

- **Workshops are needed for women recreationists, especially those relatively new to the field, that focus on career development. Topics for these workshops would include examples of problems that may arise and strategies for coping with them.**

- **Women in recreation management positions serve as important role models for other women, and a process of mentoring should be implemented to encourage young women considering a career in leisure services.**

- **Because many men occupy positions of power in the field, they must be made aware of the many factors that affect the career development of women and the types of problems they face, and then work to create a work environment that is attractive and equitable for both men and women.**

However, despite the explicit advice in relation to affirmative actions in respect of gender equity in sport organisations, the continuing situation of the lack of women in decision-making positions, leads us to consider an interesting alternative in the next section.
2.11 Are women-based sport organisations the answer?

Reviewing part of the literature dealing with gender, sport and sport organisations leads us to this question, which is related to the development of sport as a whole. According to White (1994) there has been a long tradition, in England for example, of women-only hockey and netball clubs and some female governing sport bodies. In these clubs sport is organised by women for women, and women’s needs and values are paramount. However, in economic terms they are relatively poor – very few have club-houses or their own facilities.

Most are dependent on local authority or school provision and their development potential is limited. Is this the way forward? Historically these organisations were formed because the existing organisations catered only to men and refused to acknowledge or cater to women’s needs (The All-English Women’s Hockey Association is a prime example). This organisation did much good work, but in many countries the move is towards “amalgamation” or “integration” of men’s and women’s sporting bodies often encouraged by national and international sports organisations who wish to relate to one mixed organisation (White, 1994). White (1994: p.6) raised another important question:

*Is it in the interests of women’s sport for female and male sport organisations to amalgamate, or are sportswomen better served by separate organisations?*

White goes on to argue that although one might think that amalgamation/integration is the best way forward, but this is only if the process includes safeguards which acknowledge sportswomen’s interests, the values and traditions associated with women’s sport and the need for women in decision-making positions. In order to bring about change, it might be suggested that women may need to think about what changes they are striving for. What do women mean by change? Is it merely about making sporting institutions and sporting culture more accessible to women?

Although redressing the power and influence of women in sport organisations may be desirable, if, when women get there, they adopt the male agenda, the male management style and embrace male values in sport, then it might be that women
have achieved nothing more than proving that 'women can do it too – we too can be part of the top table'.

It is our contention that there should be a more fundamental and radical agenda for women in sport, that is, to bring a feminist approach to sport and to contribute towards a redefinition of sport that is more humanistic and which will create a more inclusive sports world for both women and men. Thus, we claim that it is not enough simply get more women participating in or even leading / managing sport. One needs to be clear about what women and some men can contribute to sport, what they are trying to do when they get into positions of influence, and in what ways they want to change the system.

2.12 Women working within a mixed organisation

According to Shaw (2001) since women have begun taking a wider part in decision-making positions in sport organisations, a number of studies have sought to identify practical steps that need to be taken in order to work in cooperation with men within such organisations. Hovden (1999) also found that women in sport organisations wished to cooperate with their male colleagues as equals. However, most of her respondents suggested that this rarely occurred. Women reported that even when discussing their frustrations connected to leadership style and the working climate with their counterparts, this did not result in long-term change. In many of those situations, women felt themselves to be ‘organisational outsiders’. However, most of Hovden's female interviewees in leadership positions reported that they received support from each other.

Also according to Hovden (1999), many females in elected posts observe that informal contacts are usually strongest among the most influential (male) members, especially those who had already previously known one another.

*This kind of contact took place prior to, during, and after the formal meeting, in which issues were conveyed, strategies made, and alliances formed* (Hovden, 1999:34).
Another aspect of mixed organisation might be that most positions in sport organisations are historically and culturally most often hold by men, and it is difficult to offer new and ‘clean’ position for new comers, female in our case. For example, Hums, Barr and Toll-Tepper (1998) found in their study that the decline of women in administrative positions after the enactment of Title IX occurred because the merging of historically separate male and female athletic departments into single comprehensive athletic departments most often resulted in a male athletic director assuming responsibility over the entire department (Athletic Educator’s Report, 1980; Duval, 2003).

White (1994) has suggested some practical issues to help women cope in working within a system of sport that is essentially male-defined and imbued with masculine values. She identifies the key point as being that women should be aware that integration of women's and men’s governing bodies should not mean assimilation of women into a male dominated and masculine system, but transformation of the system itself. Her ‘game plan’, based on her own experience, presents eight points.

- **Know the system:** in order to challenge the organisational socio-cultural context, it might be necessary to learn the rules, values and culture. Above all, success in making a change will depend very much on whether one is able to impress influential people and key decision makers. It is important to be able to get the ear of someone at the top. Yet according to White (1994), women do not need to pander to their boss’s requirements too much; they need to redefine the parameters of communication on their own terms.

- **Assess the situation and decide what is possible:** it is impossible to achieve all the changes one would like to have, so there is a need to define what aspects of the organisation’s work and functioning you want to influence and which aspects could temporarily be deferred. Most important of all is the necessity of a policy for women in sport to be accepted and the principle of sport equity to be widely understood. This is critical since as McKay (1997) and Staurowsky (1995) suggest, in order to be effective equity policies may need to challenge dominant taken-for-granted assumptions about gender in sport organisations.
Shaw and Penney (2003) emphasise the need to challenge existing socio-cultural structures in sport organisations, by highlighted the thinking that may undermine equity policy suggesting that women are seen in organisations as ‘having problems’ (rather than the organisation having problems accessing women’s competences).

- **Network with other women:** networking with other women has the benefits of support, encouragement, advice, and sponsorship. Networks inside the workplace are useful for sharing common problems and working out how to tackle them (Shaw, 2003; Hovden, 1999; Lovett and Lowry, 1994). Although some organisations set up formal women’s networks, some find it likely to alienate some male colleagues. It also might seem to stress the feeling of women working ‘against’ men. As well as networking within the organisation, it will be important to have networks outside as well, as this may help to create a more detached view of work problems. An important part of networking and supporting other women is directly encouraging women to have the confidence to put themselves forward and aspire to leadership positions. Many women lack the confidence this requires, and that is where women can help each other by bringing in, encouraging and supporting (in particular) younger women, or women who are outside of the system, but have a considerable potential to contribute.

- **Adopt a feminine management style in your own workplace:** a feminine management style would be consultative rather than authoritarian, which means having a commitment not only to listening to others, but also being prepared to take others’ views on board, even if they do not mirror one's own. Shaw and Hoeber (2003) suggested that although in general masculinity was associated with senior management roles, the adaptation of more inclusive managerial styles that recognise, value and articulate the value of discourses of femininity and masculinity may to some extent improve individuals' (women and some men) experiences in the organisations and might with time develop a more equitable organisational culture. White
(1994) noted that adopting a consultative approach is much more time consuming, but it is well worth the investment of time. Management by consensus means that people in the organisation feel empowered, because they have agreed to the aims. Shared agreement over aims, objectives and strategy is crucial. Furthermore, the most effective way to get tasks done is to fully utilise the human resources on the same target.

- **Take individual responsibility for rising gender issues:** every woman has the responsibility to challenge sexist attitudes, which is not always easy to do, and there are many ways of doing so. Pfister (2006) for example found that women holding senior positions in Danish sport organisations reported that they did not experience certain gendered barriers, however, in their attempt to explain male dominance in sport organisations they draw a stereotypical picture of women giving priority to their families and having no ambitions to gain leadership positions. This explanation given by women might imply assimilation and identification with the dominant organisational ideology that undermines gender equity within the organisational values and culture, thereby excluding many women and some men from accessing leadership positions. It is also a long and hard process to change peoples’ perceptions, and women who do so are often labelled as ‘feminist’ (as a pejorative term) and therefore run the risk of not being taken seriously on other issues. It would be more useful if, rather than just raising women’s issues, women would make a generous contribution on a number of issues across the board.

- **Respect women who hold different views and take different approaches:** deconstruction of the socio-cultural context of organisational gendered hierarchies is, according to Hoeber (2007), welcomed by poststructuralist feminists. These poststructuralists disagree with the existing culture of sport organisations that privileges one version of 'truth' over another, largely that is privileging discourse of masculinity over discourse of femininity. It is suggested by White (1994) that it might be important to recognise that women have very
different views about the most appropriate tactics to use in bringing about change. However, as in any sport, if women want to ‘win’ the game they need to have a variety of tactics and approaches. Yet it is very important that women recognise the different positions that they occupy, the different views that they hold and the different contributions they can make to the overall movement. Different women have different strengths and skills; women should value their diversity of skills and should learn to appreciate how this diversity can contribute to the overall aim.

- **Do not let women’s issues become ghettoised-- insist on integrating into the mainstream:** the very act of having a conference or a course on women in sport or setting up a women’s committee within the organisation runs the risk that women and women’s concerns will be marginalised (White, 1994). The reason for this is that people in power can absolve their conscience for not taking women into consideration on the basis that women’s interests are being catered for by a specialist group. To avoid this problem Meyerson and Kolb (2000) suggest that promoting a discourse of equity (rather than gender equity) could provide an attractive discourse for the whole organisation associated with overall satisfaction of employees. It is therefore a preferable option to integrate gendered issues in sport organisations into overall organisational strategies. However, this does not mean that women cannot take initiatives in relation to gender issues. It is suggested by White (1994) for example, that women’s committees certainly have their uses, but it is necessary to be very careful about how they are used. Women’s committees can work only if they are adequately resourced and have a mandate to report directly to the main board or committee which is itself committed to accepting and acting on the recommendations.

- **Work effectively with men in the organisation:** White (1994) concludes by saying that the reality of most sport organisations is not a case of men and women as two separate groups working against each other. In any organisation there are likely to be some women who are
unsympathetic to feminist issues, but more importantly there also many men who are extremely sympathetic to feminist ideals and values and who also want to see sport change for the better and gender inequity eradicated. Women should work together with men in trying to make changes, firstly, because men do tend to hold the power positions in sports organisations at the moment and secondly, they do actually comprise half of the population! Furthermore, both men and women have responsibility for the future direction of sport.

2.13. Mentoring

At the practice-based level, Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) have developed a Mentoring Model for Management in Sport and Physical Education in order to increase the number of women and minorities representatives in sport organisations, by facilitating progress through a career in management. An effective mentoring programme within the organisation can offer a solution for women’s under-representation in sport organisations. A mentoring relationship can lead to career mobility, higher pay, career and job satisfaction, friendship, and personal growth. Weaver and Chelladurai’s (1999) definition for mentoring is:

*A process in which a more experienced person (...the mentor) serves as a role model, provides guidance and support to a developing novice (...the protégé), and sponsors that individual’s career progress.* (p.25)

The mentor, according to the literature, is defined as someone who is high in the organisational hierarchy, in a position of power and with experience and knowledge. A protégé is a relatively younger and inexperienced junior employee who ‘deserves’ career advancement help from seniors. The framework, as it appears in the literature, is briefly shown in figure 1, which might clarify the relationship between mentor and protégé. Similar mentor-protégé characteristics lead to mentor-protégé compatibility, which subsequently supports the establishment of a positive mentoring relationship. The model, nonetheless, presents two sets of functions within a mentoring relationship; career and psycho-social support. Successful mentoring in these domains results in positive outcomes for the protégé (advancement and growth), mentor
(intrinsic satisfaction, status, respect, and power), and organisation (reduced turnover and development of managerial potential).

Figure 1: A model of mentoring (Weaver and Chelladurai, 1999).

Sisley and Steigelman (1994) for example, suggested a six-month mentoring programme in the University of Oregon, the rationale for which was to increase the number of female Athletic Directors. They stated that the main goals of the programme should be:

1) To provide substantive information concerning the role and responsibilities of the protégé (in their case an Athletic Director).

2) To foster a supportive and nurturing environment through mentoring and networking activities.

3) To encourage greater involvement in appropriate state and national professional organisations.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that some ‘inhibitors’ are inherent to the mentoring process itself. Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) have identified two dangers within the selection of the protégé. First, promising individuals may not be identified
and exposed to the mentoring programme because of their distance from decision makers, and organisations need to be aware of that. The second danger is the existence of closed networks that operate in and outside of the organisations. Homologous reproduction, where mentors or organisational leaders select protégés who are 'like them', an approach so common in sport (White, 1994), would subsequently simply result in the dominant network reproducing itself.

Some of the inhibitors of mentoring may be attitudinal, and especially those related to sexual connotations, stereotyping and tokenism, where such attitudes would hinder mentoring development and functioning. Organisations must therefore make a conscious effort to promote a climate of openness and acceptance of diversity in the workplace (De Sensi, 1995).

Gender is a critical variable when forming a mentoring relationship. For instance, female mentors are perceived as more protégé-oriented and less self-absorbed than male mentors, who may tend to see the need for power as their motivation to become a mentor. Such an orientation might be more appealing to prospective protégés. Another factor, which might affect the mentoring process, is the distribution of power and influence within the organisation. Because white males are found in the upper echelons more often than females and minorities, they constitute the larger pool of potential mentors. As such, women and minorities are somewhat restrained from being effective mentors.

Thus, prospective female and minority candidates are less likely to experience effective mentoring from their respective groups. Sharp (1998) has found that courses led by women, for women, can do much to inspire confidence which, in turn, may lead women to continue through leadership schemes in a manner which may not otherwise have been possible.

This situation can be improved if organisations foster a policy of valuing diversity and promoting women and minorities to higher positions of power (De Sensi, 1995).
2.14 Concluding remarks

There seems to be a lack of awareness and understanding concerning the emancipatory rationale for equal opportunities and women’s integration. The data, even though evident in the literature, are an indication of implicit and sometimes explicit patterns of gendered competence and values. As Bourdieu (1990, 1995) has claimed the most powerful symbolic capital within a social field is characterised as being embodied, silent, implicit and taken for granted, and so its effects are often obscured, even for the groups who derive benefit from it.

Furthermore, according to Hovden (1999) the processes of unmasking and regendering, to make men’s dominance and privileges visible, reflexive and discursive represent a difficult but crucial issue for women in sport organisations today, and may lead some to question whether the struggle for equity, equal status and opportunities is worth the price. The paradigms, both structural and cultural, seem to operate in such a way that women’s attitudes, qualifications and resources are made less valuable and women’s capacity and efforts appear less valid and visible.

Most sport organisations are still very much sex-segregated along those differences. The processes of unmasking and regendering by discussing such issues are, as mentioned, highly problematic but will be necessary for bringing about change.

It seems that the on-going struggle concerning gender issues, is the kind of struggle between unconscious forces of embodiment on one hand (most of the male group) and oppositional consciousness on the other (many of the female group) (Cunningham and Sage, 2008).

The dominant situation is characterised by power and gender relations, which often results in reinforced misperceptions between women and men, and a cycle where the relative subordination of women continues (Shaw, 2003). From an institutional gender perspective, women’s lack of strategy may appear as problematic, because consciousness-raising and re-gendering processes are necessary for the changing of women’s situation. Women might need to be able to generate situations where they may act collectively against discriminating practices, as well as developing reasonable alternatives according to their own needs and interests. They may consider providing
opportunities to devise long term strategies for changing the organisational culture and climate, where they would be able to feel comfortable, valuable, and valued.

In that sense, equity policies in sport organisations can benefit sport organisations in national and international levels. Gender equity in organisations will include goals in the areas of systems and structures, leadership, resource allocation, programming and education (see more in Vlasakove, 2000) and awareness and promotion. It means a full and fair access in sport and recreation, which will then allocate, without discrimination on the basis of sex, all the programs and resources provided by the organisations, communities and governmental bodies for sport and recreation.

Hence the decision to look into the historical and socio-cultural contextual structures of the Israeli sport organisations by investigating two unique cases of the Israeli Volleyball Association and the National Project for Women and Sport, which are the focus of this research. We seek to explore the gendered barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions in sport organisations and how these are discursively constructed through an understanding of gendered language, traditions, informal networks and values. Exploration of this will help us to (de)construct the existing roles and influence of women in key positions in Israeli sport organisations. Such knowledge can be instrumental in creating a more inclusive environment within sport organisations for both genders and such an approach is important since the gendered nature of the discourse of leadership in Israeli sport have not been subject to analysis. In the next chapter we will consider the methodological considerations that will enable analysis of these organisational practices.
Chapter Three - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the theoretical context underpinning this research. In order to develop an understanding of the role of women in decision-making positions, and indeed the existence of so few women in such positions in Israeli sport organisations, I seek to identify gendered discourse and gendered power relations in the development of key gender equity policies within Israeli sport organisations.

Drawing on the work of Shaw and Frisby (2006) and Meyerson and Kolb (2000), which are founded in poststructuralist feminist theory, I argue in this Chapter that this theoretical perspective provides an important alternative to more traditional perspectives by addressing the complexities of gender relations through the process of critique, narrative revision, and experimentation. This should allow us to move beyond the simplistic assumptions and solutions offered by liberal feminist approaches which are typically used in organisational research and practice (Shaw and Frisby, 2006). In order to explore these issues, the core research questions addressed in this research are therefore:

- What are the barriers to female access to key decision-making positions in the Israeli sport context?
- How are these barriers discursively constructed in the Israeli sport context by leading actors in the policy process?

In order to extend our understanding beyond the explicit, and to identify how gendered discourse constructs barriers to women's access to key decision-making positions, I have chosen two unique gender equity initiatives as case studies within the Israeli sport context. The first is the case of the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG) within the Volleyball Association. This was an equity initiative which I, as a member of the Israeli Volleyball Association board, had led. In this case study, which will be presented and discussed in Chapter Four, I seek to explore the gendered discourse of five interviewees and in addition my own account of the barriers I encountered through the process of the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG).
The second case study involved the creation of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS). In this case study, which will be analysed in Chapter Five I interviewed 11 interviewees and also used my own auto-ethnographical account, which Ellis and Bochner (2000) advocate as a form of writing that "make[s] the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right" (p. 733) rather than seeming "as if they are written from nowhere by nobody" (p.734), asking their readers to “feel the truth of their stories and to become co-participants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually" (p. 745). This is thus a ‘standpoint’ approach which is entirely consistent with the poststructuralist perspective adopted for the study.

The interviewees for the second case study were two males (the former and current Managing Directors of the Israeli Sport Ministry) and nine females plus my own account (five of whom, including myself, constituted the group which initiated the project, and five of whom had been at some stage employees in the young organisation). In this case study we undertake critical reflection by male and female interviewees on the different life stories and accounts of actors provided in the explanations of the unfolding of this gender equity initiative. We also explore the extent of the impact of women in decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisation as constructed in these accounts.

Although, both of these cases represent unique events in the Israeli sport context, they constitute significant conjunctions in terms of what has been done to reduce gendered barriers through equity policies and initiatives. The case studies should thus shed light on how those initiatives have been implemented and how [some] women and [some] men within the organisations explain the processes and the discourse involved in the decision-makers’ engagement in and with these particular sport organisations.

In order to better understand both cases, I therefore, addressed three additional subsidiary questions:

- What can analysis of the gendered discourse in the two case studies tell us about the dominant discourse in Israeli sport?
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- What is the place, influence and the extent of the impact of women in key positions on the decision-making processes relating to the two case studies as defined in the discourse of key actors?

- What is the range of explanations of gender equity policy among male and female interviewees?

These questions further support our desire to understand and explore how the linguistic differences between (some) men and (some) women contribute to the social and discursive construction of barriers women encounter in decision-making positions. The research thus aims to learn from 'insider' (male and female) narratives about these barriers, which may be discursive but nevertheless have some material impacts. (One such example as we shall see, for instance, is the impact of a discourse of militarisation.) The research will also explore interviewees' explanations of the importance of different voices in key decision-making positions in relation to the two case studies, for example, in the creation of gender equity initiatives by women for women.

In order to gain greater depth in the exploration of the research questions, I have adopted a methodology drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, which focuses on the interviewees’ conceptions regarding specific organisational reality[ies], practices, and processes in relation to barriers, roles, influence and experience of women in key decision-making positions in the two case studies.

As noted earlier, I have employed auto-ethnography which complements other approaches adopted including life stories, open interviews and in some cases, background documentary analysis. Using my auto-ethnographical accounts as an active participant in both case studies, along with 'life stories' of other interviewees, I have identified meanings, insights and significant conjunctions for the research questions discussed in the specific cases (Chang, 2008).

3.2. Adopting poststructuralist feminist theory as a perspective

As mentioned before, this study adopts a poststructuralist feminist approach. It is feminist in the sense that it takes as a central issue, gender disadvantage, and
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poststructuralist in the sense that it adopts the view that social realities are socially constructed as well as represented, largely through language and also through other discursive systems of symbolic representation. The nature of these forms of social construction also normalises certain interests and marginalises others.

The rationale for adopting poststructuralist feminism in this research, derives from the literature, as presented in Chapter Two and from my personal experience as a woman in key decision-making positions in both case studies. Experiencing the socially constructed 'realities' in both organisations, in terms of access to decision-making positions and creation of equity opportunities (establishing new gender equity initiatives) which have informed my understanding of the contextual structures is evident in the two case studies.

Within the literature, few researchers in sport and leisure management have adopted a poststructuralist feminist approach to analyse gender equity. Among these rare examples are Aitchison (2000), Hoeber (2004), Shaw and Hoeber (2003) and Shaw and Penny (2003). The literature shows that gender equity has been conventionally theorised (and treated politically) as a women's-only issue (Shaw and Frisby, 2006; Ely and Meyrson, 2000). This perspective is limited in the sense that if gender equity is a women's issue, then it is women's responsibility to address it, rather than the responsibility of all organisational members.

The rationale in this research for conducting interviews with men and women within the two specific organisations was to identify their perspectives on, and explanations of the gender equity initiatives taken by women for women, and of the roles those women had performed and how their roles were understood and constructed within the two case studies.

Further to these arguments, Shaw and Frisby (2006) have noted that liberal feminist theory is limited because it focuses largely on increasing the numbers of women in managerial positions without changing prevailing discourse, socially contextual cultural structures or dominant organisational values and beliefs. By using a poststructural feminist perspective, I intend to challenge prevailing gendered discourse by deconstructing existing assumptions in the Israeli sport context, arguing that by increasing gender equity (for men as well as for women), effective organisational performance may be improved. For example, if inequities result in
some members of executive boards feeling excluded and thus experiencing low motivation, then disrupting dominant gendered discourse or norms may counter and offer alternatives to ineffective work relations with the potential to contribute to successful new actions or initiatives.

For poststructuralists, language is how social organisations and power are defined and contested and the place where our sense of self, our subjectivity, is constructed. The objective of this research is therefore not to identify 'revealed truths', but to assist in the highlighting of issues inherent in the construction of meaning (Williams, 1999).

Moreover, in this research I seek to deconstruct the binary thoughts and processes of the knowing-self, providing otherness (in this case, men and women with voices and sets of values other than the dominant gendered discourse in the specific sport organisations) in order to promote an inclusive space within the social contexts of Israeli sport organisations in relation to the two case studies. For example, this research seeks to explore the practices and dominant gendered discourse, that discursively construct the barriers which [some] women experience in accessing decision-making positions rather than to identify the 'truth' of what prevents them from accessing these positions. Furthermore, even where women hold key positions, I examine why women are socially structured into specific contexts that relate to 'women', where, for example, women are those charged with addressing women's issues in, for example, the National Project for Women and Sport or, as in my own case, as a board member in the Israeli Volleyball Association.

According to Richardson (1994, in Amara, 2003), understanding competing discourses as competing ways of giving meaning and of organising the world, makes language a site of exploration and struggle. Thus, post-structuralism, according to Richardson, directs us (the researchers) to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions (as an outsider, as a female analysing organisations dominated by males; but also as an insider as being part of these organisational contexts) at a specific time (a local 'reality' characterised by gendered discourse of gender and of power relations). In this respect, a poststructuralist feminist approach frees me from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone. Others (see Manning and Cullum, 1994) state that poststructuralism draws attention to the margins and can reverse the usual adherence to dominant (male) cultural values.
Poststructuralist social research also treats social realities as embedded in generalised discourse, which people enter into and use in conducting their everyday activities and interactions (Silverman, 2004). I have nonetheless applied poststructuralist feminist theory in this research as it has had a key role in shifting debates within sociology about gender, away from simple social learning theory. Social learning theory identified a clear-cut binary division between a ‘male’ category, perpetuated and internalised via a process of learning masculine traits, and a ‘female’ category, perpetuated via a process of learning feminine traits. Poststructuralist theorists have argued that this did not allow for differences among women, men, resistance or choice, as, for example, I highlight in the case of the NPWS (discussed in Chapter Five), where different women tend to have different opinions, interpretations of and perspectives on the processes investigated, and in this sense could not be treated as one homogenous group (‘female’ in this case).

Gender, according to poststructuralist theorists, is not fixed, but variable and changes at different times and in different social contexts. Butler (1990) describes gender as ‘performative’. Other poststructuralist theorists have argued that some cultural developments, such as the development of information technology, present an opportunity to challenge the rigid meaning of gender, by giving individuals the opportunity to explore gender identities (Haraway, 1991). It might therefore be noted that our debate, in this research of female and male discourse in relation to dominant gendered discourse within the organisations, is not that of stereotypical ‘we’ versus ‘others’, but that of [some]females and [some]males.

### 3.3 Methodological considerations

The constructivist approach, stresses the need to look at ‘reality’ or phenomena, such as in the case of the role of women in decision-making positions in the Israeli Volleyball Association and the National Project for Women and Sport, as socially constructed contexts, and framed by competing/interacting discourses. The role of women in decision-making positions in the Israeli Volleyball Association and the NPWS is thus seen as shaped more by the organisations' local (and internal) cultural, political and historical contexts, in relation to (external) global challenges/or changes.
3.4. The ontological frame of the study – constructivism

According to Fox and Miller (1995), the move toward constructivism was made possible by the insight that humans, who seek social reality, are themselves bearers of, and are constructed of that reality. Observers of social reality cannot be external to it, nor can their observations be isolated from being observed. In this case, the conception of reality is in a sense negotiated, or socially constructed. In that sense, I deal in this research not simply with different interpretations of the same world, but literally different life stories versions of, or different beliefs about, the world. A major benefit claimed for constructivism is that constructivists emphasise the pluralistic and the plastic character of reality (Schwandt 1994). It is pluralistic in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbolic language systems; and is plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit the purposive acts of social human agents.

The ontological positions of positivism and critical rationalism entail a deterministic view of social life in which social action and interaction are the products of the operation of ‘external’ forces (such as social norms) on social actors. The structuralist version of realism tends to share this ‘external’ view, although it would look for evidence of external forces in different places (for example in the economic situation of societies), while the social psychological version favours more of a focus on ‘internal’ cognitive resources. The other main approaches (interpretive, critical theory, structuration theory and feminism) are all fully or partly constructivist in their ontological assumptions. Constructivist ontology entails the assumption that social reality is produced and reproduced by social actors; it is a pre-interpreted, inter-subjective world of cultural objects, meanings and social institutions (Blaikie, 1993).

In my research, constructivist ontology is deemed to be appropriate in the sense that life stories of social actors identify implicit discursively constructed gendered world views, which can explain some of the barriers [some] women experience in gaining access to key decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations. In order to explore those ‘realities’ I have used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in analysing the interviewees’ conceptualisation, their life stories and my auto-ethnographical account in relation to policies relating to sport and gender equity.
3.5. Research framework – data analysis

A. Introduction

"Debate on constructivism and poststructuralism, leads me to consider discourse analytic studies, which 'combine' analytic language proceedings with the analysis of knowledge process and constructions, without restricting them to the formal aspects of linguistic presentations and processes" (Flick, 1998:203). Discourse analysis emphasises the way versions of the world, society, and inner psychological events are produced in discourse. It is usually used to analyse transcripts of talk from everyday institutional settings, a transcript of open-ended interviews or document of some kind (Silverman, 1998).

Discourse analysis nonetheless involves ways of thinking about discourse (theoretical and meta-theoretical elements related to poststructuralism as stated above) and ways of treating discourse as data (methodological elements). Discourse analysis is thus, not simply an alternative to conventional methodologies; it is an emancipatory alternative to the perspectives in which those methodologies are embedded.

In this research, I have chosen to use Critical Discourse Analysis which focuses on the linguistic aspects of the discourse but nevertheless takes into consideration broader issues such as the social context of the discourse (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Furthermore, it does not attempt the type of objectivity that is sometimes claimed by scientists or linguists, but recognises that such objectivity is likely to be impossible because of the nature of their experience. Instead, the researchers are critical of and open about their own position.

B. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Thus as indicated, for the purposes of this research, I used CDA, which, focuses on the conception of interviewees regarding the organisational processes and gendered discourse relating to the roles of, and barriers to, women in Israeli sport organisations in relation to the two case studies. CDA seeks (de)-construction of the perceptions and attitudes representative of different key actors, men and women, from different socio-cultural backgrounds, that exist within the Israeli Volleyball Association and the National Project for Women and Sport organisation. As a CD analyst I am interested in how language and meanings discursively construct and maintain dominant
gendered discourse. As noted by Bloor and Bloor (2007), discourse is used to achieve social goals and perform a role in social maintenance and change.

Titcher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000) argue that CDA does not imply a homogeneous method, and suggest that although its general theoretical background, basic assumptions and overall goals may be outlined, its methodology can only be presented with reference to particular approaches and with regard to the specific theoretical backgrounds of given studies. In this study, I do not claim that gendered discourse is the only barrier to equity. However, I do claim that by focusing on the significance of language in classifying people (men and women) with respect to their place in historically contextual power structures, and on socially constructed powerful groups (some men), or of less powerful groups (some women), I will be able to clarify how the use of language maintains gender inequities in the Israeli sport context.

In this sense, one of the main concerns is the (de)construction of subject and object in the discourse. Thus, according to Wodak (1989), the aim of CDA is to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control and dominance, as well as discriminatory inclusion and exclusion (group, gender, class) in language use, on the basis that its construction is structured by power relations, that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted (situated in time and space) and that dominance structures are legitimised by ideologies of powerful groups (in Wodak and Meyar, 2001).

In other terms, CDA is committed to an emancipatory, socially critical approach, and allies itself with those who suffer political and social injustice (Wodak, 1996). Furthermore, in my research, CDA suggests an understanding that discourse (in this study - gendered discourse) is an integral aspect of power and control. Power, in this case, could be held by both Israeli sport organisations and some key actors within this context, whose perceived identity (both organisationally and as individual agents) is defined and thus partly controlled by a masculine set of values. In our case, the two gender equity initiatives as case studies represent challenges to those who hold power. Thus, by using CDA I am engaging in politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement. This approach seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships, for example, in the elaboration of a national gender equity policy which constructs guidelines for non-sexist language use.
Derrida suggested his deconstructivist method to avoid being thematised or categorised, where the deconstructor attempts to lodge his/her own discourse in between and to construct his/her double text or sense of ‘betweenness’, opening destabilising and permanent doubleness (in Leitch, 1996). This approach implies, in a way, that the interest of the analysis is not to report one account or another, but to try to discover their connections, linkages, interstices and joints, or what Derrida refers to as “double session”, the interval between several styles (Amara, 2003), where no single style is truer than any other.

