

The role and performance of supporter directors: A social exchange theory perspective

Authors:

Dr Joshua McLeod (corresponding author), Deakin Business School, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Hwy, Melbourne, 3125, Australia, joshua.mcleod@deakin.edu.au, Telephone: +61 404 802 158

Andrew Jenkin, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde, 16 Richmond Street, 1XQ, Glasgow, UK, Andrew.jenkin@strath.ac.uk

Dr Geoff Walters, Department of Management, Birkbeck College, University of London, Bloomsbury, WC1E 7HX, London, UK, g.walters@bbk.ac.uk

Richard Irving, Department of Management, Birkbeck College, University of London, Bloomsbury, WC1E 7HX, London, UK, hirvi01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

Declarations of interest: none

The role and performance of supporter directors: A social exchange theory perspective

Abstract

Supporter directors (SD) are individuals elected to a sport organisation's board to represent the interests of its supporters. Although their inclusion on boards is widely considered to be good ethical practice, recent research shows that SDs face distinct challenges that often inhibit them from performing effectively. The purpose of this study was to illuminate how SDs can overcome these challenges by, firstly, generating a deeper understanding of the roles of SDs in Scottish football clubs and, secondly, analysing how board-level social interaction influences SD role performance. The research method consisted of 17 interviews with individuals who are currently serving, or have previously served, as SDs on Scottish football club boards. The findings show that SDs perceive their role to encompass three elements: (1) promoting supporters' interests in board meetings, (2) acting as a conduit of information, and (3) complying with their fiduciary duties. Drawing on social exchange theory, the findings then revealed a perception among SDs that successful performance of those roles is dependent on their ability to initiate and sustain patterns of reciprocal social exchange with their board colleagues. The research provides practical recommendations for SDs and other types of stakeholder representatives on how to improve their performance.

1. Introduction

Stakeholder representation – which involves individuals representing the interests of specific groups on boards – is a governance mechanism used in a variety of organisational settings (Crucke & Knockaert, 2016). Stakeholder representatives are different from other directors in that they are elected to boards by stakeholders who are not necessarily owners or members of the organisation (Matten & Crane, 2005). The most common form of stakeholder representation sees ‘worker directors’ represent the interests of employees on company boards (Addison & Schnabel, 2009). ‘Consumer representatives’, on the other hand, are clients (or associates of clients) that sit on the board of an organisation of which they are a customer (Widmer, 1993). ‘Supporter representation’ is yet another form. It involves supporter representatives, referred to here as supporter directors (SD), representing the interests of a sports club’s fan-base on its board (García & Welford, 2015). Stakeholder representation is often considered good ethical practice (Van Buren, 2010). As Crucke and Knockaert (2016, p.769) argue, “as stakeholders contribute to the value creation of organisations, they should also have the right to participate in the decision-making and corporate governance processes”.

Existing research on stakeholder representation has predominantly used quantitative methods to measure the impact it has on organisational outcomes. Studies have shown how the presence of worker directors has a positive effect on organisational market value (Fauver & Fuerst, 2006) and board efficiency (Kraft, Stank, & Dewenter, 2011; Osterloh & Frey, 2006). Further, research on social enterprises has indicated that stakeholder representatives enhance external legitimacy, which helps with the acquisition of human and financial resources (Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012). In contrast, however, other scholars indicate that organisations with workers directors show reduced productivity and profits (Fitzroy & Kraft, 2005) and slower decision-making at board-level (Hielscher, Beckmann, &

Pies, 2014; Matten & Crane, 2005). Meanwhile, a study on social enterprises found that stakeholder representatives facilitate the creation of cliques and that this can be detrimental to board performance (Crucke & Knockaert, 2016).

The studies outlined above highlight significant variation in how stakeholder representation affects organisations. This research proposes that there is little need to add to this literature by conducting yet more studies that assess the correlation between stakeholder representation and organisational outcomes. Rather, there is a need to generate deeper insight into the factors that are causing the variation. This means examining in-depth the process of stakeholder representation to illuminate *how* individuals in these roles can perform effectively and potentially benefit organisations. To date, scholars have paid limited attention to this. However, such research is needed to help relevant organisations maximise the value of their governance function and to bridge the gap between previously inconsistent findings. This is particularly important in light of recent reports indicating that stakeholder representation, namely of the employee variety, is become more popular (Downs, 2019). A particularly notable gap in the literature is an understanding of how social interactions and dynamics influence the work of stakeholder representatives. The governance literature indicates that such factors are crucial in explaining board outcomes (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012) and, thus, it expected that they are important antecedents of a stakeholder representative's performance.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyse how SDs' board-level social interactions influence their individual role performance in Scottish football clubs. Any research that aims to analyse performance must offer a clear definition of the concept. Ong and Wan (2008, p. 318) state that "board role performance is generally denoted as a board's ability to perform its roles". It follows that SD role performance concerns the ability of an SD to perform his or her specific roles. This means that before this study can analyse how social

interaction influences SD role performance, there must first be a clear understanding of what the role of a SD specifically involves. The literature offers little insight into the roles performed by SDs, so this study needs to use primary methods to gain this knowledge. Thus, two research questions are proposed for this study:

- 1) What are the roles of SDs in Scottish football clubs?
- 2) How does board-level social interaction influence SD role performance in Scottish football clubs?