The CDA used in this thesis to analyse the set of interviews, my auto-ethnographical and background documents, aims firstly at discovering how the designation of ‘self’ (females and some males) and the ‘other’ (the Israeli sport organisations, males and some females), is experienced by men and women from different intellectual, ideological or political backgrounds, operates. Secondly, it involves revealing the position of interviewees in terms of their experience within the two case studies.

Therefore, for the purpose of this research, CDA could be regarded as part of a general (research) deconstructivist process of Israeli sport organisations in relation to gender equity discourse, which attempts to reformulate or redefine the (de)construction of the role and barriers of women in key positions in these two specific sport organisations (IVA, NPWS), according to interviewees’ views or accounts. CDA is used to explore the social, historical, contextual and organisational structures, sets of values and beliefs that discursively construct the barriers for women to access key decision-making positions. This approach reflects a small but significant and growing body of research employing CDA in relation to gender issues (for example, Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008, Shaw and Hoeber, 2003).

The approach is a mirror which aims to detect the binary way of thinking (men/women, ordinate/subordinate), dichotomy (doublings, betweenness) and even ambiguity existing in the designation of interviewees of themselves (we, I, and our) and others (e.g. sport organisations, male values, the NPWS, other women). Additionally, it aims to discover whether their perception of ‘we’ and ‘others’ has, or does not have, any impact on their positions concerning the role and/or barriers of women in decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations (practice and values) in relation to the two case studies.
Nonetheless, it should be noted that the categories and later on, the analytic questions, adopted are not final. More categories, features and themes emerge while carrying out this analysis, which need to be taken into consideration in the formulation of the gendered discourse and the interviewees’ experiences within the two sport organisations focused upon in this research. For Wood and Kroger (2000), the task of CDA is not simply to apply categories to participant’s talk, but rather to identify the ways in which interviewers themselves actively construct and employ categories as guidance.

Thus, in these authors’ terms, a CD analyst takes nothing for granted and questions everything, including the researcher’s own categories and assumptions. Bearing this in mind I, for example, address general issues such as the verbal representation of gendered issues. Those working in the field differ according to their specific concerns, but agree on certain major principles. Moreover, since CDA is a rapidly developing field, it is recognised that new objectives may well arise. Wodak (1996: p. 17-20), summarises the general principles of CDA as follows:

- CDA is concerned with social problems. For example, how the barriers to women’s access to key positions in sport organisations are discursively constructed. It is not concerned with language per se, but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. Accordingly CDA is essentially interdisciplinary.

- Power-relations have to do with discourse (Bourdieu, 1987), and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse.

- Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society and culture, including power relations, for example, the discourse of militarisation within the Israeli context.

- Discourse is historical and can only be understood in relation to its context. At the meta-theoretical level this corresponds to the approach of Wittgenstein (1984, in Wodak, 1996), according to which the meaning of an utterance rests in its usage in specific situations. Discourse is not only embedded in a
particular culture, ideology or history, but is also connected inter-textually to other discourses. For example the resistance in the IVA board to gender equity initiatives can be understood as inter-textually related to (some) masculine discourse.

- The connection between text and society is not direct, but is manifest through some intermediary concept or mechanism such as socio-cognition advanced in the socio-psychological model of text comparison (Wodak, 1986).

- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory. Critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power-relations. Interpretations are always dynamic and open to new contexts and new information. For example, in the case of the NPWS, social conditions have changed during the process and therefore, interpretations have somehow changed and reproduced.

- Discourse is a form of social behaviour. CDA is understood as a social scientific discipline which makes its interests explicit and prefers to apply its discoveries to practical questions.

In addition, by using Bloor & Bloor's (2007, p. 12) main objectives of CDA in relation to gendered discourse, we may characterise its goals as follows:

- *To analyse discourse practices that reflect or construct social problems* (for example, the discourse of militarisation in Israeli society).

- *To investigate how ideologies can become frozen in language and find ways to 'break the ice'* (for example, marginalisation and barriers of women in Israeli sport organisations in relation to the two case studies).

- *To increase awareness of how to apply these objectives to specific cases of injustice, prejudice, and misuse of power.*

To these practical objectives, Bloor and Bloor add more theoretical aims that have been proposed for the subject:

- *To demonstrate the significance of language in the social relations of power* (for example, the use of gendered jokes by the majority male members).
To investigate how meaning creates context.

To investigate the role of speaker's / writer's purpose and authorial stance in the construction of discourse.

One of the strategies used by discourse analysts to extract categories is the first or initial reading. The aim of initial reading (which includes listening) according to Wood and Kroger (2000), is to identify (or confirm) the specific focus and appropriate section for analysis. Therefore, the analyst ‘notices’ the data (whether visual or spoken) and reads the transcript (written data) over and over, in order to get a feel for what is there.

In my own research, CDA has many potential benefits for the feminist approach in understanding and challenging gender inequities in Israeli sport organisations. Shaw (2001) has noted that by enlightening individuals' perceptions of gendered issues, the idea of resistance as emancipatory can be promoted. This provides a starting point for this research as it highlights in ‘optimistic’ fashion the potential to challenge discriminatory power relations.

However, CDA requires a particular orientation to texts; a particular frame of mind. It is important to develop a sense of what is involved in the socially constructed Israeli sport context in relation to gender inequities, before looking at the interviews, and may be particularly important to identify the absence of elements, or “what is not there”, as this can open up a variety of possibilities for the feminist discourse analyst. In this research the use of CDA in the specific social and cultural setting of the Israeli sport context in relation to the two case studies, not only describes and illustrates the dominance of discourse of masculinity over discourse of femininity in the Israeli sport context. It allows me, as the researcher, to understand the relationship between the discourses of masculinity and femininity and between them and other gendered discourses explored in the interviewees’ perspectives, meanings and beliefs (for example, the double linguistic practice of 'us' and 'you', as described in Chapter Four).

Wood and Kroger (2000) provide a useful review of DA, that the poststructuralist feminist discourse analyst might follow (though not in a rigid and systematic manner), while studying speech or any sort of document. Moreover, this source incorporates some practical examples for each stage of the analysis (transcripts, first reading,
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categorising, interpreting, evaluating and writing up) and it also considers this
approach in relation to notions of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ or their equivalent in DA.

Bloor and Bloor (2007:94) have suggested that research in CDA relating to gender
issues falls roughly into four types, dealing with:

- The way gender itself is gendered and the reasons for this as, for example, the use of the word 'he' can refer to either males or males and females (but not females alone).

- The way men and women are stereotypically represented in discourse.

- The way men and women interact in discourse.

- The way language is used by males and females in specific discourse events such as, for example when I (as a female) am interviewing male interviewees on gender equity initiatives.

Wood and Kroger (2000) define the broad stages to go through in DA as transcripts, first reading, categorising, interpreting, evaluating and writing up, and go on to outline other procedures which CDA can make use of in the reading of the text (transcript) making it easier to analyse. One of those procedures is scaffolding. This consists of writing the analysis in the same way as writing a report or a paper; by writing an introduction, and then the body, then the conclusions (an approach adopted in both of our case studies). The idea is to end up with a set of claims, and how they were derived and supported throughout the text looking at similarities and differences of accounts, seeking or identifying contradictions.

Regarding this point, from the point of view of a poststructuralist feminist theory, actions and beliefs are products of social ties and personality and prior commitments of the author. Therefore, the connection between beliefs (ideology, world view) and these phenomena is less-clear cut than in the empiricist repertoires. For the discourse of open-ended interviews in relation to female and male responses to equity processes, a ‘differences and similarities procedure’ will be used to look for consistency and inconsistency between different respondents (representing different views of society, or of gender, or of an event), as well as differences within the same text (same respondent) concerning different issues discussed.
However, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out, the use of linguistic resources to solve a particular problem will often create new problems. The appearance of new problems (and new solutions) can be used to assist interpretations of the original usage; that is, the device serves both to recognise inconsistency and to deal with the problem created by the inconsistency. However, the generation of new problems does not necessarily involve contradictions or inconsistency; it is more general than the criterion involving the treatment of contradictions. Further, the treatment of new problems also tends to unfold more sequentially than the treatment of contradictions. For example, Bloor and Bloor (2007) suggest that speakers sometimes assume a shared understanding which does not exist, and in such cases, communication may break down.

Discussion on interpretation leads us on to a discussion of the grounding of those interpretations, and the justification of an interpretation of discourse by drawing on evidence within the discourse. There is no doubt that interpretation and grounding are not only related but also intertwined. First, the researcher must attend to the issue of grounding while carrying out interpretation, in order to assess whether the interpretations are likely to stand, or should be revised.

Second, grounding is not only part of the warranting of claims; it can also suggest the interpretations on which claims are based (Titscher et al., 2000; Wood and Kroger, 2000). Therefore, the strategies of grounding have a double role; to secure the interpretations and to anticipate later stages of analysis, for example, in relation to scaffolding and to ideas of similarity and difference involved in the identification of patterns (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

In other words, to ground an interpretation I might aspire to show that participants orientate to the text in a way that supports that interpretation. It needs to be shown not only that some particular features are relevant to the participants, but also that participants notice or mark the feature in some way, and that there are consequences down the line of such an interpretation. Moreover, as the researcher, I attempt to be aware of some problems which might arise while dealing with grounding. The first is that CDA is not simply a matter of restating the discourse. Restating is not only repetitive, but it also tends to reify literal content. Nor is it a matter of paraphrasing the discourse. Rephrasing is not taken as interpretation, but as a way of helping the
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analyst to work out the interpretation; a way to go about identifying a possible function. The interpretation itself must be grounded in the discourse and must be in discourse-relevant terms.

As noted earlier, I have tried to identify particular utterances that may work in a particular previously unarticulated manner in order to come up with a new device. The other challenge occurs when the researcher argues for a claim because it is assumed that providing evidence would require going beyond the discourse. This problem arises when the researcher treats concepts that are discursive (in the discourse-analytic perspective) as abstract and hidden.

To conclude, interpretation always involves keeping an eye out for grounding. For example, attention to a previous or subsequent utterance as a guideline for interpretation can simultaneously identify the evidence in the discourse for that interpretation. At a tactical level, initial stages should not be so concerned with grounding, as it unduly constricts the creative activity involved in interpretation.

The CDA perspective is constructivist, even kaleidoscopic. This is what makes CDA flexible in comparison to other ‘rigorous’ (e.g. positivist) approaches (such as content analysis). According to Titscher et al. (2000), it is from this complex meshing of language and social ‘facts’ that we derive the frequently unclear ideological effects of language use as well as the influence of gendered power-relations. In gendered discourse practices, socially/ historically constructed structures and ideologies are expressed which are not normally analysed or questioned, and thus CDA seeks, by close and detailed analysis, to shed light on these specific but largely implicit and often unquestioned gendered aspects in the context of Israeli sport.

3.6. Context

Since context plays such an important part in the (de)construction of meaning, many attempts have been made to find useful ways to characterise contextual features. It might be helpful to the analysis if the researcher, acknowledging that she needs to be selective in identifying the features of context that are significant for any specific case of interaction (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Context is often taken to refer in a general way to information that is outside the text being analysed, that is, information about
setting, circumstances, social roles, demographic variables (age, gender, race, etc.) and so on. This definition arose from the understanding that social action does not occur in a vacuum and the researcher thus needs to consider the context in which it occurs in order to analyse and understand it.

In this research I have attempted to combine language and context together in order to produce meaning. Wood and Kroger (2000) suggest that, the notion context should refer to what occurs before and after a specified word or passage, or the situational background or environment relevant to some happening. Context is thus always shifting, depending on what one specifies as text or as being relevant. Therefore, it is preferable to think of context not as an object, but as a process or activity, and to ask not what goes with the text, but what is put with the text.

Nonetheless, 'context' has often been considered under the two separate headings of context of culture and context of situation. Roughly, according to Bloor and Bloor (2007), the context of culture includes the traditions, institutions and historical knowledge, where the context of situation is focused on the various elements involved in the direct production of meanings in a particular instance of communication.

Since analysts working within a CD tradition generally work with specific texts or instances of discourse, they need to take into account the setting (or social environment), identity of interviewees and so on in order to make valid assumptions (this might be generalisation in some cases but by no means universalization). Statements about context can also be used in relation to analysis, understanding, and discussion; and should be evaluated in terms of the claims that are made. Nonetheless, using context is also (and for certain sorts of claims, must be) a matter for participants, who (de)construct, make relevant, and orient to context.

### 3.7 Evaluating and reporting

#### A. Warrantability in discourse analysis

The basic premise for the discourse analyst is that the social world does not exist independently of our construction of it, so it does not make sense to ask if our analyses are valid in the sense that they are true, that is, that they correspond to an
independent world. It is suggested in this research that an analysis is warrantable to the extent that it is both trustworthy and sound. In general terms, trustworthy claims are those that can be depended upon not only as a useful way of understanding the discourse at hand but also as a possible basis for understanding other discourses, for further work, and so on (because they are derived from accountable procedures), whereas sound claims are solid, credible, and convincing (because they are logical, based on evidence from the discourse).

There are a number of reflexive elements involved in warranting, that reflect the linkage between post structural feminist theory, CDA methods and warrantability. There is overlap between the ways in which the interviewees (or I as the researcher) see themselves warrant the claims they make in their discourse. Warrantability is a structure, and like analysis, it rests on shared knowledge, although this does not diminish the responsibility of the analyst to employ warranting as thoroughly as possible. (Wood and Kroger, 2000).

B. Trustworthiness and soundness

The requirements or criteria for trustworthiness and the requirements for soundness could be distinguished in terms of process versus product. Trustworthy claims have a theoretical foundation, a set of theoretical and meta-theoretical statements that concern the nature of data, of claims, of coding and analytic procedures, and of the relationships among them. How criteria should be addressed depends on their nature: empirical, conceptual and sometimes logical. Some criteria are relevant for both trustworthiness and soundness. The criteria are also concerned with different levels; some internal and some external to the data, the analysis, and the overall work (Amara, 2003).

Discussion of trust and trustworthiness in this research, takes us further than the discussion of even general rules governing research practice. It is important since just as moral rules are components of ethical standards, trustworthy behaviour often requires the responsible exercise of discretion which is a much more complex matter than simple rule-following, for example, in relation to being consistent and discrete in presenting interviewees' conceptions (Whitback, 2006).
Furthermore, consideration of trust and trustworthiness requires attention to the multiplicity of perspectives in an enterprise such as research: every party to research trusts and is trusted in some way. Consideration of trustworthy behaviour and the integrity of the research enterprise foster the examination of that enterprise from the perspective of every party to it, rather than from the perspective of the rule makers alone.

To conclude, discourse analysts, in comparison with conventional researchers, give much greater prominence to reader evaluation (Potter, 1998), an emphasis that both results from and is encouraged by the greater transparency of discourse-analytic work. It is noted by Wood and Kroger (2000) that judgment of warrantability of any specific piece of work, that is, its trustworthiness and soundness, is (and can only be) an overall, qualitative judgment that is not tied solely to any single criterion.

C. Coherence

Coherence is a criterion that refers to the set of analytic claims that are made about the text. Its application requires that there be an identifiable set of claims. Further, the claims must be clearly formulated in order to be seen as coherent. Coherence might be applicable to poststructuralist feminist theory (the theoretical claims and their support from within the discourse have to be coherent. However, though coherence requires claims to be grounded, it is not the same as grounding (Jackson, 1986).

Grounding is concerned with the relationship between the analysis and the text. Coherence, in contrast, concerns the nature of the analysis, or, more precisely, the entire set of claims made. Grounding can be seen as a textual criterion (about the text), whereas coherence is an analytic criterion (about the analysis). The link between demonstration and coherence is analytic induction, that is, accounting for exceptions and ruling out alternative claims. Analytic induction works both indirectly and directly in relation to coherence.
3.8 Data collection

A. Choice of research sites

The selection of research sites was influenced by the theoretical argument that gender power relations are identified through discourse. These key organisational practices have been identified as the influence of history; the existence of females in key positions; gender roles; masculinity and femininity. Therefore, these criteria informed the selection of the research sites. The IOC minimum targets for gender equity in leadership, set in 1997, stated that by the end of 2001, at least 10% of all decision-making positions in organisations related to the Olympic Movement (NOCs and IFs) should be female, and by the end of 2005, at least 20% of such positions should be occupied by females. These minimum targets were followed in the establishment of the NPWS and extensive national legislation regarding women’s representation in national sport organisations. Consequently, although their existence is not dependent on having gender equity policies are nevertheless part of a phenomenon that forces them to take into consideration the external forces and the change in the social order around them.

A decision was taken to focus on one NF and to investigate it at three levels (selective executive board decisions, the establishment of the Volleyball Academy and the autoethnographical account regarding my experience as the only female member of the executive board) in order to get in-depth evaluation of data relating to the socio-historical context and structure of the gendered discourse and to understand the processes occurring within that particular sport.

The choice of the Israeli Volleyball Association and other sites was further informed by the need to select a sport or organisations that were socially constructed as appropriate for women, and which could attract high numbers of female athletes, but an organisation which had not yet achieved the IOC minimum targets. The last criterion for selection was the personal experience and involvement that I, as the researcher, had within the sport organisation. This was seen as a considerable advantage in understanding the socio-historical context, the gendered discourse and sets of values within the organisation, and the construction of barriers women encounter in gaining access to executive positions with relation to the specific case study.
These criteria explain the choice as research sites of the sport of Volleyball and specifically, the Israeli Volleyball Association and the associated establishment of the VAYTG as a gender equity initiative, and the National Project for Women and Sport during its creation as a national gender equity policy.

B. Qualitative research method

Qualitative research welcomes the articulation of discourse through in-depth and detailed data that reflect individuals’ subjectivities (Cottle, 1982). It is suggested, within the poststructural feminist theory, that subjectivity provides depth and enables participants in the research to express the ‘reality[ies]’ of their lived experiences (Burgess, 1984). This contrasts with the quantitative method, in which the researchers’ and participants’ subjectivities may be understood as ‘biases’.

Qualitative research involves a range of empirical strategies for collecting data, for example, case study, participant observation, interviews (from open-ended to highly structured), narrative method, document and communication tools (TV, tape recorder and videotapes) and ethnography. (Silverman, 2004). The qualitative paradigm also encourages an emphasis on reflection of the researcher’s own involvement in the research.

In the case of this research, which is concerned with the in-depth investigation of the experience of females and males in recruitment, barriers and glass ceiling, a set of particular organisational decisions (IOC’s minimum targets toward broader participation of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations), was utilised.

Therefore, a qualitative research method, which uses strategies of gathering data such as specific cases, observations, interviews and document analysis, was deemed appropriate (Shaw, 2001).
3.9 Research tools

A. Interviews

The first group of open-ended objectives, described broadly in Chapter Four, covered issues of personal perspectives and world views of four male key actors as respondents (see detailed description of each respondent in Chapter Four). Their interviews were undertaken following from (and drawing on) my own auto-ethnographical account being the first and only female member (until 2008) of the IVA Executive Board. My own account was my ‘story’ and perspective on unfolding events from 1999 on, from the end of the Selinger project. In addition to events, my account focused on the processes in which I was involved, which I was influenced by, and which eventually led to the establishment of the VAYTG in 2003.

My auto-ethnographical account was constructed at the time it was written, mainly in relation to my professional life story and did not focus on my other roles as mother, wife, daughter, 'kibbutznik', as a native, secular Jewish Israeli. This was in part because at that time I was less aware of the impact of my personal life story and its relation to my professional identity and role. I now acknowledge that exploration of these other dimensions would have offered potential insights into the resources and constraints impacting on my own discursive construction of my role in the establishment of the VAYTG.

The four male interviewees were selected because all were deeply involved in the establishment of the VAYTG, from its very beginning; however, none of them was a member of the Executive Board of the IVA. All of them held a broadly positive opinion of the project, but they viewed the project from different perspectives and points of view. Attempts to approach some board members who were opposed to the project to ask for interviews proved unsuccessful, due in large part, I concluded, to the sensitivity of the issue at that stage and my own dual involvement as the researcher and an actor within the project and the board.
The second group of interviews presented extensively in Chapter Five aimed to use the life stories of ten female and two male interviewees to explore dominant gendered discourses, mainly those of masculinity and femininity and the discursively constructed barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations.

The process of the interviewees’ selection was based on their career position and their relationship to the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS), referring mainly to their involvement during the stages of creation of the project.

In addition, three female interviewees were interviewed twice, first in 2005 (the year the project was officially inaugurated) and then again in 2008, a few months after the project was officially transformed into an organisation undertaking practical work. These three interviewees had been involved throughout the process from the conception of the idea, to the stage of establishing the actual organisation. The second set of interviews explored the experiences these women went through of the processes involved in moving to take on decision-making positions, and how this was affected by, or shaped, their perspectives, values, relationships, managerial style and ideology.

The approach to the interviews in line with the post-structural feminist perspective adopted in this study, aimed to identify and explore the fluidity of the interviewees’ perspectives, and moreover the fluidity of the contingently changing (non/anti) feminist ideologies of males and females interviewees along the process. My intention was thus, to uncover explicit and implicit contextually structured gendered discourse which may explain how barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions in sport organisations are constructed.

In order to achieve those aims I constructed two sets of interview objectives. One was related to the first case study namely, the VAYTG, which were organised under four main ‘deductively’ derived objectives (i.e. were seeking information on themes originating from the author’s definition of relevant information required), and the second one was objectives of the interviews with key actors in regards to the NPWS, which also incorporated three main deductive issues. (Of course, although the interviews were organised around these deductively derived codes, they were also importantly designed to allow the generation of ideas or themes initiated by the interviewees themselves.)
After the open-ended interviews, which were all undertaken in Hebrew and recorded upon agreement of the interviewees, transcripts of all the interviews were prepared in Hebrew and then translated into English, paying sensitive attention to the explicit and implicit cultural and socio-contextual differences between the languages and their meaning in specific contexts. The next step was to identify inductively emerging and repeating accountable categories within the transcripts. These categories provided the basis for the discussion of findings in Chapters Four and Five.

A list of deductively derived interview themes to be addressed within the two sets of interviews undertaken in this study is provided below:

A. **Preselected themes / deductive codes adopted for interviews with key figures in relation to the VAYTG:**

1. Barriers
   1.1 People
   1.2 Institutional
      1.2.1 Governmental
      1.2.2 National Federation
      1.2.3 Clubs
   1.3 Type of rationale for establishing the VAYTG
      1.3.1 quality
      1.3.2 quantity

2. Gender Ideology
   2.1 Anti feminism
   2.2 Non feminists
   2.3 Liberal feminism
   2.4 Radical feminism
2.5 Poststructuralist feminism

3. Perceptions (on the project)
   3.1 Interests
   3.2 Motivation

4. Perceptions on the role of female actors in NF
   4.1 Nature of barriers and opportunities
   4.2 Importance of particular actors and of particular barriers and opportunities

B. Preselected themes / deductive categories of codes adopted for interviews with women and men on leadership positions in regard to the NPWS:

1. Background
   1.1 Personal details
       • Current age
       • Domestic situation (not/living with partner, divorce, number of children etc.)
       • Religion
       • Profession and occupation
       • Education
       • Place of residence
       • Partner profession/occupation
   1.2 Family
       • Parents' participation in sport
       • Parents' perceptions on sport
• Sisters/brothers
• Location in the family
• Place of birth

1.3 Participation in sport
• Level of sport (athletic career)
• Support
• Barriers
• Social position (captain etc.)
• Post career

2. Working in sport organisations

2.1 Gender ideology in interviewee’s statements
• Non-feminism
• Anti-feminism
• Liberal feminism
• Marxist feminism
• Radical feminism
• Poststructuralist feminism

2.2 Issues relating to women within the organisation

2.3 Strategies used by women

2.4 Strategies used against them

2.5 Critical decision-making
• National policy regarding women sport
The role of women in decision-making positions – The case of the Israeli sport organisations

- who influenced policy?
- what tactics were used by whom?
- against whom or what?
- how was / were decision(s) taken?
- motivations for supporting or opposing policy

2.6 Role and position in the organisation

- Direct involvement in decision making (financial issues)
- Indirect involvement in decision making (financial, professional etc.)
- Influence or lack of influence exerted
- Barriers / opportunities experienced
- Tactics adopted by various actors

3. Administrative career stages and motivation

- Career history motivation for working in the sports administration field
- Entry into the field (e.g. via volunteering, family connections etc.)
- The situation within the sporting organisation anticipated by the respondent
- Sources of personal support
- Barriers and opportunities (in the different stages and the involvement of different actors)
- Motivation to remain in the field (appreciation by others, success, vision, habit etc.)

The following are examples of inductive categories raised frequently or significantly from the interviews taken within the two case studies:

- Sporting career as active athlete
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- Reasons for quitting the athletic career
- Reasons for getting involved again in sport
- Terms of recruitment
- Barriers experienced as an athlete
- Devotion to their mission
- Frustration resulting from the politics surrounding sport
- Multi-tasking
- Understanding the existing realities of sport organisations
- Finding a way up the ladder of responsibility / authority
- Mentoring/sisterhood
- Adopting/resisting feminist ideology
- Conflicts and adaptation of existing masculine sets of values within the organisational culture
- Recognition of inequalities

In order for the reader to better understand the place of my own auto-ethnographical account as one of the research tools adopted, it is important to acknowledge that this was also analysed with reference to similar objectives and categories. Indeed my own experience inevitably influenced the ways I approached and conducted interviews subsequently (and hence the deductive, researcher-selected categories of information I regarded as potentially significant before going into the interviews themselves). My experience of the current contextual socio-cultural reality and experience as an active female player for many years, and subsequently as the only female board member in the Israeli Volleyball Federation, were clearly important features of my knowledge and understanding of the research problem.

With regard to the cultural context within which my own story took place, I employed the following categories deductively in interrogating my own ethnographical account:
• Background in relation to volleyball
• The experience of trying to establish the "Selinger project"
• The disappointment after it failed
• Reasons to restart again a national project for women's volleyball
• The sisterhood/mentoring
• Conflicts among females
• Recognition of power relations among male members
• Barriers (humour, stereotype, language, male bonding etc.)
• Devotion to the mission
• Understanding the importance of gender equity
• Adopting a poststructural feminist approach

To conclude this section, it is worth acknowledging that the protocol I adopted to analyse my own auto-ethnographical account was as follows:

1. Transcription into Hebrew.

2. Reading and re-reading the scripts to identify what is said in relation to the deductively derived themes and to highlight and map out the inductively derived themes considering such macro-criteria as:
   - ideology (the values illustrated by the nature of my own account);
   - interests – consideration of whose interests were reflected in the nature of the discourse provided?
   - differences in descriptions of events from those provided by interviewees;
   - differences in explanation of causal factors concerning the behaviour of individuals, groups or organisations from those provided by interviewees;
   - changes over time in the above.
3. Coding and investigating the links / associations between codes.

4. Developing an explanation and translating quotations employed into English to illustrate / support my contentions.

B. Document analysis

The importance of background documentary evidence for conceptualising current organisational practice, was confirmed by providing the basis for interview questions, and comparing individuals’ views. Documentary analysis is also a key to developing a historical dimension to the analysis (Silverman, 2004).

The influence of key historical events in Israeli sport organisations and in individuals’ experiences can be regarded as one of the central theoretical issues of the research. Documentary analysis can therefore provide historical reference and contextual information on current policy decisions and practice initiatives.

During my study, the minutes of meetings of the Volleyball Executive Board Meetings for the years 1999-2008 and some confidential documents and details of formal and informal meetings of the National Council of the Women and Sport project, mainly for the years 2005 - 2008 were made available to me. However, I could not use their content directly or cite them since they were provided to me in confidence. I therefore limited their use to that of informing my understanding of the socio-historical context and of the nature of the discourse, roles, decisions and processes taking place within the sport.

Within this analysis, I was investigating the presence of different perspectives (e.g. on dominance, feminist ideology, interests etc.), of opinions, gender conflicts, relationships, and decision-making processes and events, in order to identify the main ideologies, values and gendered discourse that discursively constructed the local realities of gender roles and barriers within the two sporting organisations.

In terms of protocol I undertook to analyse the document content as follows:
1. **Finding** the relevant documents for a range of different formal and informal meetings.

2. **Identification** of the *appropriate* policy documents (to allow investigation of decision-making processes, terminologies board members used, arguments, ideology and perceptions, reflection on my own or others’ actions, etc.).

3. **Examination** of the consistency over time of content within and between national polices and the implicit personal values, beliefs, ideology of the research subjects and their actions.

C. **Case study**

In recent years, case studies have become a popular method in management research, and are now to be found in a wide range of research. Case study research as an empirical inquiry uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. It may be suggested that case study can be used in many different contexts in order to systematically investigate an individual, an organisation, or an event (Scapens, 2004).

It is thus argued that case study strategy deals with gathering maximum information about a typical, small-scale research entity, such as a gendered group or organisation, in a natural setting such as a NF sport organisation. It focuses on individual instances rather than a wide spectrum approach (Amara, 2003). The rationale behind a main effort in one or two case studies, rather than many, is that there may be insights to be gained from in-depth analysis of central cases that may have wider implications and implementations.

The case study method offers more than other empirical methods, going into deeper details in order to explain the complexities, power relations and in our case also linguistic aspects of certain gendered situations. Using case study method in this instance also allows the researcher a variety of methods of data collection, for example, a collection of background documentary insights and analysis of interviewees’ career histories.
D. Types of case study

Stake (1994) identifies three types of case study:

1. Intrinsic case study: this is used in order to get a better understanding of a particular case. The study is not undertaken because the case represents or illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case in itself is of interest.

2. Instrumental case study: this is a specific case which seeks to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating the investigator's understanding of other interests.

3. Collective case study: the researcher may study a group of cases jointly in order to better understand the phenomenon under investigation. A group is chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better theorising.