Scottish football is considered a highly appropriate context in which to conduct this research due, firstly, to the prevalence of stakeholder representation in this context. The most recent data show that 18 out of 42 professional clubs have at least one SD on their board (Supporters Direct Scotland, 2017). Studies have also highlighted significant issues with how SDs are performing in football clubs. For instance, McLeod (2018) showed that they have been disruptive to board dynamics, struggle to build trust with other directors, are viewed as outsiders on the board and are frequently exposed to conflicts of interest. As such, examining SDs' social interactions with their board colleagues, and how this influences their role performance, is expected to provide valuable insights for practice.

Supporter representation is becoming an increasingly topical issue in football. In the UK, leading political parties have made manifesto promises to give supporters a legislative right to representation on their club's board – irrespective of the club's ownership structure (Sparrow, 2019). In many European countries, and particularly in Germany, supporter representation is an established practice. Meanwhile, there have been growing calls for greater supporter involvement in club governance in countries as diverse as India and Australia (Howcroft, 2018; Sayak, 2020). Moreover, the growing momentum of the 'Fans Against Modern Football' movement, a sub-culture opposed to the commercialised and

profit-driven nature of contemporary football, is putting pressure on club owners to consider fans in decision-making (Fitzpatrick, 2014). It is important to note, though, that football fans are heterogeneous by nature and they do not all seek to be involved or consulted on club decisions (García & Welford, 2015). Some studies also show that supporter involvement in ownership and governance can be detrimental to clubs (O'Brien, 2017). Nevertheless, there is evidence of a growing appetite for supporter representation across the football industry, and this has also been apparent in other sports such as rugby (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007). As such, there is a need for researchers to examine how the model can work effectively, particularly in light of the problems identified in previous studies (McLeod, 2018).

This study uses social exchange theory (SET) to frame our understanding of how board-level social interaction influences SD role performance. SET proposes that all social life can be treated as an exchange of tangible and intangible rewards and resources between actors (Emerson, 1976). The theory posits that the quality of social relationships depends on rational judgements about the costs and benefits of continued engagement, and that relationships built on reciprocity can induce positive outcomes, such as successful performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The organisational literature has long credited SET as being an effective lens through which to understand how complex social interactions work, including in the context of boards (Auld & Godbey, 1998; Flynn, 2005). SET is thus considered a highly appropriate framework to guide this study due to its potential to offer rich insights into why SDs struggle to build strong relationships and trust with other directors (McLeod, 2018) and, subsequently, how this affects their performance.

In answering the two research questions, this study contributes in four areas. First, it contributes to the sport governance literature by developing new and important insights into the role and performance of an under-researched sport governance actor, the SD. Second, this study extends the broader literature on stakeholder representation by illuminating how board-

level social interaction influences the performance of a particular type of stakeholder representative. This builds on previous studies that have thus far focused too narrowly on measuring the impact of stakeholder representation and neglected to examine the antecedents and processes leading to performance. Third, this study enhances understandings of SET by offering a new perspective on how social exchange influence social dynamics and performance on sport boards. Finally, this study offers recommendations to SDs and other kinds of stakeholder representatives regarding how they can improve their performance.

2. Literature review

2.1 Board roles in sport

The first stage of this research is to examine the role of SDs in Scottish football clubs. Existing research on governance roles has been focused predominantly at the group-level (i.e., the board as a collective) rather than at the level of individual directors (McLeod, 2020). Inglis' (1997) seminal study found that amateur sport boards perform four roles: developing a mission, organisational planning, managing executives and community relations. A number of subsequent studies, however, highlighted issues with role ambiguity in many non-profit sport organisations (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Sakires, Doherty, & Misener, 2009; Schulz & Auld, 2006). Later research extended the literature by examining sport board roles in organisations that utilise a dual-board structure (Yeh, Hoye, & Taylor, 2011). Results highlighted key differences with organisations that use a one-tier board structure, such as the role that boards play in assigning work to executives (Yeh, Taylor, & Hoye, 2009). In addition, a series of studies have examined the strategic role of sport boards, and illustrated the importance of strategic capability for board effectiveness (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012, 2015).

The professionalisation of sport over the past 20 years has underpinned research on board roles. A consistent theme in the literature is that professionalisation is causing sport boards to transition to a more corporate-style of organisational governance where the role of the board is largely non-executive (Dowling, Edwards, & Washington, 2014; McLeod & Shilbury, 2020; Tacon & Walters, 2016). The empirical literature on board roles has focused primarily on non-profit sport organisations, namely state and national governing bodies, in a small number of countries (Australia, Canada and England) (Dowling, Leopkey, & Smith, 2018). There is a far less developed understanding of board roles in professional and commercial sport organisations (McLeod, Shilbury, & Ferkins, 2019).

Some studies have investigated the role of individual board members, such as the chair (Zeimers & Shilbury, 2020) and athlete representatives (Kihl & Schull, 2020), but this kind of research has traditionally been scarce. As such, there remains a gap in the sport governance literature concerning our knowledge of the roles of different types of individual directors, including SDs. It is important for researchers to try to address this gap. Without a comprehensive understanding of the purposes and responsibilities of specific directors, their performance cannot be assessed accurately (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). Thus, by answering the first research question – what are the roles of SDs in Scottish football clubs? – this study will provide a useful extension of the sport governance literature and contribute towards a most holistic understanding of the work of sport boards.

2.2 Board processes and performance in sport

The second stage of this study involves examining, using the lens of SET, how board-level social interaction influences SD role performance. In recent years, researchers have made good progress in analysing the social interactions between directors on sport boards (referred to in the literature as ‘board processes’), and how this influences board performance. In

particular, this has included studies on leadership, power dynamics and conflict (Hoye & Doherty, 2011; McLeod, Shilbury, & Zeimers, 2020; Schoenberg, Cuskelly, & Auld, 2016). Regarding leadership, studies have highlighted the importance of chairs being perceived to be authentic, and of chairs having frequent and high-quality interactions with their board colleagues and senior executives (Hoye, 2006; Takos, Murray, & O'Boyle, 2018). Other studies have illuminated the value of a collective approach to board leadership in national governing bodies (O'Boyle, Shilbury, & Ferkins, 2019). Studies on power have shown that sport boards are more likely to be ineffective when power is concentrated in a small number of directors (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003) or demographic group (Sibson, 2010). Meanwhile, research shows that adopting measures to facilitate social cohesion and trust, and mitigate conflict, can enhance board performance (Doherty & Carron, 2003; Hamm-Kerwin & Doherty, 2010; O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2016).

Similar to board roles, the board processes literature has been focused primarily on non-profit organisations and, more specifically, national and state governing bodies (Parent, Naraine, & Hoye, 2018). This kind of organisation invariably has a representative structure where individual representatives of different state organisations must work together to form and implement national sport strategies (McLeod, Shilbury, et al., 2020). Thus, we have a developed understanding of how social processes manifest and then influence board performance in sport organisations that adopt representative governance structures. A gap remains, however, in our understanding of how social processes influence the performance of individual stakeholder representatives, such as SDs, who typically operate in professional for-profit sport settings. Organisations in these contexts are often privately-owned and individual shareholders dominate their governance structures. SDs will typically be the only directors on the board that represent a broader stakeholder group (McLeod, 2018). These circumstances present a different, yet significant, set of challenges that warrant greater research focus. This

is an important gap to address in light of the reported inefficiencies in the way stakeholder representatives operate in professional sport (Welford, García, & Smith, 2015).

3. Theoretical framework

SET is considered to be among the most influential frameworks for understanding organisational behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). At its theoretical core lies a premise that all social life involves an exchange of tangible and intangible resources and rewards (e.g., kindness, knowledge, favours or money), and that all healthy relationships have ‘give and take’ (Zafirovski, 2005). Social exchange theorists maintain that exchange takes place if actors perceive the benefits of that exchange to outweigh the costs. Further, the theory proposes that trusting relationships are developed through mutually advantageous social exchange (Flynn, 2005). While other social theories such as social capital theory (Lee, 2009) also offer useful insight into how social dynamics affect performance, SET is considered the most appropriate framework for this study due to its specific focus on trust building and information sharing processes. Previous research suggests that these factors have been of key concern to the performance of SDs in football clubs (McLeod, 2018).

The literature delineates two main forms of social exchange, ‘reciprocal’ and ‘negotiated’ (Gill et al., 2019). Reciprocal exchange is initiated when actors perform beneficial acts for others (e.g., sharing knowledge) without necessarily knowing whether it will be reciprocated. Reciprocal exchanges are thus non-negotiated, meaning they are devoid of explicit bargaining (Chia-An Tsai & Kang, 2019). Nevertheless, these acts carry social obligations and expectations, and when the exchange process begins, each act can create and reinforce a cycle of reciprocal behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Reciprocal exchange is argued to be a dominant theoretical lens for analysing social relations. Its explanatory power has been felt in a wide range of empirical studies on social networks

(Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004), organisational justice (Konovsky, 2000), and leadership (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997).

Negotiated exchange differs from reciprocal exchange in that explicit agreement is sought on the terms of an exchange (Gill et al., 2019). In a negotiated exchange, participants focus on measurable benefits they will derive from the process. In a reciprocal exchange, the benefits actors may receive are unknown and therefore not immediately measurable (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Benefits derived from a negotiated exchange are generally more tangible, such as money, while benefits received from a reciprocal exchange often amount to intangible rewards, such as influence in a social group (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Empirical studies of negotiated exchange have focused on economic transactions (e.g. Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, & Valley, 2000), however the principles can also be applied to social relations. For example, Flynn (2005, p.739) discusses a scenario in which “two co-workers might explicitly agree to help each other by exchanging work shifts (“I’ll cover for you next weekend if you cover for me this weekend”)”. In this case, the social interaction has all the features of a negotiated exchange – the process is transparent and the terms of exchange are explicitly agreed upon.

Organisational governance researchers such as Westphal and Zajac's (1997) have used SET to explain why CEOs who hold independent directorships in other companies are more likely to argue for limited scrutiny of CEO activity. They argue that it is due to a generalised form of reciprocal exchange where CEOs, in their capacity as independent directors of other companies, promote a relaxation of the monitoring role in an act of solidarity. This act is reciprocated in other organisations and the cycle of behaviour is suggested to become self-reinforcing. Del Brio, Yoshikawa, Connelly and Tan (2013) proposed that directors are more likely to provide additional resources (e.g., financial assistance or enhanced budgets) for executive functions when they perceive CEOs to be of high integrity. The researchers argued

that this interaction represented a reciprocal social exchange – when CEOs acted with integrity boards reciprocated by offering financial resources. A consistent theme in the SET literature is that reciprocal exchange can be an influential and beneficial social mechanism (Gill et al., 2019; Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). A small number of studies have used SET in a sport governance context. Those studies similarly highlight the power of reciprocal exchanges, such as between professionals and volunteers (Auld & Godbey, 1998) and board members and executive directors (Inglis, 1994), to improve organisational efficiency.