The choice of Israel as a subject of study, and the National Project for Women and Sport and the Volleyball Federation in particular, was both for intrinsic and instrumental purposes. This combination aimed:

a. to improve the researcher’s understanding about the phenomenon, which may be gained by employing theories of poststructuralist feminist thinking, and literature within the contextual 'reality' of Israeli sport context. It may help also in the deconstruction of some socio-historical concepts, values, and ideologies which are specific to the Israeli context in relation to discursively constructed gender inequities in Israeli sport with regard to the two case studies adopted in this research.

b. to illustrate how the concerns of researchers and theorists in the domain of the Israeli sport context with how dominant masculine discourse maintains the local 'reality' of female exclusion from decision-making positions, and how the socially constructed 'reality' of male dominance in Israeli sport executive positions, reflects on women in key decision-making positions in producing gender equity initiatives.
In relation to the above discussion, although the development of women in decision-making positions in the Israeli sport context (particularly the establishment of NPWS and the VAYTG as gender equity initiatives) is a research focus, the case studies are not treated as isolated or distinctive and specific cases, but rather as social phenomena socially constructed within the local and global discourses on gender equity in general, and women in Israeli sport in particular. Access was achieved for the two case studies by seeking permission from the relevant authority, namely, the Israeli Volleyball Association and the NPWS and other interviewees. The research proposal and focus, which contains information about the basic aims and plan of the research, were presented to the appropriate parties.

E. Other research tools

Justification for using an auto-ethnography as a research method:

Auto-ethnography, as described by Bochner and Ellis in Communication as Auto-ethnography (2006), shows “…people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles” (p. 111). In essence auto-ethnography is a story that re-enacts an experience by which people find meaning and through that meaning are able to reconcile themselves to that experience. It can be further explained as research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the culture, social, and political (Ellis, 2004).

While ethnography is a social science, a qualitative research method that describes human social phenomena based on fieldwork, in auto-ethnography the researcher becomes the primary participant/subject of the research in the process of writing personal stories and narratives. The term auto-ethnography itself is contested and is sometimes used interchangeably with or referred to as personal narrative or autobiography. An auto-ethnography is a reflexive account of one's own experiences situated in culture. In other words, in addition to describing and looking critically at my own experience in the IVA as the only female member in the executive board, auto-ethnography also provides for a cultural accounting.

Autobiographical methods in general carry a strong humanist impetus in that they provide a means of conducting research that can give voice to the ‘socially excluded’ (Bertaux, 1996). The holistic approach of the biography leads to broader depictions of
individuals’ identities, both temporally and socially, within the social network that supports them (Miller, 2000). Nevertheless, within the autobiographical perspective, ‘process’ has a particularly double-edged meaning. It is relevant to our case in the sense that when a person’s/interviewee's life is viewed as a whole, the idea of his/her career ‘history’ can be comprehended at two levels. First, the interviewee has his/her own history of personal development, barriers and change as he ‘proceeds along his life or a significant portion thereof. Second, a considerable period of time passes as he/she moves along his/her life course. In this respect, ‘historical event and social change at the societal level impinge upon the individual’s own unique life history’ (Miller, 2000).

The popularity of the biographical perspective is built on three basic approaches presented in Miller (2000):

a. The Realist approach, which is based on induction. Information is collected through the collection of life histories, and is issued to construct general principles concerning social phenomena.

b. The Neo-positivist approach is based on deduction. Pre-existing networks of concepts are used to make theoretically-based predictions concerning peoples’ lives as they are experienced. The collection of information centres upon areas of theoretical concern. Issues of conceptual validity are important for this approach. In common with the realist approach, the neo-positivist one also posits the existence of an objective reality and holds that the perceptions of the actor and his objective do represent aspects of that reality.

c. The Narrative approach bases itself upon the on-going development of the respondent’s viewpoint during the telling of a life ‘story’ or a specific experience. Understanding the individual’s unique and changing perspective as it is mediated by context, takes precedence over questions of fact.

The narrative approach can be labelled ‘postmodern’, in that reality is seen to be situational and fluid. The narrative approach is tightly located in the present moment and remembrances of the past and anticipations of the future are reconstructed continuously through the lens of the present (see also, Kohli, 1981).
Although in many cases these three approaches may overlap, it might be noted that as delineated above, the realist and neo-positivist approaches share a common view of ‘objective truth’ and both share the view that the macro can be apprehended through study of the micro. The aforementioned approaches emphasise, in one way or another, the tension between the subjective viewpoint of an actor and his/her perception of the overarching social structure.

The neo-positivist approach focuses on the depiction of structure and is evaluated by the respondents’ reporting of their subjective perception of placement in structure and time. Similar tension can be observed in the realist approach, in which reported subjective perception provides the basic units for generalising structure.

However, the narrative approach, which is suggested as most appropriate to this research, is built upon a similar tension, but at a different level. The postmodern view of structure does not see it as a single reality, but as the interplay between the actors, which, through the power relations among themselves, socially construct reality (Miller, 2000). In that sense, the narrative approach can accommodate auto-ethnography and other interviewees' career histories. The narrative is based on the unique experiences of the interviewees and myself and mediated by current contexts but with relation to socio-historical discourse.

Furthermore, in order to better understand the use of auto-ethnography, it is interesting to evaluate Wolcott’s account (in Ellis, 2004) of ethnography as part art and part science, but as nevertheless unique. Ellis (2004) suggests that readers can look at auto-ethnography in terms of its meaning as a form of ethnography.

Auto-ethnography overlaps art and science; it is part auto or self and part ethno or culture. Similar to ethnography, auto-ethnography refers to the process as well as what is produced from that process.

Auto-ethnography addresses the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness. Auto-ethnographers look first through an ethnographic ‘wide angle lens’, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that may be moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.
Furthermore, auto-ethnography seeks to connect the autobiographical impulse with the ethnographic impulse.

The ethnographic impulse has been characterised as "the gaze outward", as Neumann (1996) says, "Worlds beyond [our] own, as a means of marking the social coordinates of a self." The autobiographical impulse "gazes inward for a story of self, but ultimately retrieves a vantage point for interpreting culture" (p. 173).

Auto-ethnography fluently moves back and forth, first looking inside, then outside, then backward, and forward (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994), until the distinctions between individual and social are blurred. Auto-ethnography is further explained by Ellis and Bochner (2000) as "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739). In that sense, the story's 'validity' can be judged by whether it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is authentic and lifelike, believable and possible; the story's generalisability can be judged by whether it speaks to readers about their experience.

The benefits of auto-ethnography are the ways in which research of such a personal nature might give us insight into problems often overlooked in culture—issues such as the nature of identity, race, sexuality, child abuse, eating disorders, life in academia, and the like. In addition to helping the researcher make sense of his or her individual experience, auto-ethnographies are political in nature as they engage their readers in important political issues and often ask us to consider things, or do things differently. Chang (2008) argues that auto-ethnography offers a research method friendly to researchers and readers because auto-ethnographic texts are engaging and enable researchers to gain a cultural understanding of self in relation to others, on which cross-cultural coalition can be built between self and others.

This study is attempting to reframe the narrative voice. According to Ellis (1997), evocative auto-ethnography is not questioning whether narratives convey precisely the way things actually were, but rather what narratives do, what consequences they have, and to what uses they can be put. In that sense, female executive members of sport organisations are not a homogenous group. Although many share the same interest in the love of sport, they nevertheless differ in terms of class, race, sexual identity, age, disability, body size and cultural, religious and linguistic heritage.
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(Dewar, 1993). This is, to some extent, reflected in different life stories and experiences of different women and men in executive positions in the Israeli sport contexts represented by the two case studies in this research.

The story that follows highlights aspects of some women's and some men's career history and my auto-ethnographical account which aim to explore the 'reality[ies]' of their feminist or other species of politics (Clarke and Humberstone, 1997), and of the barriers they encountered, their perceptions on certain gender equity initiatives and on the role and influence they had on the processes that led to these initiatives being established. However, there is no intention to universalise or generalise this story to all cases of females in executive positions in Israeli sport organisations. Instead, we seek to explore and understand the socio-historical gendered discourse constructing the barriers to women’s access to decision-making posts in the two case studies of Israeli sport organisations.

Furthermore, in this study, an attempt has been made to tell the story from the perspectives of the selected women and men. While writing my text, I have used ‘first person’ in order to make a clear distinction between my dual roles as both researcher and subject. Use of a poststructuralist feminist theory allowed me to liberate the research from the boundaries of validation of the study (in the sense of truth as correspondence to the ‘facts’ might imply), as we are claiming that we are telling a particular truth which takes place within a specific set of rules of one local reality, based on a unique knowledge (and where validity concerns are replaced by warrantability, effectively emphasising truth as coherence as a criterion).

I believe that sport organisations, like other social situations and relationships, represent a discourse established between people, based on power relations in each case. Different experiences constitute different kinds of knowledge which lead to different socially constructed discourse. Therefore, the following auto-ethnographical texts give us an adequate account from the subject’s point of view, and help us to reveal 'realities' and 'truths' of the self within the organisational culture, from the subject's self-interpretation. In effect, my account will be judged against how plausible, coherent and authentic it appears to be. By using an auto-ethnographic method we are trying to provide opportunities for the readers to identify and learn
from these life experiences and perspectives and thereby gain an insight into, and an understanding of their own as well as the subject’s life experience.

F. Coding and analysis

To make a large body of transcript more manageable, a series of coding and categorising exercises are performed. This involves searching through the material for a number of themes, or nodes, which can arise from the concerns on issues relevant to the study focus (gender discourse and female experience in sport organisations) or might arise from the reading of the respondents’ answers.

The mechanics of this process are exercised in the light of the arguments outlined earlier so that coding is subject to tests of warrantability rather than validity etc.

3.10 Concluding remarks

In the light of the foregoing arguments, the exploration of the barriers will be explained through a poststructuralist feminist perspective that allows freedom from the notion of a single 'truth' and by that frees us to become more inclusive of different voices and narratives. Nevertheless, in the next chapter, by using the 'narrative approach' to present my auto-ethnographical account and those of my interviewees, I am not claiming to universalise the story in all cases of women executives in Israeli sport organisations, rather I am trying to tell my own and my interviewees’ particular 'truths' which are specific to a certain 'reality' within a specific organisational culture. Poststructuralist feminist theory sees great significance in how language or discourse is used to achieve social goals and the roles this use plays in social maintenance and change within the Israeli sport context, in relation to gender inequities.

This realisation led me to use the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which will assist us in the exploration of how dominant gendered discourse helps to maintain power structures and thus support gender inequities. Power might be held by both institutions and individuals, and any challenge to the status quo challenges those who hold the power. For example, a commitment to gender equity might challenge those who are responsible for the maintenance of the existing 'reality' in some Israeli
sport organisations such as the IVA. These are matters which we look to consider in the following two case study chapters.
Chapter Four - The Story(ies) of the Establishment of the VAYTG

4.1. Theoretical framework

In this chapter we address accounts of the process of the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG) in September 2003. This process followed the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Boys in September 2002 by the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA). We do this largely through the discourse of key figures within the IVA including the author’s own perspective (through an auto-ethnographic approach). In relation to this case study four male subjects were interviewed. Each had been a key figure in relation to the IVA. However, it is worth acknowledging that none occupied the position of an executive board member. The interviewees were chosen by virtue of the level of their positions and their perceived influence and familiarity within the IVA. A further criterion was their reported involvement in the process of the establishment of the VAYTG itself, with the decision-making procedures in the IVA and/or their relationship with me as an IVA executive board member who led the process.

Within this chapter, it is my intention to elaborate the interviewees' reflections and different views in relation to my auto-ethnographical account which incorporates a description of my career history within the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA) as the only woman on the Executive Board.

Therefore, this case study is seeking to identify and understand the discursive construction of the different discourses in regard to certain barriers along the decision-making process in establishing the VAYTG within the IVA. Some of the interviews also seek to shed light on the significance of my account. As outlined in the literature review (Chapter Two) and in the methodology chapter (Chapter Three).

4.2 The historical context of the Israeli Volleyball Association (IVA)

According to the contextual history, as presented on its official website, the IVA was inaugurated a short time after the establishment of Israel. In 1956, the first National league championships took place, and in 1956, the National Teams participated in the world championships played in Paris (Israeli Volleyball Association, 2011a). From its
inception, the board of the IVA was composed solely of male representatives who were elected in accordance with their sporting political party allegiances (belonging to Hapoel, Maccabi, Beitar, etc.). However, many things had changed since the 1950s in regard to professionalism, international relations, policies, and election systems. Nevertheless, one of the ways in which the situation had not changed significantly was in terms of the status of women’s volleyball; including a complete absence of female representation in the management and decision-making positions on the IVA board.

From 1997, the situation changed slightly, when one female (member) joined the board of the IVA as an "observer" (able to participate in the meetings, but without the right to vote on any of the board's decisions). The data cited below illustrate the context, within the case study, of the decision-making process with regard to the establishment of VAYTG. These data portray the system as having undergone significant changes. Since the change in the board membership and the subsequent beginning of a less marginalised discourse on women’s volleyball, the development of material changes for example in the growth of the IVA budget for Women's Volleyball are indicated.

4.3 The structure of the Israeli Volleyball Association as described in the IVA Files

A. After the elections of 1996

**Board:** 11 members, consisting only of males (all of them in their mid-forties to mid-fifties, all married with children and some already with grandchildren).

**Observers:** I, the only female (in my late twenties, married with one child), joined as an observer. The two other observers were a representative of the Ministry of Sport and a legal advisor (both male).

**IVA Commissions:** the way the IVA tends to operate has mainly been through different commissions which advise and make recommendations to the Executive Board on the different aspects of its responsibility. At the time of writing, its main commissions are as follows: Women's Commission (from 1999, with three male members and myself); the Technical Commission (with seven members, including coaches, board members and former players; I was the only female member in this Commission from 1998); the
Financial Commission (all male board members); the League and Competitions Commission (the Technical Director and 2 other persons external to the board, all male); the Refereeing Commission; Beach Volleyball Commission; and the Legal Commission (all male).

**The Federation's employees:** a secretary (female), league and competitions coordinator (male), general director (male), around ten part-time national coaches (male only), a part-time beach VB coordinator (male).

**The Budget:** around NIS 3.5-4 million (£1 sterling = 6.1 NIS approximately).

**B. After the elections of 2000**

**Board:** 13 elected members consisting of 12 males (most of them in their mid-forties to mid-fifties, all married with children and some with grandchildren), and I, the female member (in my early thirties, married with 2 children).

**Observers:** 1 female joined as an observer. The two other observers were a representative of the Ministry of Sport and a legal advisor.

**Commissions:** The same Commissions as for the previous quadrennial (see above). However, this elected executive board had decided to disband the Women's Commission, due to its 'mainstreaming' within the Technical Commission, after the Chairman of the Technical Commission, together with the newly elected chairman of the IVA, promised the Women's Commission chairperson and me in a 'private' political conversation (January 2001), that equal treatment would be given to women's and men's volleyball.

This statement also followed the declaration of a new quota by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport obliging each National Federation to incorporate at least one woman on its board (Israeli Volleyball Association, 2011b).

In relation to the decision to dissolve the Women's Commission, I, as the sole female representative on the board, had decided to compromise on the offer to unite the two Commissions, in order to show my male colleagues that I would be willing to trust them. This was an issue which was very important to the male representatives, though regarded as less significant for me, and I suspected that I might achieve more for women's volleyball if I were willing to compromise at this point.
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The Federation employees: a secretary (female), league and competitions coordinator (male), general director (male), women’s VB coordinator (volunteer position, female), around nine or ten national coaches (only one woman amongst them).

The Budget: around NIS 4.5-5 million

Contributions: NIS 150,000 (scholarships for the Youth Academy for boys and girls).

Governmental support: approximately NIS 700,000 (from the Ministry of Sport for the Selinger project)

C. After the elections of 2008

Board: 13 members, consisting of 11 males (all of them in their late forties to their late fifties, all married with children and some with grandchildren), 2 females (early to mid-forties, one of whom was single).

Commissions: The same Commissions as described above, but with the Women’s Commission re-established due to new regulations that followed the beginning of the National Project for Women and Sport (Establishing a Women’s Commission was one of the criteria all National Federations had to fulfil in order to take part in this project).

The Federation employees: a secretary (female), league and competitions coordinator (male), general director (male), women’s VB coordinator (female), around 9-10 national coaches (1 woman and the rest were men), 7 full-time employees (including one woman), part-time male Beach VB coordinator.

The Budget: around NIS 6.5-7 million (including the NPWS)

Contribution and corporate support: NIS 2.5 million (from sponsors of the Selinger Project), NIS 600,000 (National Project for Women and Sport), NIS 800-900,000 (from the Ministry of Sport and NOC to the Selinger women’s team project), NIS 700,000 (from Ministry of Sport for the Volleyball Academies - boys and girls).

4.4 The Research Site – the (de)construction of the IVA executive board

From 1996 on, all sport federations or associations in Israel were, by law, to be considered as independent non-profit organisations, and thus voting rights were to be
divided between the members of the organisations, namely registered volleyball clubs around the country.

The decision to decentralise political power, by closing the Israeli Sports Federation and dividing political power between different federations, might be seen as a democratic initiative. In practice, however, the concentration of power was still to be found in two or three organisations that were able to exert political and sometimes even financial influence. Voting power was based on the number of registered teams that each club had in different leagues. Representatives on the board of the national association were required to be members or other individuals nominated by these clubs. However, most clubs delegated power to one of the political organisations (Maccabi, Hapoel etc.), to vote on their behalf at board elections.

In the context of this 'decentralised' system, in October 2000, following the Sydney Olympic Games, all Israeli sports associations, including the IVA, commenced the election process for new board members for the next four years. Each political organisation had its own appointing committee which tried to create an official list of candidates for each NF for the day of elections. It was at this point that I was approached to stand as one of the 'official' candidates for one of the lists for election to the IVA board, namely that of Maccabi.

The male-dominated election committee of the IVA consisted of three members (one was the IVA external legal advisor and two IVA board members). The Committee had received the approval of the Board and the General Assembly of the IVA to manage the arrangements for the new elections, starting with political issues such as deciding on the approved number of legal votes for each club and the practical arrangements for the organisation of the election day.

In these elections I was 'representing' the Maccabi list for the elections for the IVA's Board, since to meet the requirements of the quota, the female representative was to be included on the list of candidates to represent the biggest party, which at the time was Maccabi. The election committee in this case discovered that there were fewer votes available than the different parties had at first realised, which meant that each party might be forced to exclude one of their candidates from their lists.
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The candidate who seemed the most ‘appropriate’ for excision from the Maccabi list was me, the only female candidate amongst all candidates from all the political organisations. The explanation I received from the leader of the Maccabbi party for this decision was that of ‘last in first out’:

You know the system; you are the last one to arrive so you are the first to leave

This represented a structural barrier, since women were likely to be the ‘last in’ in most cases. In order to find a solution that would provide a place for a female member on the board (as the Association was required to do by the new regulations it had adopted), it was decided that instead of 11 members being on the Board, as had been the case for the past four years, the next board would comprise 13 members, with one more member from each of the two leading political organisations. This solution had been widely used amongst other federations and associations in Israel.

It is worth acknowledging at this juncture that in terms of qualifications and competences, I as a female candidate had held a position as board member without voting rights from 1997-2000. I had been a professional volleyball player and had also played for the Israeli national team, coached in the first division, and had obtained a postgraduate degree and other diplomas in sport management. At the same time, none of the other male members had been national team players or coaches.

Thus in terms of experience, competences and qualifications I was objectively very well qualified in comparison to my male counterparts. It appeared to me at that time, almost impossible to break into the male preserve of key-position holders in the IVA, or to influence the decision-making process within the board and the organisational-related forces, without making some compromises in order to eventually achieve at least the minimum targets of the Olympic Committee, while also engaging in struggles to implement gender equity policies, as the story of the demise of the Selinger project in 1999 might show.

A. The demise of the 1999 Selinger Project – a unique case

In 1999, an opportunity arose from an unexpected direction, which could have led to a new era for Israeli volleyball in general, and especially for women’s volleyball. Dr. Arie Selinger, a world ranked volleyball coach indicated that he would be willing to coach
the Israeli women's national team. He had coached the USA female volleyball team to the Olympic silver medal in the Los Angeles Olympic Games of 1984, and a silver medal with the Dutch male team in the Barcelona Games in 1992, and was named as the USA ‘coach of the century’. He had also been a leading coach in the First Division in Japan for 15 years.

Dr. Selinger was contacted by a leading female figure in the Israeli Ministry of Sport and agreed to return to Israel, in order to lead women’s volleyball to ‘a new future’. He stated that his target was the final of the Olympic Games in 2008. Many asked why he wanted to invest in women's VB, which was at that time in a parlous situation, in terms of playing level. The national team was ranked among the lowest group of teams in the world, and the IVA gave women's VB only around 25% of the operational budget with men's VB receiving the remaining 75%.

However, in 2000, after many meetings and discussions, the initiative failed. Against the wishes of the Minister, the male-dominated board of the IVA together with other sporting organisations in Israel made a decision to discontinue the initiative, retaining the status quo of marginalisation of women's volleyball. An explanation for the failure was suggested by Dr. Selinger (the most successful Israeli volleyball coach):

_In order to understand why we didn't succeed one needs more than a few fingers in the few organisations at play in the political field, first of all the federation is run by men, and men tend to see the men’s national team as more important than the women's national team... the women’s team is actually a second rate team... it is therefore obvious that once I said I wanted to work with women, I created a wall... they are not in favour of sport, they are only working for their own interests. Me dealing with women keeps most of them out of the picture ... this is the gender issue, and it is the ego of the male masculine behaviour and values that is at play here_ (Interviewee #3, p.2, 2005).

Two years later, the IVA decided to establish a Volleyball Academy for Boys and only a year later did it establish an Academy for Girls. This project represented a real challenge to the status quo in terms of gender inequity in the IVA. In this case study, we have therefore chosen to focus on this project, one of the largest and most significant that the IVA had established for women: the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented
Girls (VAYTG). In the next section I present the organisational structure of the Sport Academy, in order to shed light on the research site.

4.5 The organisational structure of the National Academy for Sport Excellence

The Centre for Young Talented Athletes (the Academy for Sport Excellence) was established in September 1990 to support talented young athletes in different sports with all available resources. From its early years, it proved itself a strong breeding ground for future elite Israeli athletes. The Centre (Academy) serves a limited number of sports, and comprises young male and female athletes aged 12-18, with the majority living in the Centre at its boarding school. The Centre is an unusual example of cooperation between different national bodies, the Ministry of Sport, the different National Federations, the Wingate Institute (The National Institute for Physical Activity and Sport) and the athletes’ parents. Its goal is to allow these young athletes to fulfil their sporting potential, and simultaneously achieve the best academic results they can in their schooling.

The boarding school pools resources, rather than being a provider in its own right. In order to establish an Academy in a specific sport in the Centre, there are certain prerequisite conditions, and the NF needs to have voted to support the decision to establish the Academy. The NF then needs to receive the blessing of the Ministry of Sport, which usually asks for the recommendation of the Elite Sport Unit of the NOC. After gaining the support of both bodies, the Ministry needs to officially decide on the budgeting arrangements with the Wingate Institute. The athletes in the Centre (Academy) enjoy a "one-stop shop" organisation. In terms of gender, all the senior coaches are men, and there are two females as assistant coaches. It is worth acknowledging that the coaches are selected and paid by the NFs. Three of the Centre’s directors are female and two are male. This role requires a combination of sport and educational management skills and qualifications.

The gender proportion amongst the athletes has usually been approximately 25-30% female and 70-75% male. Until the inauguration of the Volleyball Academy for Boys, the Centre was historically composed of ‘individual’ sports; the entrance of team sport
changed the policy and opened up new opportunities. The first team sport to arrive was volleyball, with the establishment of the Boy's Academy and a year later the establishment of the VAYTG. The initiative to establish the VAYTG was led by me, throughout 2002. By then I was an official who had decided to strive for the young female players to be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential, an approach or service my generation had not had the opportunity to enjoy:

*We never had the opportunity to fulfil our potential...and I felt things needed to be changed; women did not have any chance; it would be only if young girls could have the same openings as their male counterparts...* (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 6, 2004).

In many ways the discourse related to the VAYTG is interwoven with my auto-ethnographical account, and hopefully through this account, and its contrast with other perspectives, insights may be gained regarding the barriers to, and the role and importance of, women in decision-making positions in the Israeli sport arena. In order to address these issues the commentary is organised by reference to one core research question and some subsidiary questions.

### 4.6 The research questions

In this case, in relation to the decision-making process in the IVA, with regard to the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG) the following core question is addressed.

- What are the barriers to women's access to decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisation and how are they discursively constructed?

In addition, we will seek to explain why it is so important to have female voices on the executive board in sport organisations, what contributions they can make to the decision-making process and to what extent can they be said to make a difference?

The subsidiary research questions adopted and outlined in the methodology chapter are thus as follows:
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- What can analysis of the gendered discourse in the two case studies tell us about the dominant discourse in Israeli sport?

- What is the place, influence and the extent of the impact of women in key positions on the decision-making processes relating to the two case studies as defined in the discourse of key actors?

- What is the range of explanations of gender equity policy among male and female interviewees?

By reference to the decision making process in the IVA regarding the establishment of the VAYTG, we will explore, through a life history approach developed through open-ended interviews, my role and influence as a woman on the executive board of this sporting organisation, and the difficulties and barriers faced. In the following sections, I will seek, in particular, to explore dominant gendered discourse which I encountered as a female member through the decision-making process, which led to the establishment of the project.

4.7 The interviewees’ backgrounds

In this chapter, in addition to my auto-ethnographical account as the only female board member in the Israeli Volleyball Association, I have used a set of complementary interviews undertaken with key figures. This group of interviewees incorporated four respondents, all of them male. Among these male interviewees three were national and international coaches, two within the Volleyball Academy, and the other, Dr. Selinger, was the most successful Israeli coach internationally who was involved with the IVA during the initial failure and subsequent establishment of the National Project for the Israeli Volleyball Women's National Team (the Selinger Project).

- The first interviewee was the men's junior national coach, who had been for many years a top-level player in Israel, as well as a first division coach and national team coach for men and women. However, though very successful in local terms, he had had no international success. He had been the leading figure involved in the establishment of the Boys’ Academy one year earlier, and was one of the supporters of the establishment of the VAYTG, in part because he
thought it would help him to strengthen the Boys’ Academy, as he explained:

I have seen in my mind the project of the VA on an equal basis, because it would be better for the boys and for the whole project. (Interviewee #1, p.1, 2005)

However, he gave his support ‘quietly’, mainly by advising me what to do, and what tactics to adopt. For example:

In the case of the suggestion to postpone the rest of the women's national teams in order to establish the Girl's Academy, I thought that it would be in your best interest to say OK. (Interviewee #1, p.5, 2005)

- The second coach was the girls’ junior national coach and the Girls’ Academy coach. He was in his early 30s and had still been an active player (second division) when he started to coach at the Academy. He had been a top level player, but had suffered an unfortunate injury, and as a young coach he was widely respected. However, he had a lack of coaching experience with top-level teams, and therefore, a number of people in the federation objected to his nomination, for example;

  In the beginning I thought that Gal (the Girls' coach) lacked experience in coaching and that he was very young for this kind of position.  
  (Interviewee #4, p.2, 2005)

During the development process of the Girl's Academy, this interviewee was committed to the vision that the project should be equally beneficial to girls as well as boys. As illustrated:

If someone cuts off the budget for women and tells you to stop, when at the same time they are investing that money in men, I will surely open my mouth.  
  (Interviewee #2, p.3, 2005)

- The third interviewee was Dr. Arie Selinger, a successful coach in the top league in Japan for the previous 15 years, who had already won two silver Olympic Medals as a coach with the men's national team of Netherlands in Barcelona 1992 and with the women’s national team of the USA in Los Angeles 1984. He wanted to return to coach in Israel and to end his successful career where he had
started to coach 40 years earlier. For this reason he had been willing to come back to Israel to establish a national senior women's volleyball project. He explained his reason for choosing to coach the women rather than the men:

*Why women? I believe that women are freer to devote themselves. Men have financial issues, studies, army, and sometimes it harder for them to give 100% devotion to the project, unlike women who will do that with lower salaries and fewer requirements.* (Interviewee #3, p.1, 2005).

He was 68 years old at the time of the interview. The interviews took place in 2005, four years after the attempt to establish the 1999 Selinger Project had been abandoned in 2001, and two years before the re-establishment of the 2007 Selinger project. It is worth acknowledging that Dr. Selinger returned to coach in Japan after the first unsuccessful attempt, and was not involved in the process of the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Boys in September 2002 nor the Volleyball Academy for Girls in September 2003. In that sense, he was less likely to be aware of the implicit and explicit relationships between the various positions within the IVA.

- The fourth male interviewee was a member of the Technical Commission, a former top level player in Israel, the national team coach who had been involved for many years with the development of the volleyball infrastructure in Israel. In terms of this research, he was an important member of the small group that led the project of the Volleyball Academies for boys and girls in taking on its final structure. He was in his late 40s, married, with two children.

*I thought that the Academy was a great idea both for boys and girls. I never understood why the board always preferred to invest in men rather than women. I looked at this as an opportunity for volleyball in general that is why I continued to work with you until the establishment of the Girl's Academy a year later.* (Interviewee #4, p.2, 2005).
4.8 Wind of change – the entry of women into the IVA - M’s Story

A. Introduction

Dr. Selinger’s arrival was a turning point at which the IVA explicitly recognised that it existed as an organisation for both genders. Moreover, he was committed to the view that the IVA should invest in the age groups and gender teams which were most likely to achieve the best results at international level.

*If you want to build sport and to achieve success, you have to assess the situation and choose the one with the biggest chance of bringing you to the top...of course, if the country has enough for both genders, it would be the best...Israel is a small country with not enough money, human resources, knowledge; not, not, not...more have-nots than have, and therefore, we need to focus our resources, and work with women. This seemed like the right target in order to make a breakthrough.* (Interviewee #3, p.1, 2005)

Establishment of the Selinger project on the first occasion proved too much of a challenge, as it seemed that the different sport organisations (for example, the Ministry of Sport, the NOC and the IVA) were neither open nor ready to accept new ideas and policies. As a major proponent it could be that I did not have enough political power to promote such views, with observer status only within the executive board. It seemed to me also that some board members were afraid of losing their dominance to the voice of the 'other', women, as only a short time after the Salinger women’s project failed; they [the IVA] enthusiastically adopted a plan to establish a Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Boys.

*At the end of 2001, after two years of struggling and a lot of effort made by a leading woman from the Ministry of Sport and by me, the project was officially dropped, following a change of government and of the chairman of the NOC, but most important of all, after being rejected by the Israeli Volleyball Association (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 5, 2004).*

The decision to establish the project for boys alone was taken with wide support from most members of the board, the NOC and the Ministry of Sport. The unity amongst the members while taking such a decision, where none of the male members found it strange that the project was for boys only indicated a dominant discourse that
marginalised women. In addition it might be said to demonstrate the power of discourse in the sense that it was an unquestioned discourse of male norms.