This review demonstrates the usefulness of SET as a lens through which to understand organisational dynamics. In particular, empirical research supports the theory's capacity to explain why people may or may not be willing to exchange resources, and how this might impact outcomes, such as the development of trust (Gill et al., 2019). Accessing information, which can be viewed as a social exchange activity, is considered a key challenge for some SDs in Scotland due to a perception that they cannot be trusted to maintain confidentiality (McLeod, 2018). SET is thus expected to yield a high degree of explanatory value in relation to the issues faced by SDs and the social processes that influence their performance.

4. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore individual experiences and gain a deep understanding of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This approach was appropriate given that the aim is to gain an in-depth insight into the role and performance of SDs, from the perspective of individuals who have experience in the role.

4.1 Research context

The presence of SDs in the UK can be traced back to the 'supporters' trust movement' of the 2000s, which was a response to growing frustrations among football supporters over their

diminishing influence in football clubs during a period of sustained commercialisation (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008). Supporters' trusts (STs) are democratic membership organisations created with the aim of increasing the role of supporters in the ownership and governance of football clubs. Behind this movement is a historical context in which football clubs in Scotland, as is similar throughout Europe, have been owned privately by individuals or families (Adams, Morrow, & Thomson, 2017). Much to the distress of their supporters, many football clubs have suffered from governance failings and mismanagement under this form of ownership (Morrow, 2015). Throughout the 2000s, this created and strengthened a desire among supporters to organize themselves and gain influence in club governance (García & Welford, 2015).

Membership numbers for STs varies between the hundreds and tens of thousands in Scotland. Over the last two decades, many STs raised funds from members to buy shares in Scottish clubs (in Scotland clubs are typically formed as private limited companies) which in turn entitled them to board representation. In many cases (e.g., Dunfermline AFC), this opportunity came when clubs were experiencing financial problems. In others, club owners allowed STs to buy shares and gain board representation without a looming financial crisis (e.g., Kilmarnock FC). While in other cases, club owners have admitted SDs onto the board without a requirement for the ST to gain a shareholding (e.g., Hibernian FC). Some clubs controlled by private investors (e.g., Queen of the South FC) have resisted strongly the efforts of STs to gain board representation (Supporters Direct Scotland, 2017). As noted in the introduction, 18 out of 42 clubs competing in the four divisions of the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) are known to have at least one SD on their board. This increase in supporter involvement in governance represents a significant change in Scottish football, where boards have traditionally been populated by private investors (and their associates), while supporters had no formal influence in governance (McLeod, Adams, & Sang, 2020).

When STs (or a coalition of fan groups) have secured a representative seat on the club board, the individual is generally appointed following a one-member one-vote election process. The circumstances of a SD's ascent to the board are therefore unique compared to their board colleagues, who are appointed by the shareholder(s). Thus, unlike the other directors, SDs are representatives of two connected organisations that at times may have divergent interests (e.g., concerning the allocation of resources). Further, given that the SD is the only director not selected by the shareholder(s) – indeed the majority shareholder may ultimately dislike the person elected – SDs can often feel like 'outsiders' on the board (McLeod, 2018).

4.2 Sampling and data collection

Given that the research questions focused narrowly on SDs in Scotland, a purposive sampling approach was necessary. The sampling criteria included any individual that was currently serving, or has previously served, as an SD in a Scottish football club. The research team relied heavily on its network of contacts during the recruitment process. This was pivotal in light of the specific sampling requirements. The first step towards recruiting interviewees involved sending emails to contacts of the researchers who were either SDs themselves or were individuals that worked closely with SDs. Direct requests were made in the former scenario and requests for introductions were made in the latter scenario. In total, 17 individuals agree to be interviewed (11 current SDs and six former SDs). Six of the participants were from Scottish Premiership clubs, five from Scottish Championship clubs, three from League 1 clubs and three from League 2 clubs. The tenure of these individuals ranged from 1 year to 4 years. In the findings, the participants are coded as 'Interviewee 1', 'Interviewee 2' and so on. Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 9 both identified as female, while all other interviewees identified as male.

To elicit a rich understanding of how social interaction influences SD role performance, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method of data collection. The interview process began with the researcher briefing the interviewees on the purpose of the study and ethical issues. Confidentiality was offered to each participant. The researchers then started to work through the semi-structured interview guide. Broadly, the interviews were structured in two parts. First, and relating to the first research question, participants were asked what their role involves as a SD. Probing questions were subsequently asked to gain a deeper insight into the different elements of the SD role. Once this insight had been attained, the researchers asked questions relating to the second research question, which concerns the process of how board-level social interaction influences the performance of their role. Interview questions focused on the second research question were open-ended to start, such as “What conditions need to be in place for you to perform your role successfully?” Probing questions were asked thereafter to tease out the impact of social exchange on role performance. For example, interviewees were asked about information sharing processes and board dynamics. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the research team.

This study is limited in that it relies solely on the perspectives of SDs to inform the research questions. This study is interested in social exchange between SDs and other directors, and thus the findings only illuminate the perceptions of one party in this interaction. It is possible that other directors would offer a different view on the relevant issues. It is important, therefore, that the limits of this study are understood – it investigates how social interaction influences SD role performance from the narrow perspective of those in the role. Although SDs are expected to offer highly valuable insight, their perceptions on how social exchanges influences their performance do not necessarily align with other members of the board.

4.3 Data analysis

The template analysis approach was applied to the data. Template analysis is appropriate when the researcher is working with a particular theory in mind, but also wants to maintain a degree of flexibility in the analysis (King & Brooks, 2016). This was appropriate for the present study given the decision to adopt SET as an explanatory lens in addition to using qualitative methods that allow participants to share their own perspectives. There are seven stages of template analysis that were adhered to by the researchers. Each stage is identified and explained in Table 1. Further, to provide an ‘audit trail’ of the analytical process, examples of how the researcher completed each stage are provided where appropriate.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

5. Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion section is structured in accordance with the two research questions. First, the role of the SD is analysed. Second, the process of how board-level social interaction influences SD role performance is assessed.

5.1 The role of supporter directors

The first part of the interview required the participants to describe what their role as a SD entails. There was a high degree of similarity in their responses. The SDs interviewed generally perceived their role to encompass three elements, which are now described in turn.

The first element of an SD’s role was said to involve promoting the interests of supporters in board decision-making processes. Before this can be done, however, many SDs stated it was important to have a clear understanding of exactly who it is they represent, and then seek to understand that group’s views and interests. It was suggested by a number of participants that the task of establishing the limits of whom a SD represents is not

straightforward. SDs are generally voted in via a registered ST associated with the club, with each member of the trust having an equal vote. Therefore, formally, SDs only represent the members of a club's independent ST. Yet, often only a fraction of a club's supporter may be members of the ST. Despite this, the vast majority of the participants said they engage with any individual that claims to be a supporter of their club, but there was divergence over whose interests and views would be represented in board meetings. Approximately half of the interviewees said they only represent the consensus view of ST members on the board, while the remaining interviewees claimed to represent any individual's view if they perceived it to be just and valid.

The data show that when deciding whether to bring a matter raised by a supporter to the board, SDs largely try to adopt a "common sense approach" (Interviewee 2). This involves using their own judgement to decide whether a given issue is a substantive enough concern among the supporter-base to be worth debating during a board meeting. Although convenient, a limitation of this approach is that it is susceptible to a SD's own biases on the issues brought to their attention. SDs reported to use a wide range of methods to ascertain the supporters' views and interests. This includes email, online forums, monthly open-access supporter meetings, ST board meetings and club events.

The second element of the role was reported to involve SDs acting as a 'conduit' between the club's board and the supporters, particularly with regards to sharing information. Methods of sharing information with supporters varied across the sample. Some SDs had a dedicated section on the club website to post monthly or quarterly updates, while others relied solely on ST meetings to share information. A common theme across the interviews was that this element of the role requires careful management. SDs must be vigilant not to disseminate information to the wider supporter base that is commercially sensitive. However, given that the SD is ultimately representative of a prominent stakeholder group, participants

claimed it was vital to have a consistent two-way dialogue so supporters could be kept informed about important club developments. The following quote from Interviewee 11 highlights the challenging nature of this element of the role:

I've got to be quite careful because, yes, I am here as a representative of the fans and of course I am going to speak with them and let them know what's happening. As much as I can anyway! But it is important to remember that not everything is the fans' business, regardless of how interested they are. So you have to be careful with that.

The third element of the SD role concerned a responsibility to comply with fiduciary duties as legally registered directors of the football club. This element appears to underpin the two other aspects of the role that are more operational in nature. That is, in the process of representing the supporters' views in board meetings and acting as a conduit of information, SDs must at all times honour their legal responsibilities under the Companies Act 2006. The legislation sets out that all directors of companies in the UK must honour a series of duties (see Table 2). Interviewee 10 captured the three elements of the SD role in the following quote:

Representing the fans on the football club board, and making sure their views and the impact on them is considered. Managing the relationship between the Supporters' Trust board and the football club board, and also the general legal duties you have as a director. They are the three core responsibilities you have. (Interviewee 10)

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

This section has illustrated how SDs widely perceive their role to encompass three elements: (1) promoting supporters' interests in board meetings, (2) acting as a conduit of information, and (3) complying with their fiduciary duties. SD role performance, therefore, refers to the ability of SDs to perform these three roles successfully. Although the SDs

typically had a clear grasp of what their role should or does involve, a number of participants stated that the wider supporter-base often misunderstand their role. This seemed to be a significant frustration for those SDs: “The role is regularly misunderstood ... It is hard. You can spend a lot of time explaining what you can and can’t do” (Interviewee 4). As McLeod (2018) noted, the primary example of what SDs cannot do, which often does not register with supporters, is reveal information about commercially sensitive issues (e.g., player transfer targets or managerial dismissal decisions). What SDs are able to discuss with supporters is thus constrained by their fiduciary duties owed to the club, confidentiality agreements and the board’s collective appetite to share information.

The findings presented here regarding the role of SDs in Scottish professional football clubs provide new insight to the sport governance literature. Previous research has predominantly examined governing roles in sport at the group level (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012, 2015; Yeh et al., 2011). This study extends that literature by examining the role of a particular kind of director, the SD. This adds greater depth to our understanding of governance roles in sport. This is useful because boards do not operate only as a collective – boards are composed of an often diverse set of individuals that have different skills and priorities (Parent et al., 2018). Thus, illuminating the specific roles performed by SDs – a relatively unusual type of director – provides a foundation upon which more nuanced analyses of board outcomes, including performance, can be assessed in context.

It was notable that the interviewees had a consistent and unambiguous view as to what the role of a SD should involve. This is positive, particularly when considering that previous studies have consistently drawn attention to the inefficiencies caused by role ambiguity in non-profit sport organisations (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Sakires et al., 2009; Schulz & Auld, 2006). The role clarity SDs experience may be indicative of better governance practices, or perhaps a clearer organisational focus, in professional sport organisations compared to their

non-profit counterparts. As such, these findings also tentatively add to the literature that highlight differences in governance standards between professional and non-profit sport organisations (McLeod et al., 2019; Takos et al., 2018). Despite this, participants still reported a misunderstanding of their role, but this was on behalf of the stakeholder group. This indicates that role ambiguity is not only problematic when perceived by internal actors, but it can cause problems between directors and wider stakeholders. This insight builds on previous research, which has mainly examined the influence and dynamics of role ambiguity when perceived by internal actors (Doherty & Hoye, 2011).