Female performance was considered by Israel’s leading coach (Selinger, 2005) as potentially stronger than that of the male teams, but female provision was contested. Male performance, on the other hand was weak, but this issue that was not even considered in the debate. In other words, that the argument 'let's provide for volleyball' was treated as equivalent to 'let's provide for male volleyball'. Such a phenomenon is also noted by Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008, p. 100) as either explicitly or implicitly promoting the exclusion of women, minorities, or marginalised men from positions of leadership in sport, and thus from the decision-making process within executive boards. The phenomenon was described by some authors as the 'discourse of homogeneity' (see also in Martin, 2003; Shaw, 2006).

B. Understanding power relations

When I, as the only woman on the executive board of the IVA, proposed that a similar Volleyball Academy should be set up for girls, the male-dominated board of the Association agreed – but said that the board would have to wait a few months to see how the Boys’ project progressed, before making further decisions about the Girls’ project. Although this might seem logical to wait and find out what snags might exist, it could also be interpreted as an explicit way to delay the strategic decision regarding the Girls' Academy project. This decision to prioritise the Boys' project over the Girls', was seen by interviewee #3 as not only based on professional considerations, but also on the underlying realities of the fear of losing dominance and control.

Once I said I wanted to work with women, I created a wall... me dealing with women keeps most of them out of the picture...and they are afraid of that; this is a clear gender issue, and it is the ego of male chauvinism that is at play here.
(Interviewee #3, p.2, 2005)

This perspective is also mirrored in the following quote from the Boy's Academy coach:

The demand to stop any other women’s volleyball activities at the national level was because they (key actors in the IVA) didn't want the project for women, and they tried to do whatever they could to eliminate the project... (Interviewee #1, p. 5, 2005)
The role of women in decision-making positions – The case of the Israeli sport organisations

The insights arising from the exploration of the 'revealed reality' of some interviewees' perspectives suggested that there was a certain fear of change among the executive board toward a more gender equitable organisation. Furthermore, the realisation of the issue as a gendered issue and not a purely professional strategic policy decision indicates that at least for some interviewees it was clear that for certain key actors in the IVA it was important to maintain women’s VB in its marginalised position.

4.9 Discussion of the discourse

A. The discourse of uniformity

This attitude toward women’s sporting activities in the IVA may imply the existence of the discourse of homogeneity. Homogeneity rather than diversity among the males on the board, though not unique to sport, may indeed be stronger in sport organisations. In such a conservative gender order, inequality is masked by stressing neutral meritocracy and individualism (Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008). Indications of this way of thinking and associated behaviour amongst key actors in the IVA might be found in the following perspective of the Boy's Academy coach regarding their attitudes:

*I think that to some extent one of the reasons for the IVA Board's unintentional tendency not to invest in women volleyball, is the lack of women in decision-making positions ...men tend to support men’s sport.* (Interviewee #1, p.5, 2005)

In order to penetrate the uniformity of the board members and other key actors, I considered it important to understand the power relations within the political context of the IVA board, in order to promote the VAYTG and to bring the process of establishing it to a positive end:

*During the forthcoming months, we have started the process of mapping the forces within the board and the related stake-holders. I felt it would be useful to know which members were in favour of it, or against it, or simply undecided.* (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 8. 2004)

Nonetheless, in order to manage a successful project for women in the NF, it seemed equally important to realize the identification of the intentions of external stake-holders within the macro-governmental organisations. In regard to this case, it meant gaining
support from the Ministry of Culture and Sport, in order to have more influence and to build a supportive network. I felt that in order to create a large, revolutionary project particularly related to gender equity within an NF, an external influence would be required to bring the idea before a serious and active discussion process within the executive board.

One can claim that within a male-based organisation such as the IVA where women are a negligible minority, women may use the existing discourse in order to penetrate the decision-makers’ circle and gain an impact on the decision-making process. The realisation of implicit and explicit power-relations might be relational. Such relationships are constantly shifting, and resistance is an integral part of them.

The particular contingent and local analysis of power is critical for an examination of gender power relations in Israeli sport organisations, rejecting as it does the search for universal truth such as ‘all men’ repress ‘all women’. The view of power as relational acknowledges that there are many different versions of specific events and that power is not a clear, binary (a versus b) phenomenon. Therefore, exploring the extent of power each member within the executive board can exercise, and the inter-personal relationships amongst the different members, may eventually assist in breaking into the male decision-makers’ ‘circles’:

*I was aware of the power of the people who were present at the meeting and their influence on the decision-making processes within their organisations and the Israeli sport arena. I also became familiar with power relations within the Ministry of Sport, and understood with whom I could move things forward.*

(Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 5, 2004)

It was nonetheless clear, according to the perceptions of the interviewees, that most male members of the Volleyball Association and perhaps other officials as well had focused mainly on the costs and other material implications of the project, because they wanted to be assured that this would not adversely affect the men’s national teams, as stated by the coach of the junior male team and the boy's academy:

*The objection to creating the girls’ VA was that they would take money from the boys’ VA...and in fact this happened, and the Federation was right that they*
(Ministry of Sport) didn't double the budget...but I'm sure that in the long term, that was the right thing to do. (Interviewee #1, p.5, 2005).

This text suggests an attempt to retain the unity of the board's members. It implies a fear of taking decisions that are not popular, or in other words, decisions that would cause the members to "swim against the flow", especially when these decisions pertain to women. However, one might understand this as a concern that establishing both projects (for Boys and Girls) could cause them both to fail. Nevertheless, the general context within the decision to establish the Boy's Academy rather than Girls implies that, as the boys' academy coach observed:

As I see it, and from my own experience in the IVA and the sport arena in general, it seems that men on the board tend to support men's sport. I do not think they understood the power we, as the IVA, would gain from having a bigger academy. (Interviewee #1, p.5, 2005)

It was evident within the interviewees' perspectives that they believed that in the case of the IVA, [some] men on the executive board tended to perceive success in men's sport as more a significant achievement than success in women's sport. As from the coach of the girls’ academy observed:

I remember, since the time when I was a player, that women's volleyball was always second to men's volleyball...even today, if you ask the people in the key positions (unofficially of course)...they will say that winning with men is a bigger success than the same result with women. (Interviewee #2, p.2, 2005)

This observation is produced in the gendered context of the male-dominated executive board of the IVA, a social environment that has its own set of values which preserve, legitimise and naturalise the power of male dominance in sport, thereby privileging those who hold positions in this context of dominant masculine hegemony. Again this is reflected in the remarks of the boy's academy coach:

I believe that the people who run the system (in the IVA), didn't want to support women...the level of women is low... they asked themselves why should we invest in something that is not good? And straight away they put their money back into the men...it was easier. (Interviewee #1, p.3, 2005)
It seems that linguistic interpretation of these quotations might also shed some further light on the marginalisation of women's volleyball in Israel. By the use of the term "the people who run the system", the interviewee refers to those in the executive board of the IVA all of whom were men at that time. He then goes onto use the 'neutral' but depersonalising term 'something' which he used to refer to IVA members or his idea of female volleyball players, and he ends his observation on the gendered values in the executive board by using the terms "their money" regarding the IVA budget implying that the finances provided for the IVA belonged to the male members – equating the IVA with the male members of the board.

This linguistic formula demonstrates how [some] key male actors see themselves implicitly, not simply as the dominant group in the decision-making processes within the IVA, but as the IVA itself (they were dealing with “their” money). As we see below, this is related to the interviewees' reflections on the male-dominated board's concern about letting 'other' voices enter the decision-makers circle in the IVA.

B. The fear of the 'otherness'

Interesting issues arose when the IVA executive board acted hesitantly and avoided taking a decision to be part of the project for girls/women (VAYTG), which was proposed to mirror the previous provision made for boys (VAYTB). The explanations of some male interviewees for this behaviour of the IVA's board members showed some indirect gendered connotation. For example, they used administrative, professional and technical arguments in order to explain their rejection of the proposals (e.g. budgeting issues, the lack of sufficient female talent).

It seems according to interviewees’ perceptions that the male members might prefer to preserve the existing realities that consequently marginalise women's sporting activities and women’s initiatives in the board, and thus retain the dominance of what they were familiar with - men's sport managed by men. This attitude illustrates one of the discursively constructed barriers to women's access to decision-making positions. The fear of the 'other' within the executive members’ ‘club’, which may be described as a sense of threat from the uncertainty of new and different members, or from new ideas and voices. Such ideas would need to be challenged in a deconstruction of the executive board's 'secure' world where the places, and often, the historically-socially constructed positions of 'other' kinds of members (in this case female members) are marginalised.
The role of women in decision-making positions – The case of the Israeli sport organisations

The executive board and in some cases its employees explained their rejection of the proposal to support women’s volleyball citing a range of different reasons such as the relatively low level of women’s volleyball in Israel. Nevertheless, it is as some interviewees commented - that for many years the IVA invested little effort and only a small percentage of its resources in women’s volleyball and suggested that the IVA board should recognise its part in the level and thus the status of women’s volleyball in Israel. However, the same interviewees also suggested that to some extent, female players had also contributed to the situation of women's volleyball in Israel, lacking determination to demand greater equity. For example, the girl's academy coach of the VAYTG argued:

_As I see it, the problem of women's volleyball discrimination comes from both directions; male key holders but nonetheless, from the girls and women themselves. I don't see a lot of young girls with ambition and motivation to change the situation or to be the best in their area ...women need to come and demand._

(Interviewee #2, p. 2, 2005)

Nevertheless, this ‘blaming’ of women contributes to the continued marginalisation of women's volleyball by the IVA executive board. This approach reflects what Martin (2003) has characterised as a practice that men in such bodies can adopt, believing their actions are not gendered, so that they can "truly deny" (in their view) that they act in a gendered manner during decision-making processes. In that sense, in order to educate a new generation of players from both genders that might one day adopt a different conception of equity, part of the idea of the VAYTG was to help in the construction of a new gender equity policy regarding women’s volleyball that would be implemented from a young age amongst both genders.

According to the interviewees, there was a belief that within the context of the VA, the young athletes would be able to enjoy a better volleyball infrastructure and at the same time, the context of the VA would constitute an equity initiative within the IVA that could challenge and (de)construct the image and status of women’s volleyball in female and male ways of thinking. From my ethnographical point of view, the establishment of the VAYTG was partially based on the perception that by supporting the needs of both genders, it might open a way for young sportswomen to aspire to the top. This idea was also supported by others, for example, the girls' academy coach observed:
I believe that the female players in the VA have already changed...if we want them to be competitive athletes and to aspire to reach for the stars; we have to start at an early age, not more than 13-14... Moreover, since we have joined the VA, I don't think the girls are discriminated against in comparison with the boys/
(Interviewee #2, p.2, 2005)

C. The process of masculinisation

Nevertheless, women are still under-represented on the executive board of the IVA, the dominating gendered discourse being constructed by men for men. This is a possible reason for at least some executive board members to be more appreciative of success when it is related to the men's teams, rather than the women's. This perception might also provide another reason for the under-representation and participation of girls and women in decision-making positions and in competitive sport activity in the IVA.

The processes of rejection of the establishment of the 'Selinger Project, 1999' and the difficulties experienced in the creation of the VAYTG suggest that the board continued to find it hard to accept that gender equity initiatives such as the women's projects should have the same priority as men's projects. This underlines the argument that in order to bring gender equity policy to the organisation, more 'other' (and in this case women's) voices would need to be heard amongst the decision-makers within the IVA (even if not all women necessarily supported equity policies).

As the only female member on the IVA board from 1998 until 2008, I sensed that fear of 'other' in the board, which resulted in my continually feeling the need to prove myself in order to gain respect and acceptance from my male counterparts. This was important if I was to become more influential within the decision-making processes, mainly with regard to women's volleyball. This is evident in the following quotation from my auto-ethnographical account:

I still remember the first meeting, in 1998, in which I participated, still as an observer, when one of the male members asked me to bring the coffee. It was most likely he was joking, but I felt 12 pairs of eyes staring at me and assessing my reaction. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 5, 2004)

Furthermore, in order to be 'accepted' and therefore, as I then believed, influential in the male dominated executive board, I had intentionally adopted some 'agentic'
characteristics which according to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) are masculine, more likely to be ascribed to men than to women, such as assertiveness and independence. This decision was an on-going conflict where I wanted to keep other characteristics, such as co-sensuality and other feminine ascribed characteristics, but I felt that highlighting them would situate myself as the 'other' and therefore, might limit my influence. Another aspect of acceptance by the male board was humour. I realised that humour was one of the key communication tools used in board meetings and would be needed if I were to become influential within its dominant masculine discourse. I found that the male members, or some of them at least, continued to examine my limits, my power and perceptions, this lead me to demonstrated 'agentic' behaviour such as speaking assertively, as illustrated in my auto-ethnographical account:

I stood up and gave a speech for about 10 minutes, about stereotyping women and sport, and ended with a little joke about men. Everybody knew to whom I was referring. This was a very important event and, I assumed later, that the other board members learned to appreciate me more. This may have been because I played by their rules; I showed power, and understood later on that this was one of the unwritten rules that must be followed if one wants to break into the male circle, professionally and socially. (p. 5, 2004)

Another perception regarding the difficulties of being accepted as significant but 'other' with a different set of values was that in order to become an influential 'part' of the male dominated board it might not be enough to work and initiate gender equity policies. Rather it may be necessary to be present and active in different commissions of the board, at different events, meetings and conferences in different parts of the country invariably outside working hours. For example, as a board member, I understood that in order to be appreciated by the male members and therefore, be involved in the informal discussions and in informal decisions-making processes and meetings, I had to start using their language. Moreover I took part in their social events, stayed late in the IVA offices and took part in unofficial activities with the other key actors of the IVA. I sought to clarify the core of the explicit and implicit power relations within the board, since this would be important for me as the only female member if I was to be able to exert influence on the decision-making process and specifically on the implementation of gender equity initiatives. I reflected this in April, 2002 in my auto-ethnographical account:
In order to gain more influence I realized that it would be necessary to be present in many official and unofficial meetings... I participated in meetings held in the parliament (the Israeli Knesset), the N.O.C, and the Volleyball Association. Slowly I managed to break into some social circles, especially through my relationship with two of the influential figures (the General Director of the IVA, who was a former employee of the Israeli Sport Authority and the men's coach) within the politics of sport organisations and especially within the Volleyball Association. (p.7, 2004)

It is clear that for many women (and some men) informal meetings, participating in official events and staying "around" after working hours, may be another possible barrier in access to decision-making positions. However, my experience of adopting the socio-cultural set of values and codes of behaviour, illustrates the powerful discourse of homogeneity that might be said to exist amongst the Executive Board's members. Being the 'other' (i.e. a female holding some different beliefs, ideas and values) can be experienced as an uncomfortable situation, acting as a further barrier:

It was obvious that they were assessing me according to their code of behaviour, and me being the only woman there, gave me a strong feeling of "difference." I felt that it was me against all the rest; they, the 12 other board members, actually looked to me as being one united wall. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 6, 2004)

Moreover, even after a long period of hard work of being involved in direct and indirect discussions, meetings, events and even being part of the policy-making group, one did not necessarily feel oneself to be an integral part of the ‘round table’ in the boardroom of the IVA. The feeling of being the 'other' still exists, and it might not change if women remain marginalised and a significant minority amongst the board's members. However, another interesting insight which arose from my auto-ethnographical account was the realisation that [some] women, when starting their careers, might not wish to be 'like men' or 'one of the boys' on the board. They may wish to bring their own characteristics and set of values into the organisational culture.

I could not say that I was 'one of the guys'. Moreover, I know that I do not want to become one of them. I want to stay myself, with my beliefs and values. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 8, 2004).
To conclude, it is important to emphasise that as long as women continue to be merely a significant minority in the board of the IVA, their voices may be marginalised and their socio-cultural status may implicitly and explicitly be discursively constructed as that of the 'other' in relation to the norm for the male dominated board. These socio-cultural contextual structures of 'otherness' and 'belongingness' in relation to the female members' status reinforce the pressure to adopt the male members' codes of behaviour within the board, with the accompanying adoption of a gendered discourse, privileging masculine hegemony over any other discourse.

It was suggested in this section that in order to promote a project in regard to gender equity in the IVA, it was important to gain more influence amongst the board members and related forces. Furthermore, there was a growing necessity for me as the sole female member to learn how to develop different relationships with each of the members, as well as with the leaders of the different Israeli sporting political bodies (e.g. Hapoel or Maccabi). In addition to the inter-gender relations, it is also necessary to explore the (power) relationships among the male members themselves to try to discover implicit agendas which may exist behind the visible nature of their relationships.

An understanding of power relations within the board is required in order to develop the means of achieving desirable gender equity initiatives or policies which challenge the existing masculine hegemonic discourse of those on the board. Knowledge of the nature of the relationships between each member of the board and of relationships with other key actors is likely to be a prerequisite for developing progressive gender equity policies. Such knowledge is particularly important when the initiator of a project/policy is a female member acting for women's sport.

It was then that I realised that the “Old Boys” network, illustrated by specific humour, language (for example, the use of the term 'us' for male board members and 'you' for describing me) and nonetheless, past connections and relations from the army or the sporting political parties within this environment was very powerful and appeared almost impenetrable for an outsider, especially if that outsider was a female. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 8, 2004)

This might imply that if women wish to make a change, it might be helpful for them to obtain as much information as possible such as knowledge regarding informal relations between other members, where they meet, how they decide their positions, when they
meet informally, what their non-formal obligations are to other people in the organisation. Being part of this information chain might allow the participants to slowly become trusted and respected by other policy makers.

However, for female executive members, this does not necessarily mean becoming part of the dominant masculine environment, only rather it may help them identify the personal relationships within the board, and thereby explore with which members it might be possible to break through the 'glass ceiling' for women in sport organisations. Further to the necessity of having colleagues who share mutual desires, values and beliefs (in this case, regarding the establishment of the VAYTG), I found it helpful to identify who were the key actors within the board, even if they did not share my desire to promote women in sport. By doing so, I had a direct channel to the core of the decision-making process and through these people (key figures within the IVA) I gained more knowledge and might therefore gain more influence on decisions that would later lead to the successful achievement of the goal of establishing the VAYTG. Essentially, these formal and informal power relations, mutual interests and usage of the information chains was explained by the boys' academy coach's perception of the process:

*I think you were at the beginning of your journey [2002, 2 years after I became a board member], and you were on your own, and frankly, we had a mutual interest (as explained earlier in this chapter, he wanted a bigger and stronger project for the boys and it required establishing the VA for girls). Nonetheless, your status was not so strong, so they might have tried to manipulate you, but it came more from the feeling that they wanted to show that they had the power: we will tell you what is what, we know better than... but I think they did it out of lack of knowledge. I believe they did it not against you personally, but because they wanted to show that they had the power and not you.* (Interviewee #1, p. 5, 2005)

The exploration of the relationships and politics amongst the different executive board members was very important and mainly done by mapping and learning the informal relations, such as promises that one member gave to another, and how mutual obligations were formed. Understanding these involved working closely with experienced persons, mainly from the technical staff that guided me through the labyrinth of the power relations within the IVA executive, for example with the technical director of the IVA who stated:
During our chats, I tried to tell you some of the different layers of connections that I thought I was familiar with. I believed that if you knew this you would be able to understand with whom it would be possible to lead a positive decision regarding the VAYTG projects. (Interviewee #4, p. 3, 2005)

Furthermore, I explored the different personal connections and interests through informal meetings with different people in the IVA, also as an influential strategy that might possibly bring about a change in the existing gendered discourse at the IVA. Through exploration of the inner relationships within the executive board I also discovered that in some cases, 'uniformity' is only influential within the boardroom when the male members were sitting all together as a homogenous group. In other words, when I had one-on-one conversations, the different interests, interpersonal relationships, different values and ideas shared by the various executive male members could be detected and therefore I could identify and prepare a 'softer' ground in which to plant ideas or proposals in the decision-making processes. It is thus important to identify and understand the organisational politics and codes of behaviour, which according to this research might be considered as crucial, in order to penetrate the circle of the decision-makers and to gain influence in decision-making processes.

After realising the importance of the non-formal relations within the board, I started to map the members according to different criteria such as political connections, promises they might give before the elections and to whom, what the power relations are... (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.7, 2004)

This approach might suggest that female members who became appreciated, influential and respected when holding decision-making positions would do so as result of adopting a masculine or 'agentic' behaviour to a greater or lesser degree. The implication of this approach is an abandonment of the significance of the feminine values, thus reinforcing the absence of the female voices and images.

This points to another of the barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions, as it appears that [some] women may not wish to be perceived as masculine, and thus might prefer to avoid involvement in decision-making positions in sport organisations, as evidenced in my own experience.
At this juncture, I had to take a decision concerning my values and how far I was willing to go towards achieving my target. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 7, 2004)

To summarise this section it is maybe possible to suggest that in order for some women to hold executive positions, it might be possible to combine different behaviours, some more ascribed to masculine behaviours and others to feminine behaviours. For example, instead of adopting only masculine and 'agentic' characteristics, women could act in a determined way, but nonetheless, remain sympathetic toward others. These realisations led me to uncover other gendered discourses which will be further discussed and analysed in the following section.

D. The discourse of assertiveness

As identified above, it seems that one way to be respected, and to be taken as a serious and professional person by the male-based executive board was to demonstrate an assertive manner of speaking, exhibiting strength and determination during the process of the establishment of the VAYTG. An example which illustrates this point took place in May, 2003 during an important meeting that dealt directly with the question of establishing the Girls’ Academy, the costs and who the leaders of the process were.

After a lengthy meeting, I was shouted at by a senior executive. I stood up and said that I was not prepared to tolerate this kind of behaviour, and left the room... after a while, I received a phone call from the senior executive, asking for my forgiveness. I returned to the board, feeling more confident this time. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.5, 2004)

This action resulted from the on-going need to address the aggressive attitudes from my male counterparts in the organisation which I perceived as denigrating and thereby promoting a non-supportive gendered atmosphere in the closed surroundings within the IVA. Indeed, after I became a board member in 2000, some former female volleyball players wondered why I would subject myself to this kind of behaviour:

My friends, who used to play volleyball with me on the national team, asked me what I was doing there with all the politicians, as they said that they [the male members] would never invest anything in women’s volleyball. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 5, 2004)
Indeed, as already identified in this chapter, some men in executive positions within the IVA did not appear to perceive female colleagues in the same way as they did male colleagues. This manifested itself in a number of ways such as fear of the ‘otherness’, insecurity, or a chauvinistic attitude towards women. However, the consequence of this was expressed as suspicion, perceiving women as lacking a serious and settled approach toward their activities, and as a result a tendency to reject initiatives put forward by female executives, regardless of their relevance to the issues on the agenda.

I therefore adopted a strategy that enabled me to stand up for my beliefs and values on one hand and on the other to be acceptable by my colleagues as a professional and an expert in ‘their’ historically and socio-culturally constructed perspective on this area of expertise. My approach was to be assertive, confident, but nonetheless, aware of the informal relationships I had identified within the IVA executive board. Given the socio-cultural images of the (effective) decision-maker in sport organisations as possessing masculine characteristics, I decided that if I, as a woman, wished to be influential in my organisation and also to maintain my uniqueness on the board as representing a significant minority, I would have to adopt a style which used a gentle dosage of masculine behaviour with some feminine characteristics.

This attitude toward becoming part of the organisational culture was also identified in my auto-ethnographical account relating to a speech I made during a joint meeting of the IVA board and senior representatives from clubs of the first division of the league in May, 2003 on the issue of summarising the first year of the boys' academy, when I received the permission to talk about women’s volleyball:

*At the beginning of my speech, I noticed that many people in the room were not listening; some had left and some were talking amongst themselves. Subsequently, I changed my plan and delivered a speech that started with my own feelings, my dreams that never came true as a player, and asked them to see instead of me, their daughters, wives or sisters. When I was sure that they more or less had focused on me, I started to tell them about our plans.* (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 6, 2004)

It may well be that at least some women in executive positions in sport organisations find themselves continuing to struggle along their path as decision makers, particularly if they wish to maintain their feminine voices. As long as they are perceived by the
male executives as the 'odd ones out' gendered conflict may be maintained, thus militating against the organisation implementing gender equity measures. It seemed to me that the more powerful and influential I became as a woman, the more underlying reality[ies] of the gender struggle became apparent as the respectful limits and informality of debate were rejected, and male responses became more explicit, direct and personal. This is illustrated in the account of the men's coach:

_But you are a woman representing women...so they might have tried to intimidate you if you were doing the same but with men, I don't think they would have tried to do it to you._ (Interviewee #1, p. 5, 2005)

These regular (and what seemed to me to be endless) struggles on gender issues and the on-going need to prove myself as a legitimate board member might imply another barrier to women’s access to decision-making positions. Thus available options to women who confront these stereotyping gendered expressions might be as mentioned above, mixing characteristics as I argued as IVA executive board member, during one the latest meetings regarding the VAYTG in June, 2002.

_At that point, one of the leaders of the Volleyball Association stopped me and started to say that it [what I was saying] was all a big lie... Everybody in the room remained quiet, waiting for my reaction. I could choose to stay quiet, or to answer him...but when I saw the other members’ look in their eyes... I stood up and confronted his claims, supported with facts and he became silent._ (Author’s auto-ethnographic account, p. 7, 2004)

It is worth acknowledging that women’s assertiveness might also lead to a situation where women may find themselves unpopular with some of the members, and to some extent even socially isolated. On the other hand, it is also possible that when a woman behaves in an assertive manner in a male dominated board she may become respected, accepted and in that sense, her voice will be heard on the executive board and may be more influential on the discursively constructed contexts within the organisation. I describe this process in an incident referred to in my auto-ethnographical account concerning the establishment of the VAYTG during one of the Board meetings in June, 2002:
I knew I had gained an enemy, but I did not know what would happen with the other members. However, I felt happy that I had confronted him, and had stood up for my values. Later on, I received many phone calls from people who had witnessed the incident. Some said that it was very good; some said that I should not have left the room, but all of them were supportive. (p.7, 2004)

Within the IVA, I had recognized at that point that if I wanted to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation, I would have to gain more support both for myself and for the issue of gender equity which I aimed to promote and represent. Evidently, in addition to acting assertively, gaining more support even from influential outsiders to the board (for example, club presidents and members, head coaches and members of national sporting organisations) might help me become an influential figure within decision-making processes, and help to put the issue of gender equity on the organisation's agenda. I noted, for example, in relation to an incident in which I was confronted directly by one of the more powerful members of the IVA during a formal meeting in June, 2002:

I believe that this meeting was the most important point of the process, firstly because the discussion was now not just constrained to the board room but was somewhat within the public domain. Secondly, people realized that I was not a 'toy' that was there for decorative purposes. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 7, 2004)

Assertiveness, which has been identified as an important tactic adopted to achieve influence as a woman on a male-dominated board, may be associated with the assimilation of a wider range of masculine behaviours. This process of assimilation may engender a more fundamental 'masculinisation' of female members.

In this case study I perceived that although I found it possible to achieve some goals by behaving in accordance with my values that were more ascribed to feminine behaviour (sensitivity, sympathetic, consensual and affectionate), accompanied by some characteristics more often ascribed to masculinity (independence, assertiveness, influencing others) this did not mean that I became an integral part of the 'round table'.

In that sense, both approaches ('masculinisation' or 'otherness') might have negative consequences either remaining an isolated outsider, or becoming part of the dominant
network of male members, and thus risking a certain loss of the unique female voice. This unpalatable choice may reinforce the hesitation of women to seek to access to decision making positions in sport organisations. In my own case,

*I came to a decision to become part of the male network, without giving up on my values. This was based on the fact that there seemed no way to win the fight when there was only one woman within the association.* (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.8, 2004)

This decision, however, required self-awareness and discipline in order to manage myself within the board, and it has been perceived by some interviewees as having strengthened my position there, as suggested by the VAYTG coach:

*When I started the job, you were already there (on the NF board)...you took care of us... distanced us from politics...it was and still is a kind of safety net for those who are dealing with women's volleyball.* (Interviewee #2, p. 5, 2005)

I found that being assertive within the male-dominated executive board represented one option available to [some] women in overcoming different obstacles, gendered or otherwise. However, without the vision (of knowing what we wanted to achieve) and passion (the strength of feeling and commitment) to lead this project to its successful conclusion, it would probably not have been possible to do so.

E. "No Pain, No Gain" - finalising the project

Around April, 2003, people began to realise that this project could be established. When the board needed to come to a concrete decision regarding the VAYTG, some interesting discourse arose that explicitly and sometimes implicitly aimed to delegitimise the project. For example, some people on the board related the project to me personally, and did not see it as an initiative of the IVA, as appears from the girls' coach:

*I knew that any problem I’d come across, I have somebody to go to. I'm not sure I could carry on in this kind of project otherwise. Like if they had sent us some member of the board (like they did) without the commitment you had as a "life project" I'm not sure the whole project would have survived.* (Interviewee #2, p.3, 2005)
Nonetheless, within the Volleyball Association, many members seemed to start to realise that the VAYTG was going to be quite expensive (though less expensive than for the boys), which might mean less money becoming available for men’s volleyball and related activities and positions. Such a perspective is demonstrated in the account of the men’s coach:

*The other barrier was the Ministry of Sport, they have never invested that amount of money in team sport, and therefore it caused many budgeting problems. Regarding the girls' project specifically, the message was that if we add them to the project it will reduce the amount of money the boys have. Actually, that is what happened in the first stage because the budgets stayed almost the same and they didn't double the budget when the girls entered the academy.* (Interviewee #1, p.2, 2005)

In order for the project to be successfully implemented, I realised that I would need to be in contact with the core group of key actors who would finally take the decision on the IVA. In this case the project could be kept alive, even when the atmosphere within the executive board and the IVA’s commissions was negative. An explanation might be found in that the directors of the IVA - the Chairman, the General Director, and some board members were, in this case, on 'my' side, and it might be that a socio-cultural tendency to uniformity led some other IVA members to follow them eventually.

However, it is important to understand that I, as a female member, was expected to continue to play according to the cultural rules of the male-dominated board. In this case, the unwritten rule was 'you get some, you give some'. In other words I was asked to give back something to the key actors who promised to 'help' establish the VAYTG. It is worth acknowledging that I was asked to give up on an important issue related to gender equity which to some extent meant for me conceding on my value position in order to achieve the main aim.