The findings also add new insight to the broader literature on stakeholder representatives. This area of research has concentrated on measuring their impact on organisational outcomes (Kraft et al., 2011; Matten & Crane, 2005), whilst there has been a neglect of more detailed studies assessing the complexities and configuration of the role. Although SDs operate in different circumstances to other stakeholder representatives, their roles likely have similarities. However, research is needed to confirm this.

5.2 The role performance of supporter directors

Now that the role of SDs has been clarified, we can begin to address the second research question, which is concerned with how board-level social interaction influences SD role performance. As noted in the introduction, SDs are often seen as outsiders or ‘token directors’ on Scottish football club boards, which leads to them being denied influence and access to information on boards. This situation is said to occur because directors do not see value in the role of the SD, and they fear that SDs may leak commercially sensitive information to the wider supporter base (McLeod, 2018). Insight shared from the present study’s participants corroborated this proposition, for example:

I think, historically, the idea of fan representation has been met with derision by many people in this country. Maybe that is starting to change now, I hope it is. But certainly, in the past, there has been a view that they are not worthy or you can't trust them (Interviewee 1)

The present study's data illustrates that when SDs are treated as outsiders, lack influence in board meetings and are not provided access with organisational information, performing the three specific elements of their role becomes a significant challenge. For example, successful performance of the first element of the SD role – which involves promoting supporters' interests in board meeting – is hindered if an SD holds little social influence in board meetings. Similarly, successful performance of the second role element – acting as a conduit of information between the board and wider supporter-base – is mitigated if the board does not share relevant organisational information with the SD. The following quotes highlight these points:

It would be very easy for the Chief Executive or Chairman to decide not to mention something if they think you are just going to create problems, or if they think you are going to go running to the supporters and moan about any issue that might come up. (Interviewee 4)

To be effective as a fan director, you have to gain the confidence of your fellow directors, show that you aren't a mole in there who is going to give away commercial secrets ... It is trust, it is all down to trust. (Interviewee 2)

Across the interviews, there was an overwhelming perception that the key to overcoming the challenge of being treated as outsiders or token directors, and thus creating the conditions for themselves to perform their roles successfully, is to generate trust and buy-in with their board colleagues. Trust is "a psychological state comprising the intention to

accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p.395). In the present research, we are concerned with the trust (i.e., the intention to accept vulnerability and the expectations of positive behaviour) between the SD and the other directors. In this study ‘buy-in’ is understood as a situation in which the directors perceive the SD to add value to the board, namely as a result of their knowledge or skills. Although these two concepts – trust and buy-in – are likely to be mutually reinforcing, it is possible for one to exist without the other. For example, a board may believe in the value that SDs can offer in terms of providing feedback on commercial decisions, yet they may not trust a specific individual to maintain commercial confidentiality. Conversely, a board may trust a specific individual who is performing the SD role, however, they may not believe that he or she, or any other SD, is in a position to add value to the board. The following quotes exemplify the perceived importance of trust and buy-in for successful SD role performance:

If you have a board that is receptive to the idea of fan representation and you are a trusted and valued member of the group, then yes it can work well. But besides that, you’re going to be a token director. You’re just going to be a box to tick with no real influence. I can’t stress enough how important and critical it is to have that acceptance and trust, or you’re wasting your time. (Interviewee 6)

Do they actually want you there? I mean, yeah, that is the first thing. The fan rep will get nowhere if the owner isn’t bought into the idea [of supporter representation], if he doesn’t think that it going to be helpful. (Interviewee 13)

Adopting SET as an explanatory lens, the data strongly suggest that SDs can create these crucial conditions of trust and buy-in if they, in the course of their social interactions with the other directors, initiate and sustain patterns of reciprocal exchange. The following

sub-sections are dedicated to discussing and providing evidence of how this occurs in practice.

5.2.1 Creating buy-in through reciprocal exchange

Following analysis of the data, two main themes emerged regarding how SDs can initiate reciprocal exchange to help create buy-in among their board colleagues. The first theme concerns ‘supporter insights’. A common theme in the interviews was that providing pertinent insights to the board regarding the views of supporters can create buy-in. SDs were said to be highly embedded in at least one of a club’s key supporter groups – the ST – which puts them in a strong position to gain an understanding of what ‘normal’ supporters think and expect from the club. Although it was acknowledged that other innovative or engaged directors could also find ways of acquiring such insight, there was a perception among the SDs that this rarely happens in practice. As Interviewee 1 claimed: “I think a lot of directors are really quite detached from the community and everyday supporters”. Thus, SDs perceived themselves to be in a particularly strong position to provide valuable supporter (and therefore customer) information. Importantly, this insight can then inform business decisions:

I think it is good to have that voice on the board, to keep the board in touch with the fan base. There are certain time you just need to say to them ‘well actually the supporters won’t agree with that because...’ And you know what, the board really appreciate that because it can change the decision and possibly save them hassle down the line. They start to see real value in you being there. (Interviewee 15)

The above quote is indicative of how SDs believe they can enhance buy-in by providing key insights to the board. SET provides a useful explanation of this process. By offering insight to the board, it seems that SDs are engaging in an act of reciprocal exchange. According to the participants, when insight is provided, boards see the value in engaging with

SDs and respond by becoming more receptive to their presence (i.e., influence is provided in reciprocation). Subsequently, once influence and buy-in are achieved, the ability of SDs to perform their roles is enhanced. In particular, it was claimed that they will be taken more seriously when promoting the interests of fans in board decisions. Such interactions represent reciprocal exchange, rather than negotiated exchange, because the terms of exchange are not explicitly agreed.

The second key theme shows that the skills and experience possessed by a SD can be used to increase a board's sense of buy-in towards the SD. For instance, it emerged in the interviews that Scottish football clubs tend to have limited financial resources and rely on directors to provide their services on a voluntary basis. Subsequently, this was said to make the task of recruiting directors with valued expertise (e.g., financial, legal or property) challenging. It was often mentioned by the participants that, bearing this issue in mind, it was hugely beneficial to clubs if SDs could bring additional skills and experience to the board. Indeed, doing so not only benefited the club, but it also enhanced the level of buy-in towards the supporter representation model. Again, when buy-in exists, SDs are provided with more influence on the board in a pattern of reciprocal behaviour and, subsequently, this enhances their ability to perform their role. This point is illustrated in the below quotes.

I think at the moment, where the football club board is, my skills and experience have been helpful. Because there have been a few things that have come up at board meetings, for example around complying with certain legislation, where I could just see we were about to get ourselves into a bit of a pickle. And I can bring that bit of experience and help with that. So that's useful. (Interviewee 9)

We developed a paper that made it clear that anyone could stand. You don't need to have these skills, but that is what the club would find beneficial. And I would stand by

that because I think it is important that the director can positively impact the club, not just as a fan representative, but also as a director ... and when you do these things then you will get more recognition (Interviewee 10)

The evidence presented here further illustrates how SDs believe they can facilitate buy-in – by bringing useful skills to the board. Before this can occur, however, STs must first nominate and subsequently elect individuals with desirable professional expertise to the representative position. When this happens, SDs can help the club by offering their expert insight in board meetings, which arguably represents an act of reciprocal exchange. It is not guaranteed that the board will reciprocate by fully assimilating the individual into the board's social dynamic and decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the participants widely perceived the provision of skills and insight to be a significant and common facilitator of buy-in.

Previous research has made good progress in developing understandings of board processes and performance in sport. Specifically, this has included studies examining how leadership (O'Boyle et al., 2019), strategic capability (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015) and power (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003) manifest and influence board performance. The present study's findings build on this literature by illustrating the potential for reciprocal exchanges to facilitate the performance of a particular kind of director, the SD. In doing so, this research has offered a new perspective to the sport governance literature by analysing performance at the individual-level rather than the group-level. This is useful because it provides a more nuanced understanding of the work of specific governance actors that have reportedly been disruptive to board functioning in sport (McLeod, 2018). Further, compared to more prominent social processes such as leadership (Hoye, 2006), the notion of social exchange has received comparatively little attention from sport governance researchers. This study

therefore provides new insight to the sport governance literature by highlighting the value of SET as an explanatory lens for board behaviour and performance.

These findings also contribute to the wider stakeholder representation literature, which has been largely devoid of process-based studies (Fauver & Fuerst, 2006). As noted earlier, most research in this area has analysed whether the presence of stakeholder representatives on boards is related to outcomes such as financial performance and board efficiency. Results have been highly varied (Crucke & Knockaert, 2016; Kraft et al., 2011). This study indicates that the inconsistency of previous findings may be partly explained by the inability of some stakeholder representatives to create trust and buy-in through reciprocal exchange.

Previous studies using SET have long highlighted the capacity of reciprocal social exchange to create trusting relationships that are self-reinforcing (Chia-An Tsai & Kang, 2019). This pattern of behaviour has been found to enhance work outcomes, such as board efficiency, in various contexts (Del Brio et al., 2013; Kraft et al., 2011). This insight reflects the present study's findings, where reciprocal exchanges appear to generate trust, which then facilitates SD role performance. These findings also extend the SET literature by showing how reciprocal exchanges can create buy-in. As the literature review indicates, existing studies examining reciprocal social exchange have predominantly focused on how it influences trust (Gill et al., 2019). In contrast, social exchange theorists have given little attention to the concept of buy-in, yet these findings show that it can be an equally valuable resource created through reciprocal exchange. Thus, this study contributes to understandings of SET by highlighting different types of relational benefits that can be accrued through reciprocal social exchange.

5.2.2 Building trust through reciprocal exchange

Building trust was perceived to be crucial if SDs are to perform their roles successfully and manage the often competing interests of STs and football clubs. When a board shares information with a SD that may be commercially sensitive, particularly information that they know will be desirable to supporters (such as player transfer targets), they are accepting a level of vulnerability. Thus, to ensure that they do gain access to key information (which allows them to better perform their roles) the SDs often stated that they must convince the board that they will know the boundaries of and respect commercial confidentiality. A prominent theme in the interviews was that the most effective way of doing this is by adopting diplomatic behaviours and strategies. The following quote illustrates this:

If Supporters' Trusts have their heads screwed on, they don't put up a radical. They put up a bridge-builder. And that is what has got to be said, the softer stuff, that can make it work. But you don't put up a radical. What would happen is it would go to shit, you would have board meetings that didn't discuss a single thing, stuffed to the side and discussed elsewhere, agreed elsewhere and taken to the board to rubber-stamp. No discussion and that is it. And therefore the effective board is bypassed, and I have seen models like that before. Ultimately, it is just bad for the club, because you don't benefit from the openness of discussion. (Interviewee 2)