*An offer from one of the most influential figures within the Volleyball Association had been raised in May 2003, “in order to find a way to continue the processes”. He suggested postponing all other activities of women's national teams for the following two years, with the exception of the VAYTG, to make this project a reality.*
This suggestion was the “Catch 22” of the project... It was presented as this, or nothing, and as the only one who really wanted it to happen was me, I needed to take this unfair decision by myself. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.9)

This, perhaps more than many other aspects, illustrates the implicit discourse where women's volleyball was not considered a ‘natural’ part of the IVA’s concerns. It was not a case of Israeli Volleyball gaining something (the VAYTG) but something else must be conceded in the process, but rather that if Women’s Volleyball is to gain something, other things must be sacrificed. However, in order to justify this move, I had to believe that without it, the VAYTG would never be approved. Furthermore, the reader might realise that according to the perceptions of the interviewees of this act, they (the male members) precipitated this "Catch 22" situation because they did not actually want any expensive prestigious project for women. As one of the leading male coaches explained:

_The requirement to stop any other women’s activity was because they didn't want the project for women, and they tried to do whatever they could to eliminate the project._ (Interviewee #1, p. 5, 2005)

Or as the girls' coach agreed:

_In that matter I agree, I remember also as a player, that women's volleyball was always considered second place to the men's volleyball._ (Interviewee #2, p.2, 2005)

To some extent, looking back, I can assume that they gave me this proposition as a test to see how far I was willing to go. In this case, the idea of postponement of any other activity for the women’s national teams for a relatively short period of time, although seemingly inappropriate from my point of view at that time, was preferable to giving up on the VAYTG project, since the project had the long term potential to positively and significantly change Israeli Women’s Volleyball for the future.

_I took into account that once I had made the project work, I might also have enough time and energy to deal with looking for ways to activate the other women’s national team initiatives, the Selinger Project being the first of them. Moreover, I thought that by then I would be in a better position to influence the budget and by so doing, I would be able to change the proportions between men_
and women. The VA was supposed to be the first step toward that target. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.9, 2004)

In the end, this long term view paid off. Confirmation can be found in the comments of the coach of the girl's VA on my decision to give up any other activities for women's and girl's national teams:

Since we have joined the VA, I don't think the girls are discriminated against, in comparison with the boys...during the last two years I feel good vibes from some board members and other key stakeholders. (Interviewee #2, p. 3, 2005)

During this long process of the establishment of the VAYTG I had connections with different parties who often supported me and my struggle from outside the board even though they sometimes disagreed with my decisions, such as the one described above. These connections were mainly with females who held key positions in other Israeli sport organisations. These relationships I describe as a 'sisterhood'.

G. The discourse of sisterhood

In addition to the official and unofficial actions within the IVA, I developed some other informal contacts with women who were willing to help. Perhaps the most significant of these was with a specific woman within the Ministry of Culture and Sport. Others included leading figures in the Wingate Institute and within the Israeli Women’s Sport Foundation. These connections were, in this case, highly influential for the development of the project, mainly on the male-dominated board of the Volleyball Association and on the male-dominated board of the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

It was something new, and for them [IVA members], dealing with a “women’s network” was clearly a new experience. That was a winning point at the creativity stage. Furthermore, it looked as though the women’s network had demonstrated power, something these men were familiar with, and it was therefore more acceptable for them to vote for a women’s project. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.10, 2004)

In this case, the network created helped me to become influential in the male-dominated environment, and one of its important functions was simply letting me feel that I was not alone in this struggle. In addition, it helped me understand the informal relations of
‘outsiders’ with the board and other sporting organisations. Furthermore, the ‘outsiders’ unconsciously provided mentoring guidance for me, in the form of an experienced figure within the sporting arena.

I also used the informal connections with the various females, who were all in key positions in other national organisations, in order to gain more 'inside' information, regarding the different perceptions of key persons in their own organisations in relation to the VAYTG.

However, within this network I also had conflicts that were based to some extent on the differences of the feminist lenses of each one of us. For example, some of the other members of the network, mainly members of the Israeli Women Sport Foundation, although supportive of the idea of the VAYTG, could nevertheless not accept or understand my willingness to postpone all other women’s volleyball activities at the national level. In particular the Chairwoman and the General Director of the Foundation were upset with my decision to accept this offer.

When I asked the female members of the Israeli Women Sport Foundation for their opinion (regarding the postponing of other female activity) they were immediately against it. They said I should not do that, saying that it was not worth it. I was confused, and tried to explain the rationale for the long term, but they still stuck to their opinion, and even said that they would end their support for the establishment of the VAYTG and in some ways, for me. It meant they would not support me. (Author's auto-ethnographical account, p.9, 2004)

In this situation, one explanation for that response could be that it was a wrong decision according to their own values and was not consistent with the Foundation's aims.

However, another interpretation might be that they saw me as a young woman with no experience in terms of the struggle for equity who was trying to go in a direction that ran counter to their own approach. Whatever the reason, they decided to take a step back and subsequently were no longer closely involved in the project.

However, finally, after several more meetings, and with the involvement of the formal representative of the Ministry of Sport led by one of the female members of my network who supported the idea of gender equity, the decision was taken to locate the VAYTG
in the Wingate Institute, along with the boy's VA. In September, 2003, the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls finally became operational.

4.10 Concluding insights

The idea behind the VAYTG was that, for the first time in the history of Israeli women’s volleyball, a national team for girls and a national team for boys would be open to the same treatment, resources and conditions according to their specific needs. The role that I as the only female member took in this process was central to the development of this project (not simply in my own view but also in the views expressed by the four male interviewees.

That role was seen by me and others as essential to the achievement of the successful execution of the project since I was the sole female and the sole active proponent of the project. It is reasonable to assume that without a female on the board, the situation of women's volleyball in the IVA would have continued to be neglected. However, although the material (conditions, resources) situation has improved with the opening of the VAYTG, the promotion of a discourse of gender equity still has a long way to go.

I learnt that if women want to influence decision-making and to be considered a significant force in the decision-making process, they will need to gain influence and to do so they will need to understand the power relations within the organisational context. In outlining the case of the process of the establishment of the VAYTG I have attempted to explore the unwritten rules and underline the 'realities' of the organisation. As I was in a minority on the board, I quickly reached the view that in order to change the existing gendered discourse I had to play by the "rules of the game" of the male-dominated board.

However, in order to maintain my difference as a female voice, I tried at the same time to maintain a self-identity and values, and by dedication, assertiveness and persistence, I went about (de)constructing (and actively reconstructing) the gendered discourse and barriers within the organisation. In my auto-ethnographical account and during the analysis of the interviewees' transcripts, I sought to explore whether the process of gaining power over someone else, might lead to the neglect of the interests one is trying to represent.
To avoid being steered into an unwelcome environment in the volleyball arena I tried to keep in my sights the target I was struggling to achieve and the reasons for it. It sometimes takes generations to supplant gendered discourse and to open up new opportunities for women, allowing their voices to be heard and granting them equitable opportunities in relation to their male counterparts. In many cases, this is because some men tend to perceive women as threatening outsiders, and thus try to keep them away from the nerve-centre of the decision-making process. Dr. Selinger adopted this argument with regard to the failure of the 1999 Selinger Project:

*Running an initiative on a women’s project, that was produced by women, without men around, had left an impression that the men on the board did not want it, and therefore, they probably did anything they could to destroy it... men who have been working in the same place for many years, without producing any real achievements and suddenly a new person arrives on the scene; of course they will try to destroy his/her ideas.* (Interviewee #3, p.2-3, 2005)

Furthermore, I identified that [some] men on the executive board of the IVA attempted to maintain distance from the project, because it was identified with women’s volleyball. This might be explained by fear of changes in the existing order, as can be appreciated from the following explanation of one of the leading figures in the IVA technical staff and a leading coach, of the tendency of the IVA to avoid investing in women's volleyball:

*Another reason not to invest in women’s sport is the lack of women in decision-making positions ..., men tend to support men’s sport, so it represents a revolutionary way of thinking.* (Interviewee #1, p. 3, 2005)

These explanations suggest that the existing hegemonic masculine discourse within the male-based board contextually constructs the various realities, making it difficult to establish cooperation with other male members of the board regarding women’s issues. One option for women in this position is to find a way to form some kind of women's network in order to support one another. Nevertheless, it was evidently crucial for me to understand the surroundings and the power relations and map the contexts of which I was part, in order to find the place and manner in which to make my specific voice, values and perceptions understood and effective in bringing about significant change to my organisation. In other words, I found that if I wanted to deconstruct the context of
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hegemonic masculinity within the IVA, I would have to preserve my beliefs and values in order to prevent assimilation into the existing hegemonic discourse on the IVA.

However, according to the preceding narrative, it might be that although the presence of a woman within the decision-making position was central to the success of this project, for lasting achievements in regard to changing ways of thinking and organisational strategy and structures, considerable further progress was still required. The need for more women in particular and more voices of 'others' in general, within the organisation’s decision-making circle is evident from this case study.

In other words, in order to reframe the conceptions of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations, it will be important to promote women who have the ability, skills and willingness to be effective in such positions. As stated in the words of the girl's academy coach:

*In the IVA, all the managerial staff are men (except you). I'm sure that there is room for more women...but not only because they are women, they also have to be skilful.* (Interviewee #2, p.4, 2005)

Admitting more women to be part of the decision-making circles might help with the promotion of a discourse of gender equity. As was evident in observations by some of the interviewees, female volleyball players within the IVA are to some extent, perceived by the male-based executive board, as non-combative and non-ambitious, and therefore unlikely to achieve.

*Nowadays, the image of women is that they are not serious enough...and therefore they [the board] are afraid that investing money in them means losing the money.* (Interviewee #2, p.5, 2005)

Furthermore, the technical director of the IVA and the boy's academy coach carried this type of explanation even further:

*In my opinion, female athletes don’t want enough; they want us to invest in them, but then they don’t want to push; they don’t believe in themselves; with men it is not the same.* (Interviewee #1, p. 4, 2005)

In this quote we have a clear imputation of the inferiority of female athletes, not by virtue of biological difference but by reference to the level of their commitment. This
might be considered as one of the main barriers to women’s access to decision-making as to some extent it leaves a thin line between the polar opposition of how to 'play the game' (implying complete assimilation of the masculine behaviour, feminine behaviour or other) thus, it is a subjective judgement for each woman to make, to decide where that limit is, and how far she is willing to go.

In effect, in order to reconstruct the discourse of equity, one needs to avoid compromising one’s own identity and values on one hand, while, on the other hand, avoiding the danger of a complete assimilation in terms of adopting the existing rules that have been constructed by men, for men. It sometimes means that, until the hegemonic discourse can be replaced, one (women or any 'other' to a certain masculine discourse) will find oneself out of the 'game'. As stressed by one of the leading females in the National Project for Women and Sport during informal conversation:

> I have been working for the development of women and sport in Israel for many years, but often I'm so disappointed with my fellow women who, instead of maintaining their ability to work together, to be more sympathetic, protective of women's rights etc., become frustrated and leave. Those who remain often become mannish, seeing things in one dimension – their way; while those who become leaders often kick aside their female fellow groups. It must change, otherwise men need only to stand aside and laugh their way to the board...they help themselves (Nir-Toor, April, 2009).

### 4.11 Conclusions

The chapter has largely dealt with the discursively constructed barriers that women meet when they are holding a key position in sport organisations. By using my own experience / perspective as the only woman on the IVA Board, I reviewed the process of the establishment of the VAYTG, a unique project for young female volleyball players. The data were selected and reflected from my auto-ethnographical account and were complemented in this chapter by four male interviewees' accounts.

Let me address here the issue that all of them ultimately seemed to support the establishment of the VAYTG, and thus were superficially, at least, supporting my position. It is worth reiterating at this point that the interviews I conducted were all
open-ended, as I sought to offer the interviewees space to express themselves, their perspectives, their beliefs and explanations of specific events. During the interviews, efforts were made to ensure that interviewees would not be led.

The four additional key informants were selected because of the privileged access/perspectives which their roles afforded. Although not members of the IVA Board they were senior and influential figures who took part in the establishment of the VAYTG.

It is worth noting at this stage that attempts to recruit interviewees who opposed the establishment of the VAYTG, and whose views were most obviously diametrically opposed to mine in relation to the girls’ volleyball project, were unsuccessful. This was for some individuals still a sensitive issue.

Nevertheless, although it was not possible to interview key figures who opposed the VAYTG project, and although all four of my male interviewees were eventually in favour of it, they looked at it from different points of view in which they demonstrated approaches which might be construed as non-feminist, even sexist, and reflective of a discourse of hegemonic masculinity. For example, the female’s coach (Interviewee #2) at the academy presented his perspective in ways that surprised me and were clearly at odds with my own account in relation to the reasons for establishing the male academy before the female academy.

*I don’t feel the attitude for the girls is discriminatory in relation to that for the boys, and even when it is, it is not always just the males’ fault, and I don’t see so many girls who are really motivated.* (Interviewee #2, p.3, 2005)

This realisation had led me to an understanding that some discourses of inequities may be deeply embedded, with this interviewee engaging in what might be described as ‘victim blaming’, implying that discrimination does not really exist, and that if it does, it is often the fault of the girls because of their lack of motivation.

Thus by exploring the perspectives of male interviewees who do support the project we may nevertheless identify negative discourses which militate against equity.

Moreover, when analysing Dr. Selinger’s account (Interviewee #3) for example, it is possible to see that he focused his rationale for the establishment of the VAYTG, or the Selinger Project for women, on the greater possibility for playing success that the
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women’s team may afford, and furthermore, in many of his expressions during the interview, he used terms that may be considered to reinforce a discourse of sexism.

I preferred to make the project for women, because, it has more potential for success at an international level...nonetheless it is cheaper to do it with women, salaries are less expensive in relation to men. (Interviewee #3, p.1, 2005)

And he continues:

I believe that women are freer to devote themselves. Men have financial issues, studies. (Interviewee #3, p.1, 2005)

Nevertheless, the account of the male coach at the Academy (Interviewee #1), although ostensibly in favour of the VAYTG, emphasises seeking to strengthen and privilege the boy's project at the academy. This interviewee seemed to believe that the girl's project would further enhance the boy's project, and thus, though he supported the VAYTG, he did not aspire to gender equity per se.

I have seen in my mind the project of the Volleyball Academy on an equal basis, because it would be better for the boys...

And he continues:

In general I think that the meaning of establishing the VAYTG alongside of the VAYTB, was even a bigger issue than just a gender issue.... In all projects from this kind there are ups and downs and there are always people that understand things late and in different stages, they are trying to change the project and that is why it was important to establish a bigger and more stable organisation. (Interviewee #1, p.1, 2005)

The above reflect inconsistencies with my account and such linguistic representations present discursive constructions which could reinforce barriers that women in decision-making positions might encounter. Moreover, to some extent such discourses may be even more powerful, when they reveal who is seen as in favour of advancing women’s sport in the form of the VAYTG project.

To conclude, the presence of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for promoting and developing sport in
general, and women’s sport specifically. Women can contribute from their experience, knowledge and understanding as embedded within their point of views. The process, however, is not easy, particularly in the climate of Israeli sport, as there are many barriers from the stage of recruitment to becoming a decision-maker. Analysis of the transcripts of the interviews (including my auto-ethnographical account) provides insights into the possible ways women may assume managerial positions, and moreover, reach high and influential positions within the organisation, but also suggests some of the drawbacks which may be encountered. There needs to be an acknowledgement that although the IOC, some NOCs and some IFs, have accepted that the minimum targets for 2005 should be 20% female membership of their boards and though many countries, Israel among them, have legislation regarding women’s representation on the boards of their sport organisations, inequalities and barriers to progress still exist.

The existing gendered discourses in the IVA both reflect and ensure the fact that equity is not being achieved. It was evident, for example, that the IVA Board was not willing to accept me as a woman into its inner circle. What, then, are the lessons to be learned from this case for practical action on the part of women? Below I identify three factors which would need to be taken into account before entering a sport organisation, for women to become influential within the decision-making processes.

1. Women may need to be persistent and dedicated to their missions. However, women may be aware that they could find themselves excluded from important ‘nerve points’ of decision-making positions. Many will hear the same chauvinistic jokes, and will have to make a decision of whether to laugh or not. Unfortunately, women still confront many of the symptoms that evolve from the discourse of masculine hegemony and therefore, their dedication is a very important characteristic.

2. Discourse that might be helpful for different women who want to enter the sport managerial arena, is the discourse of the sisterhood. As described in this chapter, in my account it showed that when women collaborated in facing a mutually demanding objective in the creative stage, they managed to achieve that objective.

3. The third step is arguing that women might need to assimilate the equity discourse by themselves, and need to live in accordance with their beliefs,
values and words. Women will then contribute their unique characteristics to the organisation, no matter whether female- or male-based or as preferred and suggested in this research, representing dual-gender based values in the organisation.

In the next Chapter I will discuss the case of the establishment of the National Project for Women and Sport in Israel, which takes the questions we discussed in this chapter regarding the barriers to women’s access to decision-making positions one step further by looking at a national level project created and directed by women for women.
Chapter Five - The Creation of the NPWS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt to explore dominant gendered discourses that are evident in interviewees’ perspectives in regards to the role of women in decision-making positions in the creation of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS) within the Israeli sport arena. It aims to reveal how these discourses and/or their subtexts may reinforce the skewed ratio that excludes many women from decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations, but moreover, demonstrates how these dominant discourses are reflected in a women-centred organisation such as the NPWS.

It is important to realise that data in the literature (e.g. Collinson and Hearn, 1996) show that senior managerial positions in sport organisations are not constituted by a single discourse or by unitary configuration of practices and furthermore, some of the discourse in evidence will be similar to that attributed to managerial work in general. According to Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008), an understanding of these texts and subtexts might be utilised to challenge, modify or disrupt those discourses, and subsequently, the gendered nature of the organisational culture.

In that sense, it is worth acknowledging that managerial work has changed a great deal since the beginning of the twentieth century. These changes, according to Acosta and Carpenter (2006), include an increasing emphasis on the need for managers to possess and utilise good communications and interpersonal skills. These changes have often been associated with the feminisation of management, with the creation of more women-friendly organisational cultures and managerial styles, and the necessity to employ more women managers. Such changes have, however, come about primarily at the middle management level where most women managers are located. Senior managerial work in most organisations, including in the field sport, is still primarily a male domain (Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2008).

In this research, I therefore argue that the historical socio-cultural context, within which there is a lack of women athletes and the almost complete absence of women in
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decision-making positions at any level of sport organisations in Israel, might have been construed as a set of affairs that does not necessarily reflect full transparency and comprehension for women nowadays. In the next section, I will focus on the conceptualisation of the NPWS as a gender equity policy in place in Israel since 2005, designed to challenge the existing situation where women’s sport and women in sport, found themselves marginalised at all levels of management and competition.

5.2. Rationale for the selected case study

In order to explore the research questions, the NPWS (National Project for Women and Sport), was chosen as a case study as both a product of and a site of the discourse on women and sport in Israel at the national level. This case study analyses the explanations, experiences and narratives of key figures that took part in the establishment of the NPWS, and is used to make sense of the reproduction by key actors of the gender equity policies within women’s sport in Israel. The case study aims to examine the reproduction of discourses and how these policy discourses define and reflect the gendered nature of sport policy and equity policy in the Israeli context. Furthermore, the case study allows us to explore the barriers women encounter on their way to decision-making positions in the Israeli context, and the place, influence and impact of women in decision-making positions in the process of attempts to change the existing situation in the Israeli context.

In order to explore the above, the researcher will use women's and men's experiences, explanations and narratives regarding processes that led to the establishment of the NPWS, a national level project to establish a female-based organisation, as well as documentary sources which highlight or critique the ‘official’ positions adopted within given organisations / institutions, and in particular the NPWS. My intention is to understand the interviewees’ interpretations of their gendered self–knowledge, and of their roles as gatekeeper position-holders in what is the largest ever national project for women and sport in Israel. In addition the case study will seek to explain the extent of the women’s contribution to policy and impact on the policy-makers, in order to explain the significance of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations.
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The case study seeks to explore women’s roles during the process, their managerial style and their variety of feminist approaches. The subsidiary research questions adopted and outlined in the methodology chapter are as follows:

- What can analysis of the gendered discourse in the two case studies tell us about the dominant discourse in Israeli sport?
- What is the place, influence and the extent of the impact of women in key positions on the decision-making processes relating to the two case studies as defined in the discourse of key actors?
- What is the range of explanations of gender equity policy among male and female interviewees?

In order to address those issues, 12 further interviews were held: ten with women and two with men. Four of the female interviewees were interviewed twice; in 2005 and later on in 2008, in order to achieve an in-depth analysis of the barriers, and their role in the context of the construction of the NPWS. The first set of interviews took place in 2005, a few months after the official inauguration of the NPWS. The National Council members and its chairwoman had been nominated, and there was a feeling in the air that Israeli sport was heading toward a new era, as can be learnt from the following statement:

*The fact is that today, with a female Minister (in 2005), we face a new era; we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

However, it seemed that after the initial euphoria and celebration by the pioneering group of women regarding the declaration of the inauguration of the project, some months passed by, and despite the Minister’s declaration on national television of her success in changing the whole nature of the relationship between women and sport in Israel, progress seemed to have been limited.

The female interviewees described their interpretations of this unclear situation, since the hegemonic masculinity that had traditionally marginalised women in the sport arena, had changed very little. For example, men in executive positions in national
organisations seemed to be not doing anything to improve equity in their own organisations. As argued by one of the key figures in the leading group:

_Throughout the years they [the Ministry of Sport] has declared that we should give more money to women’s sport, but they never actually did so, but when the NPWS could became a reality, they pushed me aside and they didn’t even involve me in anything, again I felt as if I was there as a decoration._

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

As the approach described here seems to reflect, there was a reluctance to let the pioneering group of women led by a senior female figure from the Ministry of Sport be the leading actors steering this project. Although this was a women’s project aimed at empowering women, the male officers involved displayed a reluctance to relinquish control over the decision-making process, particularly in relation to the allocation of financing.

They demonstrated their dominance by raising all kind of difficulties during the process of the establishment of the NPWS, as can be realised from the following figures of the former Head of the Sport Authorities in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

_The female Minister did something huge here ...I'm not sure she understands what she did...10 million shekels per year...but I saw it was not going through the right directions, and I said NO!_ (Interviewee #11, male former executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, P.3, 11/2005)

By the time the (2005) interviews took place, the former head of the sport authorities in the Ministry of Culture and Sport (Interviewee #11) together with his board, had managed to cause the leading group of the NPWS lots of frustration in their work. It was a few months after the official inauguration in 2005 when the project had still not yet started and more than two years after they had started to work on it. The women in the leading group were still not being paid for the work they been asked to do by the Ministry itself in order to prepare the ground for the different federations that were supposed to participate in the project. This frustration was illustrated in the following claim of one of the women from the leading group, at her later interview:
The Ministry of Sport caused so many problems in order for the project to stop, I was with 2.5 legs outside of the project; they even managed to hurt me financially and personally. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 1, 10/ 2008)

At this point in late 2005, these women were at a crossroads. They questioned how and whether the struggle should continue and why and for whom this struggle was taking place. As described by one key figure in the leading group:

*It is tribal even when a Minister talked and decided about this issue (women in sport) and the money for that, nothing happened... 4 years later we still can't activate the money.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

As new elections for the Knesset were just around the corner, there was uncertainty over whether the same Minister would continue in office (she was, indeed, not subsequently reappointed). As a result, interviewees were concerned about who might continue to lead the project through to implementation, as for example, the director of the NPWS stated:

*It was an unknown situation, we did not know who would take charge of the project...we were lucky that there was already the Public Council, which gave us some power to continue, otherwise, I think the project could had stayed a dream.* (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.1, 4/2008)

The second set of interviews took place in 2008, a few months after the NPWS had started its work. These interviews aimed to analyse the discourses that might remain or had changed during the three years that had passed from the day of the official inauguration by the former Sports Minister until December 2007 and early 2008 when the different National Organisations (Elite Sport Unit, NFs, School Sport Federation) had accomplished the requirements for participating in the project (e.g. appropriate representation on their boards, establishing of women’s commissions, with a woman as chairperson; recruitment of a female as coordinator for the local project etc.), and the first cash payment was transferred from the Sports Betting Council to the National Council of the NPWS.
Studying the context of the NPWS construction process, through interviews with key actors (male and female), was intended to enhance our understanding of the interviewees’ discourses about this process, reflecting on the different perspectives and experiences of women (and some men) in decision-making positions in certain Israeli sport organisations. Furthermore, this set of interviews, sought to explore the on-going understandings of the conflicts, barriers and roles of those female and male interviewees through an in-depth discussion of the qualities that those women had manifested during the process; their devotion and passion. As described by one of the leading women of the project:

*It is persistence and consistency that brought us to the starting point of the NP. We probably had to understand the internal politics...with whom can I cooperate to reduce disagreements.* (Interviewee #3, female, executive in the leading group, p.1, 4/2008)

Or as also illustrated in her earlier interview:

*I'm doing it, first of all, out of a great love for sport, and furthermore out of a belief.* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.2, 9/2005)

An interesting case occurred, when in mid-2007 the female director of the leading group wished to apply for a senior position in the Ministry of Sport and the female executive at the Ministry (Interviewee #1), also a member in the leading group of the NPWS had not supported her. This was a milestone for the leading group. In this case, women were perceived as willing to implement and adopt the notion of a ‘sisterhood’. However, once the struggle for the construction of the project had ended, and there was an organisation to manage and lead, the connections between the members of the female leading group were manifestly weaker.

As one of the leading group of women remarked:

*The agenda of female solidarity dispersed because of what the women there did behind each other's backs, especially the leading figure...*(Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.4, 4/2008)

Two other dominant themes were raised during the interviews. The first of these was a desire to change the existing situation of the male hegemony, which mainly the
female interviewees argued might be possible through the establishment of the national project for women and sport (NPWS). They seemed to believe that the project would raise the number of women in decision-making positions, and would also give greater focus in term of governmental support to women's sports, as may be illustrated in the words of the female director of NPWS:

For me the project's aim is to change the marginalisation of women's sport in Israel, through financial aspects, communication coverage, amount of women's involvement in all levels of competition, but mainly in terms of athletes and directors. (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.4, 9/2005)

The second theme to emerge was a denial of the existence of any homogeneity / solidarity within the female leading group of the project (which was manifest in the exclusion of the 'other', female or male, from the executive group). The group members were all women with certain similar beliefs and shared values. There was an unwritten decision that by definition, the group would not include men and that all the employees of the project would be women, even though this might lead to some obstacles, objections and disagreements from the Ministry of Sport, NOC and the national federations. As maybe reflected in the following comments of one of the leading women on the NPWS:

I believed that we needed to build some kind of sisterhood, but not like men sometimes have; I think therefore, that we were more inclusive toward other's opinions. Although we were all females there, we had different points of view and I think we represented a wide range of sports and females within sport in Israel. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.3, 10/2005)

This issue is discussed more broadly later in this chapter. The later interviews are intended to reveal the characteristics of the interviewees’ managerial styles in regard to gender approaches to leadership, and to identify the nature of relevant discourses in this female-based sport organisation. The next section will present the interviewees, and describe their backgrounds, positions, and the extent of their involvement with the NPWS.
5.3 The interviewees

The rationale for choosing these interviewees was based on career positions and relationships to the NPWS.

**Interviewee #1 – a female executive in the Ministry of Sport**, working as the director of the Women and Sport Department in the Ministry. She was the main member of the leading group of the NPWS, since its inception in 2003, and had established the leading group by collecting together a number of her friends who had been involved with gender equity issues. This interviewee was nominated by the Minister to lead the establishment and direction of the NPWS project. She was born on a kibbutz and was now in her mid-50s and was a former Olympian, who had participated in two Olympic Games as a swimmer. She had a B.Ed in Physical Education and a Master's degree in Sports Management; she had worked for many years as a hydrotherapist for wounded soldiers, until she took up her Ministry position which she held for 15 years. She had three children and was married for some 30 years before divorcing shortly before the interviews took place. This interviewee was the founder of the project (Nir-Toor, 2003), and in a way it was virtually her ‘fourth baby’. She was involved (and still is at the time of writing) in all the stages of this project, big or small. She recruited all the women in the pioneering group. (The interviews with this candidate took place in September, 2005 and in April, 2008).

**Interviewee #2 – a female executive in the NPWS**: this interviewee was a central member of the leading group of the project, from its inception in 2003 and was involved in all the meetings and struggles surrounding the establishment of the project, contributing to all the written drafts of the project before their submission to the Ministry for final approval. It was indicated by the female executive from the Ministry (personal communication from interviewee # 1 September, 2005), that this woman would become the salaried General Director of the executive unit that would lead the project upon its establishment. She was in her mid-50s, and a single mother of two children. She was a former basketball player in the first division and also a national team player and captain of the team. Interviewee #2 had gained a full study scholarship at one of the leading universities in the USA, and was witness to the changes that took place in the
USA as a result of the introduction of 'Title IX', which dealt with women’s representation and participation at all levels of national sport in the USA. Upon her retirement from active play, she became part of the leading group called, ‘Lachen’ (an NGO that fought for equity for women in basketball). After ending her active sporting career, she continued her studies and was recruited by a major company dealing with high-tech and had worked there for about 20 years. A few years later she was asked to become involved again in the sports arena as a volunteer and she subsequently became chairwoman of a top level basketball team in the First Division and a member of the Israeli National Basketball Federation for two terms of office. (The interviews with interviewee #2 took place in September, 2005 and April, 2008).

**Interviewee #3 – a female executive in the NPWS:** a single woman in her mid-30s thirties at the time of interview, she joined the pioneering group in late 2004 after the programme had already been more or less structured, a short time before the official inauguration. She joined at a stage when permission had been granted for three of the women in the group to receive temporary nomination as paid advisors to the Director of the Women and Sport Department in the Ministry of Sport (interviewee #1). She then graduated as medical practitioner and held a position as TV broadcaster on the Israeli Sport Channel, a position that she continues to hold at the time of writing. In the past, she had been a basketball player and was coaching in the second division of Israeli Women’s Basketball League. She had joined the team as a paid functionary, since it was her view that if women want to make a change, they should not act as volunteers, because as such their contribution would be devalued, and male hegemony would remain unchallenged. As she claimed at her interview in relation to her decision to be part of the project:

> Advancing women is most important, and here I found a subject that I care about and nonetheless, I can earn money from it. (Interviewee #3, p.2, 10/2005)

Later on, around 2006, this woman left the leading group since the Ministry of Sport had ceased paying the three female advisors but then returned in 2007, just when the project had reached its turning point and the bid for the activation of the
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project was about to be published. Together with Interviewee # 2, she was responsible for the executive unit that managed the project in its first two years (mid-2007 to mid-2009). (Interviews with this respondent took place in October 2005 and April, 2008).

**Interviewee #4 – a female executive in the NPWS**: this woman joined the project at the end of 2005. She was a former top-level athlete, and once ranked in the world Top 10 in her sport. She was in her early 40s and single. She served in the army for many years and was the first woman to become the chief of the IDF School for Snipers. After a long absence from the sports arena, she was approached by an opposition group of people in her sport who wanted to change the political structure of the sports’ NF. This group succeeded in its mission for her to become a NF board member. In her interview, she claimed that she was not a feminist:

> From a feminist point of view, well I'm not a feminist; I mean I love it when they [men] open the door. (Interviewee #4, female, p.12, 10/2005)

Furthermore, she adopted a ‘non-feminist’ position (Henry, 2001) claiming that she had never suffered because she was a woman and she believed that if one was good at what one did one would succeed, no matter the gender, as evidenced in her interview:

> I entered the board based on my abilities and regardless of the fact that I'm a woman. (p. 15, 10/ 2005)

She worked for the project up to the second half of 2007, a few months before the project started. One reason for her not continuing may be that the bid on the activation of the project involved the recruitment of only two full-time jobs as executives, and a part-time job as secretary. There were a number of disagreements between her and interviewee #2, who held the position of General Director of the project. (Interview took place in October, 2005)

**Interviewee #5 – a female executive (auto-ethnographical account) in the NPWS**: as the author of this thesis, therefore, we will use the first person when describing the context of my involvement in the project. I joined the pioneering group of the project early in 2003, just after its initial protocol was
compiled. I was recruited by the female executive from the Ministry of Sport (#1), who had known me since 1999, the period of the first attempt to establish the Selinger Project. I was then at the end of my semi-professional athletic career, a mother of two children and I was working both as a volleyball coach and a P.E. teacher in high school. In order to be more influential in Israeli volleyball in general, and women’s volleyball in particular, I became an observer in the IVA (Israeli Volleyball Federation) and a year later, I became the first female member of the IVA Board for two terms.

I had been involved in the struggle for women’s equality in sport, since I was a player and captain of the national team. I was the ‘driver’ behind the project to establish the VAYTG and later on, I worked intensively on the establishment of the second Selinger Project in June 2007. In 2004, as was the case with Interviewees #2 and #3, I became a paid advisor of the National Project for the Ministry of Sport for a period of three months, and after this I continued working for a few more months as a volunteer. In September 2005, I received an offer to become the director of the Academy for Sport Performance, into which the VAYTG was incorporated.

The decision was difficult, but I had to earn a regular salary. Another factor was that I had a number of disagreements with the other two female advisors and therefore, I chose to join the Academy. From that date, until 2007, I was involved as a volunteer at many levels on the National Project (autobiographical transcripts were developed in field notes from beginning of 2005 until, April, 2009).

**Interviewee #6 – a female NF coordinator in the NPWS:** this interviewee was in her early thirties, married and a mother of two children. She was a basketball player at the highest level in Israel, and was still playing at the time of writing in the second division. She studied PE as her university degree. While joining the project as a volunteer, she was new to the notion of women fighting for their rights. Although as a player she had experienced the implications of the culture of hegemonic masculinity, for her it had not been such a traumatic experience. Accordingly, when she joined the project, it was at a later stage, as an employee. She became a NPWS female coordinator in
one of the 12 NFs that had been chosen to be part of the project in the second half of 2007. She had Interviewee #4 as her mentor throughout her first two years on the job (interview took place in April, 2008).

**Interviewee #7 – a female NF Coordinator in the NWPS:** this interviewee was in her mid-20s and had just started her Master's Degree in PE. She was a competitive athlete, and at the time of her recruitment in the second half of 2007, she was a coach in the Youth Sports Academy. She was not married and had no children. She was recruited to work for the NPWS in the NF for her sport (swimming) and reported no specific problems in entering the organization. However, she reported that she had limited power to introduce and develop her initiatives. (Interview took place in April, 2008).

**Interviewee #8 – a female NF coordinator in the NWPS:** this interviewee was also in her mid-20s, single, following her academic studies at an American college where she received a full scholarship as an athlete. Upon her return home, she had been recruited by another NF (tennis) to be its project coordinator, and continued to play her first sport (soccer), where for many years she witnessed discrimination toward female players, as she described in her interview in April, 2008:

> It was so unfair, they (the executive board) gave us (the Women’s National Team) just crumbs (one training camp, for example) and for the men’s team they gave the earth. (p. 2, 4/08)

**Interviewee #9 – a female board member in one of the NFs participating in the NPWS:** this interviewee was in her early 40s and was not married. She held a Master’s degree in Business, had worked many years as a coach, and for six years held the position of chairwoman of the Women’s Commission of her NF and was a board member as well. She had been involved for many years in her sport. She was an outsider to the project, and had the opportunity to observe its establishment and recognize the problems and difficulties involved in its implementation. She was faced with the decision of whether to help or stand aside, criticising the project, a position adopted by many men who waited to witness its failure (interview took place in May, 2008).
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Interviewee #10 – a female National Council member in the NPWS: This interviewee was in her late 50s, was divorced and a mother. She had numerous academic achievements, held a senior executive position in the national sports arena, and over many years, had been involved in the Women’s Sports Foundation and other activities. (Interview took place in May, 2008).

Interviewee #11 - male head of the Sports Directorate within the Ministry of Culture and Sport (November, 2005): this interviewee had held his position for 12 years, until mid-2007, but prior to that he had been an amateur athlete in different sports, a coach, a PE teacher, and for eight years held the position of head of one of the Education and PE colleges in Israel.

He had to his credit a National Report - the Dekel Commission Report, on the status and requisite changes necessary in Israeli sport, including one chapter that dealt with the need to develop women’s sport in Israel with regard to gender equity. He held a PhD, was married, a father and grandfather.

Interviewee #12 - male head of the Sports Directorate within the Ministry of Culture and Sport (August, 2008): this interviewee assumed his position in early 2008, a short time after the project had been activated. He was involved in the project earlier, as General Director of the National Institute for Sport and PE, and later on he was a member of the National Council of the NPWS. He held a PhD degree. His career record involved a period of being an athlete in different sports and coaching. He had been director of the School for Trainers and Coaches and was involved in many appointed commissions to reflect upon and suggest how to improve Israeli sport. He was involved with international sport organisations, was a father and divorced.

Therefore, to summarise the characteristics of the group of interviewees, there were ten female interviewees, two of them married, and one divorcée with three children, one single mother of two children and seven were singles. The age range of the women in the pioneering group (interviewees #1 to #5 described above), was: two around 35-38 years old, one in her early 40s and two who were already into their 50s. All the interviewees held university degrees, and all, except one, were high-performance athletes, either at the international or national level. Among the female
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interviewees, one can find two different groups, the pioneers who were the leading group of the NPWS which established the project from its very beginning, and the second group of women that later on (end of 2007) started to work at the NPWS as coordinators.

These two groups were supposed to be complementary. They symbolised the progress of the project and the establishment of its visionary organisational structure, since the senior executives were supposed to be women (mostly selected from the pioneering group), and so were the middle-level directors. Most of these were recruited to managerial positions as a result of the new agenda of NPWS to create more opportunities to secure managerial jobs for women.

The two males selected as interviewees represented two different generations, with different managerial styles. However, both of them had held the same powerful official position in the Israeli Sports world, neither had ever been high-performance athletes, but had been involved in terms of sporting career in different positions. They were of different ages, one was two years prior to his retirement when the interview took place, and the other had just started his new position when the interview took place. Neither of them made any specific reference to their family status during his interview.

Both male interviewees gave the researcher their macro-level overviews on gender equity policy and on the context within the NPWS and its National Council. In different sections in their interviews it was difficult to understand if their answers represented their own views, or were perhaps answers that they believed were expected from them. For example Interviewee #11, former head of the Ministry of Sport argued that:

*Promoting women is one of my philosophies...We are going to establish more clubs for women, work on the grassroots, open more positions for women.*

(Interviewee #11, male former executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p. 2-3, 11/2005)

In the following sections, I reveal dominant discourses and their gendered text and subtexts that these key actors in the Israeli Sports arena (female and male) use to describe their experiences, and the influences and barriers they encountered during the
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process of the implementation of the NPWS project. The transcripts of the open-ended interviews were repeatedly reviewed and analysed using discourse analysis, which emphasises how versions of the world, society, and personal beliefs are produced in discourse (Silverman, 1998). The final compilation of the categories which were raised and overlapped within the different interviews will be discussed in depth in the following sections.

5.4. Introduction of the research site – the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS)

The vision of the NPWS as outlined by the leader of the pioneering group of women which established this initiative was as follows:

_To develop a sports culture in Israel, in order to ensure the full participation of girls, young women and women in general at all levels within the framework of sport._ (Nir-Toor, 2003)

Because women are a significant minority at the different levels of sport in Israel, the establishment of the national gender equity policy through the NPWS, was intended to bring women in Israeli sport toward a much more inclusive and open future. To achieve this vision, it was felt that a revolutionary way of thinking would be required in order to fulfil the possible dreams of many girls and women regarding their wishes to be involved in sport at all levels of competition.

The NPWS has tried to bring about significant changes in women’s sport in Israel (Nir-Toor, 2003), for example in terms of public views and perceptions in regards to women and sport, in terms of financial support and the amount of girls’ and women’s participation in all level of sport in Israel. The route that was suggested by Nir-Toor's reports (2003, 2005) and the leading group of women to the Minister of Education, Culture and Sport at that year, was based on a directed intervention strategy (see more in the next section).

Aiming to bring about a change in the perceptions, views and participation of women in the Israeli sports arena, the Minister for Education, Culture and Sport had officially declared the establishment of a National Project for Women and Sport in 2005. The
The aims of the project suggested in 2003 were to expand the infrastructure of young girls in sports, to improve sport excellence among female athletes and to create women's leadership in sport amongst coaches and decision-makers in sport organisations. In order to achieve the aims of the projects, the following guidelines were constructed by Nir-Toor and the leading group of the NPWS in 2003:

1. **To create a long-term programme** to take care of expanding the infrastructure of young female athletes and the nonetheless, place emphasis on excellence in women's sport as well. In order to achieve this, according to Nir-Toor (2003), the stakeholders would organise a constituent explanatory and marketing strategy. Thereupon the program, guided by the appropriate legislation, would bring about requisite representation of women on the boards of the NFs' and other sport organisations. Moreover, the leading group of women suggested establishing a special unit to work in cooperation with these bodies, concentrating on women’s issues in sport. This unit would be composed of three female executives, one in charge of the marketing and public perceptions and another in charge of the implementation of the programme within the sporting organisations (NFs, NOC etc.). In order to make sure the programme had an impact and was creating a long term change, the unit would have a female coordinator in each NF and organisation participating in the project, whose job would be to manage all the activities regarding women and sport within the specific organisation and report to the special unit executives.

2. **Classification of sports in order to join the NPWS** (National Project for Women and Sport): Because only a certain amount of money (approximately 10,000,000 NIS per year) was given to project, it was seemed to the leading group almost impossible to work with all NFs in Israel and to be influential and professionally efficient. So in order to be transparent and to allow all national federations to compete over the budget that a place in the project offered, a technical committee was established. According to the leading group of women and Nir-Toor (2003), the committee had to decide on certain criteria (in relation to present and future human resources and infrastructures, (number of athletes, achievements, geographical conditions, facilities, future achievements, and potential of the sport) whereby the different sports would be chosen.
3. Criteria for NFs in order to join the NPWS: Aiming towards the development of gender equality and the NFs’ cooperation in this process, the following criteria were adopted:

- Appropriate representation – implementation of the legislation and making of the required amendments to each NF's regulations and procedures. Immediate correction of the current situation by nominating more women to the boards (to achieve a minimum of 20% representation in 6 months and 40% in 2 years).

- Establishment of women’s committees chaired by women in the various NFs.

- Commitment to equalising the budgets and conditions in national teams on a gender basis.

- Recruitment of a female technical coordinator.

- Commitment of each NF to maintaining and adding to existing activities for the advancement of women.

- Specific additional criteria to be developed for the various sports.

It is important to understand that the Israel Sports Betting Council could not find a way to establish the criteria and parameters by which the budgets of the national organisations and other local projects were calculated. It therefore, took up to the end of 2007 before the NPWS became financially operational. Our approach in this case study is thus to explore the implicit and explicit discourses evident from the creation of the pioneering group of women in 2003, until the inauguration of the project at the end of 2007.

A. Objectives

The objectives established for the NPWS were as follows:

i. The establishment, on a countrywide level, of quality infrastructures for female athletes of all ages and levels.
Table 1: The predicted growth of female athletes in the designated sports during the first four years of the NPWS (Nir-Toor, 2003):

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ii. Creating women’s leadership in sport

As asserted earlier, male hegemony is still evident in the control of Israeli sport at all levels – boards, technical committees, NFs, and other sport organisations. Therefore, the aspiration of the group responsible for establishing the NPWS was to involve more women at the different functional levels of sport, and to promote them into the decision-making at all levels. This objective stems from the assumption that some of the women in the leading group adopted a liberal feminist approach, which assumes that by creating a situation of more balanced representation (in gender terms), the needs of female athletes would be addressed. This was an assumption that not all women in the leading group fully agreed with.
There was a wider understanding that in order to bring about significant change, a wider scope of actions would have to be taken:

*We need to commit the female athletes to the idea of the NPWS as a start, the media also...not only through laws; we should create public opinion and corporations.* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.4, 2005)

iii. **Suggested steps by the leading group within the NPWS towards developing women’s leadership in Israeli sport organisations (Nir-Toor, 2003)**

The pioneering group of women established more specific objectives in six areas

- Implementation and enforcement of correction number 5 (2003) of the Israeli Sport Law (1985) regarding women’s representation in the boards of sport organisations, which obliges all state-funded organisations to have a satisfactory percentage of women on their boards, with a requirement that each organisation report to the Women’s Commission of the Israeli Knesset each year on the proportion of women on their board in order for the organisation to be permitted to receive government funding (Galily, Ben Porat and Lidor, 2009).

- The provision of courses for developing women’s leadership in sport which would raise awareness among women of the importance of their integration into sport management systems and would train women, giving them professional tools to allow an easier, more complete integration into the sport organisations.

- The provision of scholarships for sport management studies to develop qualified women for work in senior management roles.

- The bringing about of about quicker integration of women in the fields of refereeing and coaching by supporting females during coaching and refereeing courses, both financially and in other ways during their professional careers.
- To qualify more male and female coaches to work with female athletes. Both female and male coaches who work with women athletes should be trained in the specific aspects related to coaching women.

- International conferences: as part of the promotion of women’s leadership in sport, the NPWS will demand that the sport organisations send female representatives to international conferences in order to be updated on tendencies and subjects that feature on the world sport agenda and especially in relations to women’s sport.

iv. Transformation of public opinion in Israeli society toward gender equity and marketing activity in regards to women in sport (Nir-Toor, 2003)

Explanatory and marketing activities were to be included in the long-term programme of the INPWS, in order to promote awareness among society in general, and girls and women in particular, of the latent advantages of physical activity at all levels. At the same time, it was considered that marketing activity would encourage the recruitment of more girls and young women to sport organisations and convince them to participate in sport. The target groups in this respect were talented young girls, their parents, school teachers and other stakeholders. In order to bring about a transformation in public opinion toward gender equity and the promotion of growth in the number of women in sport, the following methods were finally suggested by Nir-Toor (Interviewee #1) in 2003:

- Increase the exposure of women’s sports by means of all the available communication tools.

- Stress education – to implement explanatory activities for female students, teachers and parents in school.

- Maintain role models of elite female athletes at present and in the future.

- Distribute scholarships to female athletes in order to allow them to continue their academic studies.

- Qualify women to become sport journalists.
v. **Criteria for success**

The NPWS encourages all participating bodies, including itself, to create key performance indicators for measuring its success.

vi. **The budget of the NPWS**

A long term and secure budget is one of the key points for the success of the project. The budget will emanate from two main partners of the projects:

- The Sports Betting Council: NIS 80 million (about $2,286,000) for the first 8 years.
- The Ministry of Culture, Science and Sport: NIS 1.9 million (about $543,000) per year to be specifically earmarked for the special independent unit that will activate the NPWS.

### 5.5. Approaching Sport

A. **Being an athlete – a socially-inclined choice**

It seems that the formation of the female interviewees' sporting interests was initiated before and at the outset of their active athletic careers. It is important to understand how and why these females gravitated towards sport, and subsequently to explore their experiences before, during and after their sporting careers.

Through the interviews it became apparent that for most of them, their introduction to sport as athletes was not accompanied by any significant pressure or encouragement from their families and close friends. As interviewee #3 said, in her case there was no one promoting her participation and no one discouraging her either:

_I don’t remember anyone special who had pushed me; however, nobody stopped me from participating in sport._ (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.1, 10/2005)

One of the possible reasons why most of the female interviewees were not discouraged from participation might lie in the fact that at least four of the female interviewees were born and raised on a kibbutz, a life based on the values of equality,
sharing and communal life in a children’s house (a form of boarding school for those from six weeks to 20 years of age). In this case, for those raised on a kibbutz the peer group may be as influential on their choices and behaviour in childhood, adolescence and even adulthood, as their parents and families. The importance of the kibbutz as a context in shaping an interest in sport and physical activity was emphasised by Interviewee #3, one of the leading female group involved with the project:

I remember I always played sport…it might have started from my childhood on the kibbutz, where the swimming pool and grassy fields were the only places to go to. (Interviewee # 3, female executive in the leading group, p.2, 10/2005)

Another female interviewee explained that her initiation into sport was a product of the fact that everybody in her kibbutz played, and her family was supportive but had not pressured her:

I started with swimming, because everybody went to try this…my family and especially my mother supported me,… however... they didn't push me. (Interviewee #1, executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.2, 9/2005)

In contrast to the above, Interviewee #4, who did not grow up in a kibbutz, related that her father had died when she was a young child. Her mother had been preoccupied with other matters, and suffered a lot as a single mother. She therefore used to make her own decisions, including that of participating in sport, often displaying a tendency to do things that were against her mother's will:

I come from a family that had nothing to do with sport... which I came to by accident...I never let my mother be a part of that world...it was a way to control my life...one of her (mother’s) ways to show me she was taking care of me, was to sit me down to play the piano, like any other ‘good’ girl. (Interviewee #4, female executive in the leading group, p.1, 10/2005)

Thus in these cases, despite some differences among the female interviewees in terms of socio-cultural background, participation in sport was not obstructed by their social and familial context. Nevertheless, none of the interviewees described the context as supportive, or as generating pressure to push them toward sport activity or a sporting career.
B. The discourse of competitiveness

Another interesting theme gleaned from the interviews with the female interviewees was a discourse of competitiveness. The women who had decided to stay within the world of sport and compete at the highest levels, later continuing their sporting activity as coaches and managers and holding key positions in the sporting infrastructure described themselves as competitive individuals.

The interviewees described competitiveness as virtually a necessary condition for those who wanted to continue to work with sport up to the highest level. However as Interviewees #1 and #4 indicate, this is a characteristic which goes beyond sport and permeates other aspects of their lives:

*It was important for me to explain that I was very competitive... My determination and motivation toward success were very strong, and actually, never stopped. I just transferred it from competitive athlete who wished to win to my work in the Ministry and achieving my mission.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, pp.1-2, 9/2005)

*I had a need to be the best in everything I did, even at things I didn't like such as playing the piano...I always tried to prove myself...I became an outstanding pianist...and 12 times national champion in my sport.* (Interviewee #4, female executive in the leading group, p.2, 10/2005)

Most of the female interviewees expressed a need, an inner motivation, to continually prove themselves in everything they did, and to be the best. However this might be in part a reaction to their past experience and a resistance to the gendered roles society (or their family) regarded as appropriate for them. This adoption of a competitive approach clearly is a requirement for top level athletes, but is something which also equipped them to struggle against gender hierarchies and the masculine hegemonic values rooted in Israeli organisational culture.

Pfister points out that organisational culture is enacted in everyday situations and relates among other things to aims, leader ideals and practices of an organisation. Often this implies organisational cultures produced in the context of the masculine hegemony which characterises wider society (Pfister, 2006). As we noted in the previous chapter, a difficulty women often face is that to exercise leadership they
have to work within existing organisational cultures, and this can imply adopting masculine leadership styles of what Eagly and, Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) term 'agentic' behaviour, for example competitiveness and aggressiveness which are ascribed more strongly to men than women, and may be required in order to gain the attention and respect of key stakeholders within the organisation. As Interviewee #3, a leading figure in the Ministry of Sport, claimed:

*It is persistence and consistency that brought us to the starting point of the NPWS...this is maybe a reflection of the competitiveness we have as former athletes.* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.1, 4/2008)

In order to deepen the understanding of women’s involvement in sport and the lack of women in decision-making positions in sport organisations, it was important to explore the reasons why many women athletes leave the domain of sport in Israel and do not become coaches and directors or get involved in any other related endeavour, and this is discussed below.

### 5.6. Leaving the sport arena

**A. The ‘Male Reservation’**

Analysis of the male interviews reveals that though the interviewees were middle level athletes they had continued their working careers in sport up to the highest level as decision-makers in the Israeli sport arena. They perceived this as being a natural career direction once their athletic activity had ended.

In contrast, the female interviewees, with one exception, had all been top level athletes at least at national, and in some cases at international level. It is important to understand that the male interviewees perceived the fluidity and upward progress of their sporting administration career as a natural progression, unlike most of the female interviewees who stopped their involvement in sport (if only temporarily) once their career as an athlete ended. The contrast between male and female experiences here highlights the dominant culture within sport organisations in Israel, suggesting some of the barriers experienced by those who do not belong to this dominant culture.
Evidence of this notion of ‘natural’ progression is illustrated below in the comments of the former Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

*I was first an athlete, I used to play soccer, and actually I played in the second division and I was pretty good. With time and for various reasons, I became a basketball coach also in the second division, which was very good at that time. I had studied physical education and I went through all the regular career phases. Afterwards, I was a P.E. teacher for all ages, and I also used to teach in the college. During these years I become Head of the College.* (Interviewee #11, male, p 1, 11/2005; emphasis added by author)

A similar pattern was illustrated by another male executive manager in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, describing his working career and its relationship to his athletic career:

*I started with swimming, which I quit relatively young and moved to different sports; I received a wide background in PE, gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, skiing, water skiing, football, etc. My natural track was to finish as PE teacher, then a BA and MA at Tel Aviv University and a PhD in Hungary.* (Interviewee #12, male, p.1, 8/2008; emphasis added by author)

However, it seems that unlike the 'natural' progression that male interviewees would assume as their continuing career in sport, the female interviewees tended to perceive abandoning sport after their athletic careers as a 'natural stop', without regard to the level they had attained.

This perception of what is natural for female careers in sport is the product of an almost complete lack of any further involvement of women in the Israeli sport arena. As female Interviewee #4 pointed out, having finished her career as a participant she simply decided to move on:

*When I quit shooting, I locked the rifle safe, as I had done with the piano... I didn’t even want to listen and watch.* (Interviewee #4, female executive in the leading group, p. 2, 10/2005)

The decision to quit, although explicitly described by some female interviewees as gender neutral and certainly not an exclusively female experience, was found to be
very significant. It was identified as connected to a significant moment in their sporting careers that was related to the feeling that someone or something within the sport system had disappointed them or let them down. The importance and uniqueness of this issue is that this experience related to those interviewees who were top class elite athletes (World Class or Olympians). It was described in the following manner by one of the leading female figures:

_It [thoughts on quitting] started after the 1992 Olympic Games, when I was ranked in the World Top 10…but the Elite Sport Unit wasn't able to offer me what the army could, regarding a future and actual career. In the army, I was told that if I wanted to continue, I would have to stay that year, and it meant giving up the Olympic Games._ (Interviewee #4, female executive in the leading group, p.7, 10/2005)

In this case, although one interpretation might be that this woman had seen her sporting career as something important but not as a lifelong career, this type of thinking was also found in another female interviewee who had been an Olympian and had participated in two Olympic Games and had ended her sporting career at the age of 18. Her story is involved with the murder of the 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics:

_At the age of 18, after the Olympic Games in Munich 1972, I came back home with good results, but having witnessed with my own eyes the murder of my eleven friends there…well….; I came back to study PE, but I didn't want to continue swimming._ (Interviewee #1, female, executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p. 2, 9/2005)

However, reviewing the interviews repeatedly, one realises that another interpretation may be that because sport was always so important to these individuals, disappointment with the system had actually led the interviewees to abandon the field about which they cared so much. The Israeli sport organisations, in this case, were seen as a historically male preserve, mainly at the managerial level, dominated by a hegemonic masculinity that seemed to be deeply ingrained in the organisational culture and values. This is illustrated in the comments of the leading female in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:
After the Selinger Project for the National Women’s Volleyball team was doomed by the male executives in the Ministry, I couldn't continue...I wanted to leave the job and the office with the people there. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.2, 9/2005)

The findings of a number of studies regarding the lack of women in leadership positions in sport organisations such as that of Pfister (2006) comment on the fact that although women and men might report on their sporting organisations as gender neutral, the characteristics or image of the ideal leader were still shaped by overt masculinity.

Therefore, although some women continued their involvement with sport after they ended their career as an athlete, in many cases, they were doing something related to physical activity, rather than working in sport organisations which dealt with competitive sport. A senior executive director commented:

After quitting, I couldn't see myself as a coach...I worked in water rehabilitation of wounded soldiers...so in a way I never left the water...but for 10 years, I had no connection to competitive swimming whatsoever.

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.3, 9/2005).

According to some of the female interviewees, despite legislation and other external efforts to change the current structures of the executive boards, the male members, in some cases, found a way to preserve their domination of the board. This is illustrated in the account of Interviewee #9 (5/2008), when the male-based boards subtly redefined organisational 'realities'. For example, where elections had once taken place, and female members had become candidates of the different parties, their opponents had agreed to add more male members to the board by creating a political agreement between the competing parties, to enlarge the general number of members (male and female) on the board. This effectively maintained the marginalisation of women’s sport in these organisations.

I remember that during the elections for the Federation's board, we forced the leading parties (Hapoel, Maccabie and Elitzur) to follow the new law of appropriate representation, and after a long fight, they made a decision to
allow us to bring more women, but on the other hand, their condition for doing so was to raise the number of seats on the board, so there, no men would have to leave his position for a female 'newcomer'. (Interviewee #9, female coordinator in the NPWS, p.2, 5/2008)

Moreover, the board in some cases subtly minimised the women’s ability to influence change in the decision-making process by choosing two or three members who would be the day-to-day executive decision-making team, within NFs such as the Volleyball Association and the board would merely approve this team's decisions. This system was presented as a way of improving the efficiency of the organisation. However, this also functioned as an implicit means of maintaining male hegemony among the decision-makers of the sports federation.

In the case of this study, it appears that in the current situation most women [and some men] who maintain what Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) describe as communal characteristics (e.g. affection, kindness, interpersonal sensitivity, a willingness to strive for consensus) which are ascribed more commonly to women than to men, were likely to remain excluded from the centre of decision-making processes.

This section has sought to illustrate the nature of the gendered atmosphere experienced by some of the interviewees during their sporting careers but more specifically after their retirement and in their administrative or management roles. The next section will extend this, focusing more closely on the perceptions of female interviewees who took part in team sports, since it is evident from the transcripts that within some team sports in Israel gender inequities are felt by the female former athlete interviewees from the very beginning of their athletic career, and are ‘visible’ through the inequities between men’s and women’s national teams. This contrasts with the descriptions of females from individual sports who reported that once they were considered as elite performers their perception was that the organisation treated them in a relatively equitable manner.
B. Differentiations between female interviewees' perspectives of team sports and individual sports

The female interviewees who played team sports differed in their accounts from those who participated in individual sports, in terms of displaying more frustration in relation to the gender inequities in their sport. Most described feeling discriminated against during their sporting career (most were national team players) since they received smaller budgets and less attention from the executive board than their male counterparts. They described themselves as feeling excluded given the dominant ethos that treated male sport as mainstream and female sport as marginal. On the other hand, female interviewees who were active in an individual sport reported that during their athletic careers, they barely felt any kind of overt gender discrimination.

In most instances there were only a few women in the elite category in their sport. Nonetheless, they had never had female coaches, and the dominant discourse within the sport organisation's board was mainly masculine in style and ‘normalised’ male sport and the male coaching of female sport, and this provided a discursive context to which the female interviewees needed to adapt themselves. The experience of sportswomen who felt the presence of discriminatory sets of values within their sport might go some way to explain why female team players, when quitting their sport career as athletes did not tend to leave the sport completely. Many of them continued their struggle for equity and equality as volunteers and not in any official status, as indicated in the following comments:

*We established the ‘Lachen’ NGO for women’s basketball, in order to achieve equality...at the same time I was working in a high-tech company that had nothing to do with the sport itself.* (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.2, 10/2005)

Or, as argued in the author's auto-ethnographical account:

*I wanted to help young girls achieve their dreams, -- unlike me, who never had the chance to reach my full potential, and will always live with a question mark inside me ... so after quitting, I volunteered as a member of the Technical Committee and later on as observer on the board of the VB Federation ...*
wanted to exert some influence…but they didn't want me as a full member, so I couldn't vote, but I opened a little window...  (p. 1, 5/2005)

The interviewees' perspectives on the existing masculine hegemonic discourse suggest ways in which male hegemony is sustained, despite the legislation that forced organisations to include more women in decision-making positions in Israeli sport organisations. However, it is important to realise the actions that those interviewees from team sports took in order to challenge the existing context of historical hegemonic socio-cultural structures in their sport. The personal experience of these athletes and thus their profound awareness of the inequities within their sport go some way to explain their commitment to change those inequities.

In the next section, we explore how the interviewees responded to the frustration they experienced.

5.7 Breaking the “Glass Ceiling” – renewing involvement with sport

A. We are here out of love and devotion

The awareness of male hegemony in some Israeli sport organisations, and the emergence of a discourse of gender equity and of female access to key positions seem to have increased close to the 1984 Olympic Games. It was not until that time that a female representative worked or volunteered in a formal senior executive position in any Israeli Sport body. Nonetheless, there was no specific department in the Israeli Sport Authority, or at any other sport institution, that dealt specifically with the advancement of women and sport issues.

According to the female interviewee's accounts, it seems that even when the Israeli sport leaders decided to promote this issue, they did so half-heartedly, without giving it deep thought in terms of the ‘content’ of their position, and moreover without budgeting for it. One interviewee describes how she was invited to take part as a volunteer in the first Israeli sport initiative for women, without any pre-discussions over the nature of her responsibilities as the first female director in the Israeli Sport Authorities:
After 10 years... during a flight to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, the National Olympic Committee chairman asked me where I had been all this time. He told me that they were looking for an Olympian to work with them ...after we came back, the NOC chairman called me and said that he wanted to promote the important issue of women and sport...but like any typical man in these positions, he never thought to offer it to me as a paid position, but only as a volunteer. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.4, 9/2005)

It is worth acknowledging that at that time, in 1984, the NOC chairman received payment for undertaking the role (although not as a salary but rather through an expense budget), and was (and remains) a very powerful position in the Israeli Sport arena. Further exploration of the above subtext and its underlying meanings might help explain the ‘lip service’ of the male leadership to gender equity, which on one hand showed good will by letting women enter the sports decision-making domain, but on the other hand, affirmed an undefined position of responsibility, with neither defined authority nor budget for their activities. The maintaining of the marginalisation of women, while appearing to have taken some positive action thus implicitly reinforced male domination in the Israeli sport leadership.

An important point was revealed during the review of the interviews transcripts in relation to the motivation of the pioneering group of women to dedicate their time and energy to the creation of a new gender equity policy in Israel. It seems that one of the main reasons, despite the gender-unfriendly environment, was simply their commitment and devotion to the mission of promoting the issue of sport and gender.

To an outside observer it might seem to be a naïve reaction, as almost all the females in the pioneering group joined the group on a voluntary basis. Deeper exploration of the interviews revealed that their motivation also came from their passion for sport, which had come either from their experience of successful sporting careers and positive experiences as athletes, but also as a product of their frustration, in the case of women from team sports, in terms of gender discrimination in their participation in sport. This is argued by two leading women in the pioneering group of the NPWS:
I'm doing it, first of all, out of a great love for sport, and furthermore out of a belief that the advancement of women is most important. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 5-6, 10/2005)

In a shift of opinion, the second interviewee said:

What could I say about those years [when she had just started to work for advancing women in Sport]? I managed to help by raising the issue, and putting it on the agenda, but I'm not sure I could say I made a difference. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.8-9, 9/ 2005).

A. Barriers to becoming re-involved

The willingness to become re-involved in sport as a woman promoting a women's sport initiative was complicated by the existence of barriers raised in discussions during the interviews with some of the females from the pioneering group. It seems that great devotion to the vision of the pioneering group and its goals of establishing a national policy for gender equity in sport was required. Some of these barriers arose within the different sports authorities / organisations in which 'permitting' women onto the boards had not changed the organisation’s masculine culture and thus its lack of inclusiveness of women. This is illustrated in the following quotation of one of the pioneering female figures, when describing the barriers to the establishment of the NPWS:

People (mainly men) that don't believe or don't want the project to work are the main barriers...those people feel that it is more convenient, from a political point of view, to keep the situation as it is now. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.2, 10/2005)

In recent years the legislation in Israel toward gender equality, in terms of representation and to some extent, also in terms of budget, has become relatively progressive. However, despite this progress, the assimilation of a gender equity policy in Israeli sport organisations has lagged far behind, as identified by the same female leader:

They (the NF's), don't have any interest in making a change, don't forget that even when we (NPWS) have the money, it won't necessarily go towards the
same things they want. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 5, 10/2005)

In this case, the implicit tendency to maintain masculine hegemony in terms of the sets of values within the executive boards militated against women freely participating in executive decision-making and feeling part of the mainstream when occupying key positions within organisational hierarchies. In other words, the possibility for women to become active and accepted actors in organisational decision-making was, in effect, only made optional through the comprehensive national legislation on gender equity in decision-making positions, the division of financial resources and increases in the proportion of female athletes. The female member of the executive directorate of the Ministry of Sport and Culture described the context in the following terms:

*It still seems they want us to "close" their lack of budget, and although they want the NPWS money, it is feels like they are still waiting for us to fail.*

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.19, 9/2005).

Furthermore, the difficulties experienced in entering the sport organisations, mainly by those who were the first to break into this male preserve of Israeli sport, meant that the women felt as though mere lip-service was being paid when recruiting them to different positions.

*However, when I got this job, I was very naïve…they actually used me as a 'silence tax'...it was convenient for them; I was a woman, a former Olympian.*

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.8, 9/2005)

The interviewees, who were senior male executives, made similar observations when referring to how the organisations’ culture constructed the roles of women in executive positions.

Hence, the sub-texts in these interviewees' transcripts reveal how top-level sports’ leaders in Israel see women’s involvement in sport management, as demonstrated by a former chief director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport:
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In most organisations, women were there only as a decoration...behind their backs, men were just laughing at them. (Interviewee #11, male, p.2, 11/2005)

Perceptions as described above by this interviewee who had been a very senior executive, inform one's understanding of the extent of the gender inequities and barriers which women have needed to break through in order to become influential in existing Israeli sport organisations. It also suggests the degree of determination and passion women needed to bring to this task in order to take their place within the organisational structure. Even in the 21st century, some men, and indeed some women, still tended to regard women in the old gender stereotypes such as belonging in the domestic milieu. This disparagement results in a patronising masculine approach that fosters male hegemony and maintains the marginalisation of females, as argued for example, by a current male senior executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

Despite our desire for equality, in that instance women are still those who carry most of this burden [for domestic responsibilities]. Moreover, the hours one has to be at home is equivalent to the hours one needs to be dealing with sport (afternoon, evening)...therefore, women have less time to invest in volunteering jobs. (Interviewee #12, male, p.4, 8/2008)

It is important to realise that given the difficulties described above, most of the female interviewees reported that they had a high inner motivation to challenge the existing situation. In this sense, the combination between the dominance of the masculine hegemonic socio-cultural contextual structures within the sport organisations in this research and the highly motivated female probably fostered the development or strengthening of a feminist approach, as described in the next section. Indeed such circumstances were seen as instrumental in the creation of the pioneering group of females which eventually established the NPWS.

B. The next step: adopting a feminist approach

Adopting a feminist approach (see Chapter 2 for full discussion of the nature of feminist perspectives) however, is not an obvious or inevitable move for all women. Having an increasing number of women with a growing awareness of feminism and its agenda, has helped to bring about the current situation in which women confront
different approaches within the same sport organisation. It seems that women are to some degree less afraid to announce their feminism and use it as an anchor for their activities as representatives of women who aspire to aims of gender equity.

What is interesting is that, to some extent women show greater respect for the achievements of their peers, using different feminist approaches that follow from women being more open to 'otherness' than men are, as suggested by a female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

My feminist self-realisation helped me to realise that if more voices had been heard, the world might have been a better place... I helped develop a feminist agenda, not against men, but for women ... I'm convinced that 'more women' means more opinions, and a wider perspective. (Interviewee #1, p.13, 9/2005)

Nonetheless, it seems that some women are adopting [the] feminist approaches in accordance with their own beliefs and experience, and thus their perceptions and explanations develop during their experience / life history as occupying subordinate roles. Some males nevertheless continue to adopt approaches toward women from a classic position of male hegemony, as illustrated by one of the leading executives in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

Women's pregnancy, for instance, might be a point that men can use to justify their chauvinistic perceptions...however, we must learn how to live with this fact, and to accept it as part of our organisational life. (Interviewee #12, male, p.4, 8/2008)

Although there is a growing awareness of men in regards to the gender issue, this may be taken as the beginning of a new ‘feminist’ approach on the part of Israeli male sports directors towards women’s involvement in sport and in key decision-making, or it could be described in terms of merely paying lip-service in order to satisfy the increasing labour force of women in senior positions. As argued by a former chief director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, who, during his tenure, had only one woman among twelve male directors on his executive board:

I think that women are good in many areas...their senses are more acute, their strategic view is better, their insights are more intelligent...and sport should
have dealt with women in a more serious way than today. (Interviewee #11, male, p. 3, 11/2005)

This is of course a dangerous argument, since the mirror image of this view is that men are more likely to have positive attributes in other areas. The notion of masculine and feminine leadership types however implies that the difference between men and women is not biologically determined, but rather socially constructed. However, looking at the narrative of the most senior female employee working under his leadership we see a different kind of account:

As influential as I might have become, the Director of the Israeli Sport Authority suddenly felt that my dealing with women in sport was insufficient and he divided my position into part-time responsibility for women and sport and part-time for general sport for all ...not to mention that he decided to stop budgeting separately for the unit for women and sport. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

These two extracts imply a distance between the two explanations of the male former director’s attitudes. This might look as though, even when consideration of a policy issue is led by women who are trying to achieve their target (in this case in the NPWS), there may be [some] senior male executives who still try to retain their dominance within the organisation by ensuring these leading women remain marginalised when real progress is about to be made (in this case, gender equity policy being backed with a substantial amount of money). Such marginalisation through exclusion from powerful positions is illustrated in interview with the leading woman in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

When the NPWS became a reality, they (the men) pushed me aside and didn't even involve me in simple decisions. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.15, 9/2005)

Feminism comprises a wide variety of conceptions and approaches and the majority of the interviewees seemed to adopt what might be described as a mixed approach toward the gender inequities that existed in the Israeli sport organisations context. The mixed approach, which will be further discussed in the final chapter, consists of aspects as a liberal feminist approach, meaning intensive action for equal
representation, equal budgets, and action for extensive legislation regarding different issues in gender equity in sport. In addition, some interviewees shared values with what I identify as more of a poststructuralist feminist approach. For example, this approach implies that the values of hegemonic masculinity might be changed by deconstructing language. The following example illustrates the identified mixed approach:

*I'm not a radical feminist, although I respect them... me personally, I believe that with more understanding of more people... it might eventually bring us to the targets of the project.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.13, 9/2005)

And on the other hand, the same interviewee continues to explain her feminist approach using shared values with a more liberal feminist approach:

*I'm currently the vice-chairman of the Betting Council, and I still find it very hard to change men's way of thinking... but I'm sure if there had been 3-4 women on the board, we could have made a change.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.13, 9/2005)

This mixed approach as well as their awareness of the organisational culture have caused some of the female interviewees to decide to 'play the game' within the organisation's set of values which in this sense means, to explicitly adopt an agentic (masculine) approach that may imply a strategy that can be identified almost as a mild deception, as illustrated in the following quotation of one of the female leaders of the NPWS leading group:

*This is not a "one day revolution"... we first need to find those people and organisations that share the same voice as us... therefore, we need to play some kind of game here, where "the entire world" will not be against us.* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 4, 10/2005)

Women in this sense actively pursued an approach which would make the dominant males feel less uncomfortable (‘she is one of us’), and therefore her presence could be more readily accepted in the dominantly masculine culture of the organisation and its membership. According to some female interviewees, this opened up an opportunity to become more influential on the gendered issues from within the organisation:
We need to convince the world to support us, and it should be from a position of strength. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.4, 10/2005)

This might be described as a strategy of countering the existing organisational set of values, where masculinity and agentic characteristics are dominant, from the inside. If members, male and female, take action and execute these required changes in the linguistic context, starting a new dialogue may open the organisation to members who are considered as outsiders or ‘others’ in the current context. How to achieve this is highlighted in the next section.

C. Using mentor's guidelines

It has been identified in different studies in the past (for example: White, 1994; Nir-Toor, 2003; Henry et al., 2004; Henry and Robinson 2010), that a mentoring system can be helpful in paving the way to promoting gender equity. Nonetheless, one of the understandings of the mentoring system includes the realisation that it might be necessary to develop a feminist approach. This based on the notion that feminism, in our case, is an approach which recognises the existence of gender inequity in society, recognises also that this situation is neither fair nor ethical, and recognises therefore also a moral imperative to do something about it. This may help one to understand more about the causes and factors that create the current context and therefore to set up targets which may eventually change the current gendered discourse.

The findings in this research, from some interviewees' responses, point towards the use of female to guide young women along the long path from young athlete up to the point at which they hold senior positions, as illustrated by the female director in the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

At the beginning of my paid work, the department had a small budget, and I had little experience.... Luckily, I convinced the director to pay someone to guide me...it was a female with a strong feminist agenda. She was the first and only (for many years) female pilot in the IDF...she worked with me for 8-9 months...my mentor taught me all about feminism and its theories...till I became an official. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.3, 9/2005)
Working with a mentor seemed to help this interviewee develop a clearer acknowledgment and awareness of both the implicit and explicit contexts of women and sport in all their complexity. According to some female interviewees, assistance from a mentor also helped the development and creation of a feminist approach and gave the struggle a clear rationale:

*With time, I became familiar with the many problems together with my mentor at the beginning, and alone, later on, I developed a feminist agenda, not against men, but for women.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.3, 9/2005)

A mentoring programme can, of course, sensitize women who are new to the arena to the struggle toward gender equity. It could also be used to foster a sense of obligation and commitment through developing a deeper understanding and exploration of the contextual socio-cultural structures that created the existing gender inequities in sport. The establishing of a sisterhood can also provide an empowering environment for other women and maybe for some men. Such an argument can be drawn from the transcript of one of the leading females of the NPWS:

*I envisage one more task that needs to be done; I need to employ mentoring women to guide them in the subject of feminist solidarity; how to keep encouraging the sisterhood...it is not to be taken for granted, we need to work on it.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.18, 9/2005)

Furthermore, due to the historical socio-cultural structure of Israeli sport, women may need to overcome deeply embedded historical traditions, whereby the political sporting bodies/parties (Maccabi, Hapoel, Elizur and Beitar) are also involved in the decisions regarding the composition of the sporting organisations (see Chapter 1), and therefore, the different lists for elections are constructed by and thus reflect the political interests of these bodies. Historically, these bodies mainly consist of men who know one another from their past. Often they have met during their army service, through politics, a common hometown, while others may be ‘friends of friends’. Therefore, most women may feel themselves to be, and may be treated as outsiders in this environment, as can be illustrated in the author's auto-ethnographical account
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(October 2004, after the elections for the IVA’s Board) from a position as a NF board member:

I was sitting there…the only woman. On average I was ten years younger than most of them, and I didn’t know whether to laugh at their jokes, particularly when they had a chauvinistic undertone ...when I tried to recruit more women and fellow players, they laughed at me and called me the Don Quixote of women’s volleyball (Interviewee #5, Author’s auto-ethnographical account, p. 4, 5/2005).

For years the sporting political bodies, despite their banner slogan, ‘developing sport in Israel’, were mainly developing men’s teams at the senior level (Nir-Toor, 2001). However, the main female actor in the Ministry of Culture and Sport (Interviewee #1) argued that although these bodies also invested at grassroots level, this was largely in order to gain political votes, and they mainly invested in developing grassroots activities for boys rather than girls. According to the same interviewee, three years later in 2008, the issue of developing grassroots team for boys and men more than for women was still an issue, and it seemed unlikely that it would be eliminated unless greater change occurred. This interviewee argued, however, that instigating change in male thinking had not been easy.

I am currently the vice-chairperson of the Israel Betting Council, and I still find it very hard to change the male way of thinking... (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.4, 4/2008)

This interviewee suggests that in order to tackle this unjust situation or context, a gender equity policy is required. The expectation of those promoting the NPWS was that a wider implementation of attitude-change within the society would be required, both by men and women, toward women and sport at all of its levels. This is commented on further by the interviewee:

But I’m sure that if there had been 3-4 women on the board, we could have made a change...it is difficult, however, to find women who are willing to join sport organisations at this stage...I have been on the job for many years, I know I tried and did a lot, yet I can’t point to any major achievement in changing the hegemonic masculinity in the organisation during that time...that is maybe the
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Male interviewees, who had held one of the most powerful positions in Israeli sport institutions, concluded that the situation of women in sport in Israel is still less well-represented in relation to the situation of other countries:

*It doesn't matter where...it seems that women's representation is always inferior in relation to men's...I believe that the most important issue is for them to reach influential positions in the organisation.* (Interviewee #12, male senior executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.3, 8/2008)

It seems, therefore, that mentors and advisors might be needed in order to help individually those women involved or who wish to be involved in sport, to achieve positions as decision-makers, without prejudicing their own specific voice, perspective, and initiatives. To conclude this section, one can argue that in order to change the existing values and culture, women need to take a position, which reflects their own perceptions and which might help in directing them to the target of implementation of gender equity policies. Mentoring programmes are likely to make a contribution to achieving this.

The next section will explore some of the barriers experienced by former female athletes, who had come to understand (partly through the mentoring programme and partly through their own life experiences) the need to be united in action in striving for their goals in relation to the advancement and implementation of gender equity policy in Israeli sport.

5.8. Establishing a national gender equity policy - The NPWS – National Project for Women and Sport (the National Project for Women and Sport - Athena)

A. Introduction of the NPWS vision

After the political elections in 2001, an opportunity materialised to counter the masculine hegemonic set of values regarding women and sport in Israel and to bring
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about a change. This was not only an instrumental change but also involved, as argued in Bryson and de Castell (1993), a more generalised policy of equity with respect to a wide range of differences in terms of language and action in the existing hegemonic system at the national level. This unique opportunity was initiated with the nomination of a female as the Minister of Education, Culture and Sport and in addition, the nomination of a female as chief of staff of this Ministry. Both of these women were known for their strong ‘liberal feminist’ attitudes (see more in Chapter One). Once the new female Minister decided to take action, the process of the establishment of the NPWS, was initiated.

The Minister of Sport had asked the only woman executive in the Ministry to initiate a national project in order to promote women in sport at all levels, including directors, coaches and athletes, and specifically, to focus on the transformation of public attitudes toward women and sport. This was an important turning point for the pioneering group of women, who led the process from its very beginning. Furthermore, it developed a new spirit amongst them as illustrated in the words of one of the leading female in this group:

*Probably for something like that (the NPWS), something that really could make a difference, we needed to wait for a female Minister, as well as a female general director of the Ministry... for me it is proof of the necessity of more women, but not only women, in key positions in order to make changes...the fact is that today, with a female Minister (in 2005), we are facing a new era, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

B. Gender-based modifications

An interesting issue arose from the interviews, regarding the differences between [some] male and [some] female perceptions of the aims and vision of the NPWS in 2005, as most members of the leading group viewed the project as a tool to construct a holistic gender equity policy change. The male interviewees were mainly focused on their aims in regard to the need to increase the number of young girls actively participating in sport, rather than focusing on advancing women towards decision-making positions, promoting the fair allocation of resources or displacing the masculine hegemony that had infused the sporting system and its organisations. This
focus on gender equity in terms of athletic participation and the parallel neglect of promoting women into decision-making roles had the potential consequence of maintaining the status quo in terms of culture and values, while apparently addressing the problem of gender equity. As the former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport argued:

*Promoting women is one of our philosophies...We are going to establish more clubs for women, work on the grassroots.* (Interviewee #11, male p. 2, 11/2005)

Indeed, as critics of liberal feminism argue, even if getting women into positions of authority is achieved, this does not of itself tackle the issue of dominantly masculine values in organisations. Since such values perpetuate and (often implicitly) legitimate male interests, only adding more women personnel without changing the cultures of organisations in the system, means that significant and sustainable change may not be achieved.

### 5.9 The Barriers

#### A. The discourse of territorialism – gender-based conflicts

The process of the establishment of the national project had created a wall between the male leadership of Israeli sport and the pioneering group. It was mainly felt at the Ministry of Culture and Sport, where the only executive female there, who was working on the project, was reported as being summarily pushed aside by her male counterparts, when they felt that the NPWS was about to become ‘real’. This was initially most evident when the former male Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport argued that the woman appointed to lead the process (Interviewee #1) had been leading the NPWS project in the wrong direction, as he saw it, and therefore, he established another team, which comprised only men, omitting the solitary female:

*The woman I chose to lead this project didn't do the right thing...she doesn't know how to work...that was when I stopped everything and nominated a two-man team and myself, which would answer the requirements of the Betting Council. I know how it works, as I come from there; they can't mess me*
around, and I can get the money. (Interviewee #11, male former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p. 3, 11/2005)

This justification for removing the only female executive who was the head of the Women’s Sports Department in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, because of her ineffectiveness, stands in contrast to her own account, where she argues that the Chief Director felt threatened by the loss of financial control of Betting Council monies from his office, as the NPWS was supposed to be independent of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. She argued:

It looked as if everything was a threat; therefore, instead of being a partner, he was an obstacle...he behaved near the Minister and the General Director as a 'little puppy', but he "wiped" me with his frustration because he didn't or couldn't agree with the concept, the idea. He even said to me:" Who needs your special unit? What do they know more than us?" (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.2, 4/2008)

Certainly the importance of the financial issue was openly acknowledged by the former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

The only reason I'm still taking part (in the project), is the money. We need money in sport...my programme touches on the real problem. (Interviewee #11, male, p.3, 11/2005)

This conflict was described by the female employee as "the same old news", everybody saying that it was very important to promote women in sport, a plan of action adopted by the Minister herself. However, when it came closer to ‘reality' and people started to understand that a new powerful project was about to start, supported with a lot of money, regardless of their beliefs about the female capability to bring it to reality, the men wanted to take control and therefore they excluded the leading woman:

But when the NPWS became a reality, they (the former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport and his deputy) pushed me aside and they didn't even involve me in the criteria-setting for the division of the money of the NPWS. I felt once more like I was there as a "cover version" for them [men].
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(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.14, 9/2005)

The situation in 2005 was that after the formal declaration of the project, the struggles had created a 'white elephant'. There it was an officially approved project, worth 2.5 million US dollars yearly from the Betting Council and governmental budgets, but it could not work because the different stakeholders had not signed and prepared the formal agreements and therefore, due to technicalities that might have been relatively easy to resolve, the unit employees could not receive their salaries and after more than two years of voluntary work, almost everything stopped. From the perspective and explanations of some interviewees it would seem in this case, that if less ego, desire for control and more willingness or openness to change had been developed, then the dominating hegemonic masculine values might have been challenged. As the leading female in the Ministry of Culture and Sport argued:


Nonetheless, working with the Betting Council was not easy...we wanted to lead a new creative project that had a different way of working, more flexibility, a less bureaucratic attitude, and we couldn't really do that...they (the executive board including, for example, the NOC President, NF representatives, representatives of the Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Economy) and they didn't allow it to happen. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.6, 4/2008)

Frustration was a very common feeling amongst those females who worked for the project. The attempt by some of the male leaders to stop the project from moving forward was on-going. There are perhaps two main discourses in relation to this state of affairs. The first, as evidenced in the above quote, is that the ‘men’ were obstructing progress in order to protect their own position. The second, as evidenced below is that the women were too inexperienced to secure the money effectively from the Betting Council. As can be interpreted from the former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

This national/public council, or those trying to establish it, they (the pioneering group of females) don’t know how to do it, they are not the right people, they are not professional. (Interviewee #11, male, p.4, 11/2005)
So the male leaders created problems (the first discursive account), resulting in the project being postponed until 2007 and the status quo remaining; or the ‘experienced’ men having to step in (second discourse) because the women had been unsuccessful in bringing the project to fruition. Interviewee #1 (the leading female figure in the Ministry of Culture and Sport) claimed that the action taken may have been the product of personal insecurity on the part of the former Chief Director of the Ministry of Culture and Sport:

_They signed the documents and the contracts without his signature (the former head of the Israeli sport authority)...he was probably personally offended and decided to damage the project, he gathered the financial people in the office, and actually they manage to stop everything for almost two more years._

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.1, 4/2008)

Further examples of the first discourse, which refers to the struggle by senior leaders to retain the dominance of the masculine culture and values, was also revealed in the interviews with another of the leading females in the leading group:

_People who don't believe, or don't want the project to work, are the main barriers...those people find it more convenient, from a political point of view, to keep the situation as it is now._

(Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 2, 10/2005)

Female interviewees claimed that in some cases, it was not possible to advance the project, due to personal conflicts. That explanation was, to some extent, shocking for the women of the leading group, and it took time, with limited success, for them to understand this reality and bring the process back on track:

_He probably was personally offended...it might have been the source of evil...it was a personal revenge... he reacted as though everything was a threat._

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.1, 4/2008)

The conflict between the genders was not hard to detect. The perspective of the male interviewees reflected in the organisational culture of the Israeli sports bodies makes this quite clear, and so the female interviewees’ realisation of this issue spurred them
not to give up during the long process of establishing such a large, difficult and unusual kind of project. Even if all of the key position holders had been working together, implementing this change would have taken a considerable time and effort to establish. As a leading female in the leading group claimed:

_The people in the governmental offices/NFs were acting as barriers; it was a lot of money invested in a different and separate concept and they wanted to control it...beyond that there were personal power struggles...but nonetheless, everybody should understand that even if we had worked together, it was still difficult to have a new kind of project accepted._ (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 2, 4/2008)

**B. The struggle for acceptance – mainstreaming the issue of women and sport**

The leading group of females constantly had to confront their rejection as women. This rejection might be interpreted as fear of the ‘other’, as claimed in the following quotation of one of the leading woman interviewees:

_I believe that the issue of women building a new project for women was perhaps too disturbing, but I don’t think this was the one and only problem... I do think that the problem was in the acceptance of other and unfamiliar voices._ (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 2, 4/2008)

In this account, the traditional ‘old boy’s club’ which is at work in sport sees the Israeli sport arena as its own domain, and therefore, denies access to others who may wish to be part of the organisation, and thus maintains its exclusive hold on the ‘territory’. Such a perspective is also evident in the account of the former Chief Director of the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport:

_They (women) need to understand the people in the 'club'; for them, women entering decision-making positions means that some of them [the men] will lose their seats; they don't know how to deal with women._ (Interviewee #11, male, p 4, 11/2005).

The use of terms such as 'they'/'us' with generalisations about the other gender appears in the majority of the interviews and written documentary data. This is, some will say, symbolic of the core of existing discourse in regard to gender issues in the Israeli
sport arena. The process of women entering key positions in sport is something that touches the soft core of Israeli sport, by questioning the issues of a) controlling the situation; and b) feeling needed and a sense of belonging. It is indeed, eventually questioning the traditional positions.

Nonetheless, in order to analyse the findings, it might be useful to look at the data from a political point of view. Since the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, sport was directly linked to one's political connections, which confirmed male ‘friendship clubs’ as the dominant form for the future. As we noted in Chapter One, mandatory service in the Israeli Army was, and in many ways, still is, the main core of male bonding, and although women are also obliged to serve, the majority do not serve in combat units or do annual reserve duty together and therefore do not create the strong bonding experienced by many men during their military service (see Chapter One).

Furthermore, the identification with a certain sporting-political club is still an unwritten prerequisite for advancement in one's working and political career. These explicit connections explain to some extent why working in sport became a male domain. When one became a key position holder in the system, one could continue the existing tradition by accepting new 'club' members, reproducing existing power and gender relations in sport. One of the leading women went as far as to argue:

*I said many times that the sport structure is the core for women’s exclusion in Israel...Today, we understand how much Israeli institutional sport is male centred and full of male values...moreover, the political organisations like Maccabi, Hapoel, Beitar etc. established many clubs and teams in order to gain more political votes and money; they didn’t invest in grassroots or female sport.*

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.12, 9/2005)

Feminists from different streams in the recent past have led Israel to a relatively progressive legislation in terms of representation on executive boards of sporting organisations, and this process was still on-going at the time of writing. For example, recent legislation requires that from January 2011, executive boards of sports bodies should include at least 30% from each gender and from 2012, with the board reflecting the proportion of female athletes if this is more than 30%.
However, from the interviews with these men and women involved with sport, it is hard to conclude from the text that such legislation has brought about a change in the existing structures, values and beliefs about women and sport. The NWPS, by definition, aims to bring about a change in the attitudes of the Israeli public towards women in sport, for athletes and key-position holders, by using not only legislation and other external elements, but also education, conversation and discussion, a fair allocation of resources - in effect, implementing a holistic national gender equity policy. Interviewee #3 also suggests that legislation alone is unlikely to provide a solution.

*We need to commit the female athletes... as a start, using the media...not through laws, but to create public opinion and cooperation with them* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.3, 4/2008).

*In terms of representation in key positions, I believe that, regarding legislation, we are even more progressive than many Western countries...the problem is to implement it.* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.7, 10/2005)

The different approaches and perceptions among the leading group, have led to a successful process with great openness and acceptance of each other despite contrasting feminist positions, but, this was not achieved until the beginning of the NPWS as an official organisation, and there were more than a few powerful disagreements between the women in the group. The idea of establishing women-based organisations had frustrated the possibility of keeping their young sisterhood alive during the initial and creative process of the NPWS, when it became an official body with the characteristics of organisational power relations. The question as to the extent the women in the leading group would be open to hear the different approaches in the stage of managing an existing project / organisation, will be further explored in the next section.

C. 'Cat fights' and the discourse of sisterhood

The existence of different feminist approaches amongst the group of women, who made the NWPS a 'reality', was also a reason for an implicit struggle between the leading groups. Although all the members were brought together by the same woman
and fought for the same goals, the establishment of the project took much time, and a great deal of energy. During that time, each woman developed her own way of thinking, her own perspectives on the situation (for example, on how the project should work), her own ambitions, and her own possible solutions for the never-ending story of the establishment of the NWPS, and this eventually disunited the leading group. Others suggest that working non-stop with no actual results brought about cracks in the wall of unity amongst those pioneers, as one leading figure in the leading group argued:

"It is not happening yet because women, not just men, instead of being target oriented... it became a more personal matter between us...it is against my feminist agenda and it's hard to explain it, even to myself." (Interviewee #3 female executive in the leading group, p.16, 10/2005)

It is also possible to argue that the differences amongst the leading women in the project were progressing into a deeper crisis of trust, with a fight for recognition as the project leader and controller of the project which divided the leading group into sub-groups. These struggles were considered by some as a conflict of ideologies, as illustrated in the following comment:

"It seems that women sometimes prefer to choose compromise, even if it means giving up on ideology; even if it means having to leave a friend...men won't do that." (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.17, 4/2008)

The development of this behaviour was a problematic discovery, according to this interviewee's account, and it seemed that it this conflict within the group destroyed some of the beliefs these women had started with in regards to women’s sisterhood. Realising that not all the women were 'there for each other', was seen by this interviewee as a key point of fracture:

"The biggest insult, however, was the acknowledgement that not all the women were there for each other; that was a real disappointment; it really hurt me...women that received all the credit from me, as women who were concerned with gender equity and nonetheless, knowledgeable... for some reason they
ignored me. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.5, 4/2008)

Considering the situation in more depth, this might be interpreted as personal crisis of faith for the two main leaders of the leading group, resulting from their different perspectives on the project. But nonetheless, it also may be related to the struggle for leadership of the project, where the perceptions of having been personally insulted, to some extent led to a breaking point of the solidarity between the two leading figures:

Do you know that she (Interviewee #1) gave money that should have been ours to the Selinger Project without even consulting us? They had to give Wingate money, so they gave them ours with her permission...the Ministry of Sport doesn't give us information...and she plays with them...I think that when a woman does this kind of thing it causes huge damage, and now they can hide behind her...the agenda of female solidarity dispersed because of what the women there (in the Ministry) did. You know that when I wanted to submit my name to the bid to become the Chief Director of the Ministry of Sport, I came to her, and she was so negative, she said words about me that offended me a lot... it caused a personal break, but also an ideological break, and I told her that. (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.6, 4/2008)

One of the critical issues that is evident in many of the debates about gender (and for that matter race / ethnicity) policy advocacy is that advocates disagree as to the extent to which they need to adopt a line which will carry the majority with them. Nevertheless, these feelings within most of the figures in the leading group have led to a realisation that the existence of interviewee #1, a woman in a middle level of management position in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, may sometimes be a disruption to the process of achieving changes regarding gender equity, as illustrated in the same leading woman's claim:

The woman there (Ministry of Sport) has no power to lead or change things...it is a problem for us that she is there...the agenda of female solidarity has dispersed. (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p. 6, 4/2008)

This acknowledgment points to a significant aspect of our research, that a gendered-based organisation may bring the same maladies of power relation struggles, closed-
mindedness and non-acceptance, whether dominated by males or females. The same aspirations (implementing a gender equity policy for women by women) as these pioneering women had demanded and for which they had striven, ceased when they were envisioning the project, and changed to individualised aspirations (positional struggles) when the project was about to be realized:

*The sport authority doesn't give us information despite the woman there ... if we had men in the process it might have been easier. I know that most of the difficulties have a gendered background.* (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.5, 4/2008)

What this suggests is that where significant and long lasting gender equity change is being sought there is a need to go beyond simply integrating representatives of the ‘other’ (women, ethnic minority groups, disability sport etc.).

This implies incorporating less homogenised voices, fewer individuals interested in self-advancement and incorporating some with political-sporting links. Such an approach can be found in different public business sectors, as concluded by Interviewee #1:

*My feminist acknowledgment brought me to realize that if more voices had been heard, the world could have been a better place.* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.13, 9/2005)

Nevertheless what all the women and some of the male interviewees accepted in the context of a need for plural voices in sporting organisations was the requirement for women’s voices to be given a place at all levels of management, and especially in executive positions. In order to achieve a better understanding of these voices, further exploration of women’s managerial styles will be discussed in the next section.

5.10 Managerial styles

A. The discourse of comprehension

The establishment of the project seemed to have brought about a need amongst the leading group of women to decide on how to act within the organisational cultures
and structures of sport organisations in Israel. The approach the leading team of women decided to adopt was to be positive and more understanding with regard to the current contexts even though in NFs, the NOC, and other sporting organisations, a masculine discourse predominated.

In other words, it was recognised that the group would have to work with those (male and female) who held very different views on gender equity and on whether / how it should be achieved in sport management and policy. As one the female leaders of the pioneering group said:

*Yes, we are coming with a positive point of view...and once we decided that the NFs were partners, we gave them space.* (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.3, 4/2008)

This approach of inclusiveness and the willingness to comprehend others’ points of view, according to the same interviewee, is not limited to organisations and those who are leading them, but also more broadly in respect of others' points of view regarding sport per se and its athletes. One such example is the case of Rhythmic Gymnastics which to some extent was perceived by the female leaders as an activity outside of sport.

*We are not judging or criticizing...we are even supportive, like for example in rhythmic gymnastics...I tried to look at it as a sport and I found it amazing, although I would never send my daughter to this sport.* (Interviewee #2 female, executive in the leading group, p.4, 4/2008)

Another aspect of style was the willingness to cooperate with different sporting bodies in order to establish, enact and implement the NWPS and its targets.

**B. The discourse of cooperation**

The pioneering leaders of the NWPS viewed the project as a long-term effort that needed to bring about bigger changes in the conception of sport in Israel using different means and aiming for new targets. However, as we have seen, the context of Israeli sport institutions is very complicated. For historical reasons, the politics-oriented sporting organisations, such as Beitar, Hapoel, Maccabi, Elizur (see Kaufman, 2005; Galily, 2003), had been involved in the organising of sport in Israel
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in the different stages (for example, involvement in budgeting of clubs, political votes, memberships in the NFs, the Betting Council and in the NOC).

Historically, these bodies had gained a lot of power to influence major decisions on sport policy in Israel and in this case, on cooperation with, and therefore the success of the NPWS. Even following recent progressive legislation that has sought to remove some of their power by allowing the local clubs to receive government budgets independently, and public council recommendations to close these bodies, these political associations still remain highly influential in any macro or micro decision-making in Israeli sport. These organisations still arrange lists of candidates for the elections of the NFs presidents who then hold the majority of votes for the election of the NOC president. These politically-oriented organisations also have official representatives within the board of the NOC and the Board of the Israeli Betting Council.

In 1995, due to a government decision, the ISF (Israeli Sport Federation), ceased its activities and the NFs became independent NPOs (non-profit organisations). This decision had been taken in order to give more power to the clubs and NFs and in order to allow each of the NFs to elect and appoint its own representatives to the executive boards and commissions. The decline of the traditional umbrella organisation of Israeli sport has resulted in a novel situation, of two decision-making organisations at the top of the Israeli sport pyramid. One is the INOC, where the majority of the power belongs to the NFs, and therefore, to the politically–based organisations and the other is the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

In the past, there were collaborative efforts to create a new context for Israeli sport. However, personal disagreements and relationships between the leading figures in both organisations disrupted any attempts to create a single umbrella organisation. The current situation preserves the status quo in terms of power, where no macro decision can be taken by one organisation without the other. The NWPS defines one of its unofficial, long-term aims as being to influence the sport institutions in Israel. Cooperation between people, government organisations, the private sector, and the institutional sport organisations, was found to be a very important theme among the pioneering leaders of the project.
The role of women in decision-making positions – The case of the Israeli sport organisations

We need to create public opinion and to cooperate with them... at the end of the day, it is all about cooperation. (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p. 4, 10/2005)

The project itself was established by means of cooperative efforts: the Ministry of Sport leading a group of volunteering women; the NOC was involved through its Elite Sports Unit, and through the NFs; the public was involved via representatives on the Public Council for the project, as well as different women’s rights NPOs and governmental and NOC representatives; and the project was funded by the Israel Betting Council.

On one hand, that cooperation could be one of the barriers that inhibited the project in the formative years; however, on the other hand, in a macro-level analysis, this factor could be a key to its future success, together with the mutual interest in the project of all the different partners. Moreover, male interviewees also described cooperation as something new and highly important, both for the success of the project and as providing a message for the future of the entire Israeli sporting institution, as one of the Israeli sport leaders said:

I believe that only by cooperation can we succeed... if this project is assimilated into the sport arena, it will achieve great progress, and it might put us among the most progressive countries around the world...no doubt that the NPWS, if it succeeds, will be able to create a chain-reaction regarding issues that don’t have a strategy, in the state of Israel. (Interviewee #12, male senior executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, pp.4-5, 8/2008)

The theme of seeking mutual comprehension (which is consistent with a communal, feminine approach, Eagly and Schmidt, 2001) as evidenced in this section provides one explanation for the introduction and acceptance of cooperation between different organisations in the creation of new projects. Moreover, the discourse of some of the female leaders explains their willingness to compromise as a means to maximise their ability to achieve their aims from the inside of such organisations, rather than seeking to replace externally developed male hegemony with a dominant form of female hegemony. As one of the leaders of the pioneering group argues:
I read an article that said that you can destroy the master's house only with the master's house tools...we are coming across with a different language, with different codes, but if we want to succeed, we need to talk their language, their codes, to play their game. (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.4, 4/2008)

Furthermore, even with the establishment of the NWSP, the situation was still far from enabling women in sport to feel openness and acceptance of those who want to be part of the sporting arena in Israel. The individuals within the leading group who look toward holding key positions in sport organisations are women holding different feminist approaches. Including post-structural feminists that desire a gender-inclusive management while, acknowledging the gendered nature of knowledge production and the way it maintains and reinforces the power relationships between the sexes (Fletcher, 1999).

This goes some way to explaining the present situation as exclusive to men and women who understand the ‘rules of the game’, and therefore excludes women and men who may have a different set of values regarding sport leadership. As Interviewee #1 comments:

We are not yet in a position where we can completely be ourselves... at the end of the day, we wish to manage the sport along with men, but the language is different...also, we are still a minority. (female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.5, 4/2008)

One of the suggested targets of those leaders was to change the language within the sporting arena such that it would be more inclusive and open to different opinions that mattered to women. The NWSP is based on these explanations, and the wishes of the creator of the first draft of the project were described by her as follows:

If we can be four or five in number, nobody will ignore us, or will think of it as a complaint. I still remember the words: ’OK ... we heard you’. (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.5, 4/2008)

In order to achieve these goals and other mutual gender equity changes, another discourse has arisen, the discourse of determination, which is the subject of discussion below.
D. The discourse of determination

In recent years a new discourse relating to the determination of women to achieve their mutual targets is evident when we compare the interviews from 2005 with those from 2008. Despite the many external and internal problems identified, the leading pioneering group of women never ceased the struggle for their mutual beliefs as a group. It might seem that these women, who had the clear vision to establish a unique project in order to promote women in sport and to develop this issue, were also united at every level during the process. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, it may also seem that this was true only as long as the target remained the same, but was still unachievable, and therefore, no internal threats were evident as described in my auto-ethnographical account:

*I was one of the youngest (among the pioneering group), and I felt as if we had acted as one united force, and we said we wouldn’t let them win.* (p.3, 10/2005)

However, this unity appeared to dissolve around the starting point of the NPWS, and evidence for that may be found in interview with one of the NPWS coordinators who joined the project in 2007 straight after its official inception, as a paid member of staff:

*Unbelievable…finally, it was actually happening, but you left, and two others left, another one was pushed aside…where was the unity?* (Interviewee #5, author's auto-ethnographical account, p. 3, 3/2008)

During the early years of the establishment of the project, especially during the formative stage, the entire group used to gather together voluntarily and think and re-think energetically about this exciting new creation, determined and united around this dream and united in the wish to bring it to fruition.

*It is persistence and consistency that brought us to the starting point of the NP* (Interviewee #3, female executive in the leading group, p.1, 4/2008).

Moreover, some of the pioneering group believed that they had created a unique kind of sisterhood, and therefore felt very powerful, as the leading figure in the Ministry of Culture and Sport claimed:
I remember those days (during the formative stage) as being something precious, something so desirable, we used to meet and talk for hours... we, of course, worked a lot, but nonetheless, talked about ourselves. I thought that I had found women who would be my best friends forever (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.6, 9/2005).

Another possible explanation for the determination of these pioneering women might be that most of the women in the leading group had experienced the hegemonic masculinity culture in sport, and despite that (or maybe because of it) had chosen to take part in the leading group working to establish the NPWS which aimed to implement this innovative national gender equity policy in Israel. As Interviewee #1 said:

*It was my fanatic belief and moreover my wish, to prove it was possible, that made me work crazy hours, recruiting smart women...and with smart moves we led this process, one can say, even with the use of tactics and tricks.*

(Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.2, 4/2008).

Most women mentioned in their interviews the difficulties they encountered during the whole process from its beginnings in 2003. They explained it as mainly because the NPWS was something new at all levels, and people tend to reject change. Nonetheless, because it was a project for women, managed by women and kept alive thanks to women's initiative, most of them thought it may only be possible for a determined, powerful group of women to activate this kind of project.

*It became clearer and clearer to me that in this revolution, only women could have led women... in order to become a reality, we needed those women’s circles...one or two individuals couldn’t make a difference. It needed to be a group with a lack of jealousy...we wouldn't achieve anything if we couldn’t act like a team...we had no option except to be there for each other* (Interviewee #1, female executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, p.4, 4/2008).
5.11 Concluding thoughts: do women live up to their own expectations?

Looking deeper into the later interviews and documents (2008), it seems that cracks appeared in the young sisterhood the leading group had initiated; only a short time after the project had officially been inaugurated. The female interviewees had changed their language regarding the united force and friendships among themselves. They reported that during the creative process, there was an undeclared hierarchy among the group, as almost all of them were volunteers and only one woman, from the Ministry of Culture and Sport, was getting paid for this initiative. She had received the revolutionary mandate from the Ministry of Culture and Sport to establish the NPWS and she chose all the women in the group. It was, therefore, accepted by the group that she would be the leader for that stage, as I noted in my auto-ethnographical account from 3/2008:

*I remember that we all were enthusiastic about being part of this unofficial group that S. [the woman from the Ministry of Culture and Sport] established and led.* (p. 2)

However, it seemed that, the closer it came to Day One of the project, the group had unofficially nominated another woman from the group as the director of the project, who started to be recognised by the different sport authorities as the leader of the NPWS, and for the day it would start to be an active project.

It seemed that the new ‘challenger’ intended to assume the leadership over the other members and to consolidate her position, as is evidenced by her comments (also presented earlier in this chapter):

*The woman there (sport authority) has no power to lead or change things...it is a problem for us that she is there.* (Interviewee #2, female executive in the leading group, p.6, 4/2008)

This impasse influenced the project before and even after it started, mainly during the creation of the project agenda, and with the continuing struggle for the division of money at all levels, where other organisations were involved. The project started in 2007, and until mid-2009, there was no longer any sign of the initiating sisterhood. As a matter of fact, the entire team, except for the project manager, found themselves to
be outsiders, no longer explicitly involved in the NPWS. I noted in my auto-
ethnographical account:

*Our dream of creating a revolutionary project for women in sport is vanishing and I'm standing here and can't help; sometimes I'm so angry and sometimes I'm sad, what direction will they choose? Why doesn't she (the manager) call us to help? I think she is afraid.* (p. 3, 3/2008)

Returning to the informal conversations with those women; they all felt that although they were pushed aside by their female counterparts, they were still willing to help and rebuild the leading team that had in its early stages shown considerable commitment and determination.

It might be explained that as long as men continue to be the majority at all levels of the organisation and the sport arena, and gender inequities will continue to exist, it might be difficult for women who found their way up the corporate ladder to behave differently, as during the process of climbing they needed to confront, or work in conjunction with this male-based organisational behaviour. For the leading group of the NPWS, the challenging of the Israeli sport organisation’s culture was a major change they wanted to bring to the Israeli sport arena.

The vision of this change was to allow women with different behavioural patterns to enter into Israeli sport bodies, and even more than that, to allow other discourses, such as comprehension, acceptance, sharing and cooperation to became part of the mainstream discourse, and thereby to permit varying opinions and voices to be heard around the table of the decision-makers and at all levels of the organisation. At the end of the research process it appears that a lot of work needs still to be done in order to achieve this vision, including perhaps the need for women and men to internalise the codes of the gender equity policy among themselves by learning to work together with colleagues (male and female) who have different views.
Chapter Six - Discussion and Summary: Women, Sport and Policy

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have adopted a poststructuralist feminist perspective, and within this context have employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological approach to understanding the nature and impacts of discourses around gender equity in the two policy exemplars from Israeli sport. Such an approach has allowed me to identify the nature of the voices that are evident in the discourses which appeared in the documents and the interviews undertaken together with the nature of the discourses themselves and, by implication, the absence of certain discourses and voices from the material reviewed.

Exploration of these discourses was developed through what Munslow (1997) and Booth (2004) term a deconstructionist approach to the history of the socio-cultural construction of the Israeli State and the sporting domain within it, with a special focus on gender roles. In order to deepen our understanding of the Israeli sporting context, two policy case studies of major national significance were selected, namely the establishment of the Volleyball Academy for Young Talented Girls (VAYTG), and the development of the National Project for Women and Sport (NPWS).

6.2 Originality and contribution to knowledge

Within the context of Israeli society, via secondary analysis we highlighted the importance of the militarisation of society as a source of discourse and thus of power to certain interests. Membership of certain strata within the army reproduces certain forms of masculinity that provide post-service civil society access to sources of power and influence in everyday life.

The ubiquitous influence of militarisation privileges certain types of hegemonic masculinity in terms of dominant societal discourse and that discourse itself privileges forms or certain types of organisational structures in the economic and business domains and in the non-commercial sphere in sport. In undertaking CDA within the context of the sporting sphere it is important to acknowledge the broader contextual
framework which is founded on the virtually universal military experience of men and women in Israeli society.

Within this context I sought to discover what shaped the sporting sphere in terms of findings, contribution and understanding of the Israeli sporting context and the mechanisms that work within this context to produce policy stasis and / or change, and their outcomes. Nonetheless, in terms of the voices we hear in the discourses of my interviewees, though we have the voices both female and male sports administrators, it is important to acknowledge the types of voice which are absent from the interviews. For the most part, the male interviewees (and for that matter the female sports administrators interviewed) are largely either positive about the two initiatives or at least not antipathetic.

Thus in terms of absences, we do not have strong representation, for example, of anti-feminist ideology, which argues that gender disadvantage is an inevitable consequence of biological differences, even among the male interviewees, because for the most part these are males who were willing to be interviewed and engaged with me as a primary actor and activist in the field. There were other males (and perhaps indeed some females) who would have found it difficult to engage with me as a known activist, and there were those who I was unable to persuade to participate or did not even approach because of their anticipated opposition to initiatives in the general field of gender equity.

However, even though this position is underrepresented, and even though interviewees were either supportive or for the most part not totally opposed to the gender policy innovations, nevertheless we can identify points in the discourse where elements of anti-feminist ideology surface, for example, where interviewees occasionally referred to ‘natural’ differences between men and women or to implied biological differences, as was the case referenced in Chapter Five where Interviewee #11, the former executive in the Ministry of Culture and Sport claimed:

*I think that women are good in many areas...their senses are more acute, their strategic view is better, their insights are more intelligent.* (Interviewee #11, male, p. 3, 11/2005)
It is important to stress that when commentators such as Henry (2001) refer to types of feminism (including non-feminism and anti-feminism) they are employing an ideal typical framework, and that in reality individuals’ views do not confine themselves to one or other ideal typical ideological position. In their discourses, individuals are inconsistent or contradictory or their views change over time or in different contexts. Thus fragments of different types of feminist ideology surface at different points in the discourses analysed.

In addition we can see different actors using very different arguments to support a common policy outcome. When the women’s coach, for example, argued that he was in favour of putting resources into women’s coaching at the elite volleyball level, he justified this not on the grounds of equity as an ethical requirement but by reference to the argument that women are more malleable in coaching terms (which at one level might be understood in anti-feminist terms, although this may be socially acquired malleability rather than a product of biological factors) and also by reference to the fact that gender did not matter (consistent with a non-feminist approach) what mattered was that the women’s team was more likely to succeed in international competitions.

Liberal feminist elements are also evident in the discourses identified in this study, viewing equality in terms of the number of women promoted to positions of seniority within sporting organisations as the appropriate policy goal or rationale. However, even here the level of equality sought was questionable, and could be described in terms of accepting inequality. This is clearly illustrated when discussing the need to conform to the IOC minimum targets, which means achieving a minimum target having 20% of the leadership positions in sporting organisations occupied by females, since for some parties the 20% level is treated as the outcome sought, the goal, rather than a bare minimum to which to aspire.

Furthermore, as critics of liberal feminism point out, even if equality were to be achieved in terms of the same number of women and men in leadership positions, this would not necessarily change the dominant political perceptions and organisational cultures in regard to promotion of gender equity. Females in political positions of influence need not necessarily promote equity concerns. This implies the need to
move toward equity policy rather than simply aspiring to equality, since equality per se does not necessarily result in meaningful change.

In relation to discourse concerning the behaviour of our female interviewees within sporting organisations, despite their feminist concerns (and I define here feminist concerns as being acknowledgement of gender inequities and the need to address them), there is evidence of the adoption of elements of masculine behaviour which reflect the cultural norms of the Israeli sporting milieu (see for example discussion in section 5.7 in Chapter Five).

That notion of the dominant view of how to behave effectively and what is expected of leaders, which is embedded within the organisational culture, values or leadership style, is evidenced by women describing what they see as happening either in their description of their own actions, but more commonly in their description of those of other women, often couched in terms of their disappointment in other women’s actions. This explicit or implicit acceptance of existing styles in sporting organisations constitutes a means of reproducing the hegemonic masculinity which characterises both sport and other domains in Israel.

Another interesting vein in which the exclusion of [some] women from managerial positions in sport is seen as ‘reasonable’ (or remains unconsidered) in the world views of many men is evident in the expressions of masculinity and femininity used by some male interviewees. For example, Interviewee #12, the head of the Israeli sport authority, (as cited in Chapter Five) identifies the issue of pregnancy as a possible barrier for women’s access to decision-making positions.

Explanations of hegemonic masculinity are reflected among other male interviewees in this study who, for example, seemed to ‘blame’ the female players and young girls for lack of motivation and willingness to be more involved in leadership roles without reference to why this might be the case. The dominance of this hegemonic masculinity world view provided little space for dialogue about the contexts and importance of gender equity within the relevant Israeli sport organisations since it was dismissed simply as a failing on the part of the women concerned.

I would argue that my analysis contributes to an understanding of the development of gender equity within the Israeli context, first of all by providing substantive new
analysis of the process of the development of the two policy initiatives through the
discourse of individuals involved as primary actors in the domain of this research in
my own case both as researcher and subject of the research. Using my auto-
ethnographical account allowed me to highlight the discursively constructed gendered
barriers within the sporting institutions on the one hand and to explore the discourses
that according to my own experience and those of other female interviewees helped in
overcoming these gender barriers, such as the discourse of being devoted and
committed to the idea of gender equity. Such explanations, however, imply gendered
expectations of women themselves expecting women to be primarily committed to
‘their gender’ rather than to other sources of disadvantage.

I would further argue that the analysis also provides originality in understanding the
social construction of the two initiatives through the social construction of the
individual(s) via language by way of what is described and how it is described. The
language draws upon the interviewees' ideologies and understanding. Analysis of this
discourse also helps us to identify ways in which women’s actions (more specifically
their accounts of their actions) may be inconsistent with the values they are promoting
in relation to hegemonic masculinity, in particular their adoption of masculine
leadership styles.

This is not a new finding in its own right (because other research has highlighted how
women committed to gender equity as an outcome have ironically sought to adopt
masculine leadership styles as part of the process for achieving such outcomes).
However, this study traces the process and mechanisms whereby a group of female
leaders’ shifts from the adoption of an overtly feminine consensual collective
approach toward a more individualistic set of interests or certainly to a more
individualistic style consistent with hegemonic masculinity which at certain points has
the consequence of excluding other women. This is cited in Chapter Five when one of
the leading female interviewees, leaves the group of the pioneering group of females
and takes on the task of driving the project forward alone.

In terms of contribution to knowledge, the research develops an understanding of the
roles of shifting ideologies on the part of key actors in the process of developing
socially progressive sporting institutions. It highlights the difficulties of establishing
socially constructed progressive sporting institutions in the context of an Israeli
society dominated by an hegemonic masculinity framed within the military experience of mandatory military service, and the accounts seek also to trace the voices least heard in such a context.

6.3 Research implications

The aim of this research was to explore and develop an understanding of the discourses in regards to the gender roles and gendered barriers that women and some men experience when they become involved in the Israeli sporting context. The aim was not, however, one of evaluating the policies within this context or to suggest a model for gender equity policies. Rather the intention was to raise questions that take into account the uniqueness of the Israeli context as a new country for which military service defines the mainstream culture. Our research questions were as follows:

- What can analysis of the gendered discourses in the two case studies tell us about the dominant discourses in Israeli sport?
- What is the place, influence and the extent of the impact of women in key positions on the decision-making processes relating to the two case studies as defined in the discourse of key actors?
- What is the range of explanations of gender equity policy among male and female interviewees?

Using a CDA approach in this research implies an emancipatory way of thinking, seeking outcomes which have the potential to change the world for the better, and to inform the potential strategies for the less powerful members of society. One way in which the findings may be helpful in reframing socially progressive initiatives in a more effective manner, was the exploration of the perception of the male interviewees who saw it as legitimate to support the establishing of a project or initiative for female athletes as long as it benefited the male project. This was, for example, the way the boys’ coach in the academy justified his support for the project for girls.

I have seen in my mind the project of the Volleyball Academy on an equal base, because it would be better for the boys. (Interviewee #1, p.3, 2005)
Other male interviewees, even when supporting projects for female athletes did not necessarily do so because of an aspiration to gender equity. Even the women’s national team coach explained his reasons for choosing to work with female rather than male players in the following terms.

*Men have financial issues, studies, army, and sometimes it harder for them to give 100% devotion to the project, unlike women who will do that with lower salaries and fewer requirements.* (Interviewee #3, p.1, 2005)

This approach might be considered arriving at appropriate outcomes for inappropriate reasons. Such an approach lays us open to the danger of finding a situation in which men are more likely to be successful than women, in which equitable outcomes may be abandoned for pragmatic reasons. Gender equity, when not supported for its own sake, is vulnerable to changes in policy context.

### 6.4 Implications for practice

Since the approach adopted involves *critical* discourse analysis, there is an expectation that the analysis will incorporate implicit or explicit emancipatory recommendations. A contribution to policy change could be through publication of the findings regarding the achievement of a more equitable sporting context. This might be fostered by promoting seminars and clinics on gender equity to discuss the study’s findings, following publication of the thesis or papers which draw on it.

It is surprisingly evident in this research that some actors, even without any predominant anti-feminist or non-feminist perspectives, are simply not aware of the hegemony of particular masculine values in the sporting context in Israel and thus raising awareness of such phenomena is an important first step to the development of a more progressive policy environment.

Further exploration of the interviews highlighted an interesting discourse which emphasised the vulnerability of the solidarity amongst the leading group of female of the NPWS. It is worth acknowledging that I, as a researcher, was also a primary actor within that group and as such, it was a major issue to prioritise group solidarity as part of an attempt to develop different management styles from what had been the
norm. Within policy initiatives which provided the focus of this research, the success was limited and solidarity did exist but only until the point at which the NPWS became a national organisation rather than a prospective initiative.

Analysis of interviews for the two policy initiatives (and of the literature) highlighted the emancipatory contribution of mentoring in taking on leadership positions in Israeli sport. Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) and White (1994), have argued that mentoring programmes within an organisation can contribute to solutions to address women’s under-representation in sport organisations, and to develop the effectiveness of women once they are in influential positions and to organisational inclusiveness.

An implication of our research findings is that in order to promote gender equity, policy decision-makers might look to recruit and train women and men to work toward identifying the existence and implications of, and alternatives to, hegemonic sets of masculine values that exist in the organisational board members' way of thinking in Israeli sport and which militate against equity. This, according to my analysis, was found as important, in order to enable each member to bring his/her unique voice into the organisations’ contexts.

Furthermore, conclusions drawn from the case of the NPWS presented in Chapter Five, although concerning a wide variety of issues in regard to women and sport, suggest that if the boards in the organisations were based on one gender as an absolute majority (in this case, women) they would maintain an intimacy that would help to develop dominant discourse that would marginalise 'other' voices, even if these voices did come from women.

Thus we would argue, in line with the poststructural feminist approach, that reconfiguring sport organisations to be gender-balanced has the potential to result in new structures, values, knowledge, history and culture of these organisations.

Finally, the study of gender roles is complex, contradictory and confusing. Despite the attention of researchers to gender relations and the creation of integrated balanced sport organisations, there is still resistance to these changes. It is still difficult in many contexts for each gender to be accepted by the other, indeed being viewed as ‘the other’. It has been suggested, despite the initiation of a new national gender policy (NPWS), that the Israeli sport organisations are still far from adopting new patterns,
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culture and language, and are locked into each gender regarding the other as ‘Other’ and thus reinforcing an antagonistic discourse.

Because research on gender equity is relatively new within the context of Israeli sport, further exploration and ‘archaeology’ are required. The exploration, in this research, of the hegemonic masculine set of values which exist in the Israeli sporting context, brought me to the following concluding remarks.

6.5 Concluding remarks

In this research I suggest that for most cases, discourses of masculinity were associated with dominant senior management and leadership roles and furthermore seemed to be taken as the 'natural' set of organisational sets of values and culture. By utilising critical discourse analysis, I pinpointed areas of resistance to these influential discourses. First, in the IVA, there was some recognition by the male dominated organisation of a local gender equity policy initiative; this was made through the establishment of the VAYTG.

Second, during the process of creation of the NPWS, [some] women and [some] men, were able, to some degree, to accept that there are inequities in Israeli sport leadership positions influenced by discourses of masculinity, and that women should be involved in senior positions. However, it was suggested that women in senior positions may be vulnerable to adoption of existing discourses and in such cases to be welcomed by male leaders as long as they commit to these masculine values which have dominated the Israeli sporting context. In other words, when women adopt a certain kind of behaviour, language and humour the dominant males are familiar within these organisations, then they represent more of an ally than a threat of change. However, it was somewhat surprising that these orientations to follow masculine values were found also within the NPWS leading female group impacting on behaviour within the group.

Within this study, the use of a deconstructionist approach to history provided a useful vehicle to shed some light on the historical contextual constructions of the dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity that created an environment and 'reality[ies]' in which women and [some] men were implicitly excluded from senior leadership
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This form of exploration was found to be critical in generating an understanding of the current situation and therefore, to fostering the ability to reframe and implement local or national equity policy. Realisation of that the value of such approaches led to the understanding that gender inequities are the product of deep socio-historical contextual structures and that only by deconstructing them will gender equity policies, in terms of both meaning and practice, be likely to be more fully implemented within the Israeli sport context.

Using a poststructuralist feminist approach to inform the area of gender equity policy provided the study with a perspective that offers alternatives to those current discourses of masculinity and femininity, which discursively reinforce gender barriers within Israeli sport organisations.

It was suggested within this research that discourses of hegemonic masculinity, such as the discourse of militarisation within Israeli society which spills over into civil society, continuingly reinforce underlying realities that exclude women and some men from becoming part of the mainstream milieu of Israeli sport.

These challenging socially and historically constructed gender barriers could be reframed through education, which is one option through which to challenge such discursively constructed sets of values. However, the overall aim of our study and the approaches adopted was to allow voices of 'others' to be heard and to suggest explanations, experiences, evaluation of the current situation of gender roles and barriers in Israeli sport organisations. Doing so without preferring one voice over the other opens up opportunities to further debate and opportunity to understand sport management and leadership in Israel and the place of gender roles and barriers within it.

Nonetheless, further research, in particular informed by a poststructural feminist approach, may contribute to a deeper understanding of the local reality[ies] in terms of gender equity policies through exploration of the different gendered discourses rooted within the Israeli sporting context. More deconstruction in this area may develop the potential for more inclusive discourses within sport management and leadership.
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