Interviewees 9 and 8 also identified the importance of adopting a non-confrontational, diplomatic approach in the trust building process:

And I think making the changes [developing trust] has been down to going in with a fairly clear agenda and not expecting the big things to happen immediately. Overcome those barriers, because then people see that actually we have nothing to be scared of here. Build up a confidence that we can work together. (Interviewee 9)

[To build trust] you need to have the ability to listen ... I would count myself as being calm, don't get too excited over issues, it is a case of putting them forward logically and in the correct manner so it does not appear confrontational if you like. (Interviewee 8)

Nine interviewees mentioned, either implicitly or explicitly, that informal interactions (i.e., outside board meetings) between SDs and other directors are an important part of the trust building process. The main forum at which these informal interactions appear to occur is football matches, which directors attend weekly during the season and all sit together in the directors' box. As Interviewee 7 noted: "We [the directors] car share for away games, so that has been really good for getting to know people... and for them to understand that I am a sensible guy that has good intentions for the club". This frequency of informal meeting between directors is perhaps idiosyncratic to the sport context, and could potentially have a significant impact on board dynamics.

Again, SET is useful in framing our understanding of how this trust building process unfolds. By engaging with the other directors in a diplomatic way, it is arguable that the SDs are initiating a reciprocal exchange process (Gill et al., 2019). As the above evidence indicates, adopting a diplomatic approach shows the board that the SD is not a 'radical' who will act irrationally and without consideration of the other directors' points of view. Consequently, the board appear to respond to their diplomacy by providing SDs with more detailed information, which they trust will be communicated to the supporters in a fair and balanced way. In turn, the performance of SDs is enhanced because they are better positioned to perform their role of acting as a conduit of information.

The findings presented in this sub-section further strengthen the contribution of this study to the sport governance literature. As noted earlier, that literature has paid limited

attention to the role and performance of individual directors such as SDs (Hoye, 2006; Zeimers & Shilbury, 2020). Yet, this kind of work is needed to generate more nuanced and detailed understandings of how key governance actors can provide value to organisations (García & Welford, 2015). This study helps to address that gap. Again, these findings also help to address the dearth in research that examines stakeholder representation as a process (Matten & Crane, 2005). Although Scottish football is an idiosyncratic context (Adams et al., 2017), the importance of trust and buy-in, and the ability to create those conditions through reciprocal exchange, is likely to exist across industries. Figure 1 below presents a process model that helps to visualise the findings. The model shows that SD must engage in a process of reciprocal exchange, where skills, insight and diplomacy are offered to the board. This helps to create trust and buy-in, and the board reciprocates by providing information and influence. These social conditions subsequently facilitate SD role performance.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

6. Conclusion

Supporter representation is common in European football and sport organisations around the world are increasingly considering adopting the practice (Howcroft, 2018; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2007). Despite this, research shows that SDs face distinct challenges that inhibit them from performing effectively and that their value is often not realised (McLeod, 2018). Consequently, the purpose of this study was to enhance understandings of the role of SDs in Scottish football clubs, and then analyse how board-level social interaction influences their performance. In achieving this purpose, this study has added new insights that can help SDs to overcome key challenges inherent to their role and add value to sport organisations and other stakeholders. In sum, this research makes four contributions, which are now summarised.

This study has developed the sport governance literature by identifying the roles performed by SDs, and by illuminating how SDs can enhance their role performance. To date, sport governance scholars examining governing roles have primarily focused on the board as a collective (Yeh et al., 2009). The roles of individual directors, such as SDs, has received comparatively little attention. This is a shortcoming of the literature insofar as it does not allow for nuanced analyses of individual directors' performance. This study has helped to address that gap and contribute towards a more holistic understanding of sport governance. In addition, although researchers have developed understandings of various board processes in sport, such as leadership and trust (Hoye, 2006; O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2016), the concept of reciprocal social exchange has rarely been studied. Thus, this research provides a useful new perspective to the literature by demonstrating the value that reciprocal exchanges can yield in sport governance contexts. This study also adds to the sport governance literature by analysing governing roles and performance in professional, for-profit sport organisations. Previous research has mainly focused on non-profit sports organisations (Dowling et al., 2018), and so this research helps to extend the sport governance conversation into more diverse contexts.

This study has extended the stakeholder representation literature. This body of research is dominated by quantitative studies that measure the impact of stakeholder representation on organisational outcomes (Dimovski & Brooks, 2004). The results of those studies have been mixed (Crucke & Knockaert, 2016), suggesting that stakeholder representation is a complex phenomenon. By examining the process of stakeholder representation via qualitative methods, this research helps to unravel the complexities of the practice. Specifically, the findings show that the performance of stakeholder representatives is linked to their ability to enact reciprocal exchange processes that build trust and buy-in.

The inconsistency of previous research findings likely reflects, in part, the inability of many stakeholder representatives to do this.

This study contributes theoretically by strengthening the argument that SET is an effective framework for explaining workplace behaviour. The findings add to previous studies that illustrate the capacity of reciprocal social exchange to induce positive work outcomes (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Scholars using SET have long highlighted how reciprocal exchange helps to build trust between organisational actors (Gill et al., 2019). This study mirrors that insight, but also extends the SET literature by illuminating the ability of social exchange processes to create buy-in. The concept of buy-in has rarely been a focus in SET studies, yet this research shows that it can be just as valuable as trust in organisational contexts. This research proposes that SET can have continued relevance to the ongoing development of supporter involvement in football governance. As traditional club owners face greater pressure to include supporters in decision-making, their relationships with key stakeholders such as STs, local communities and non-governmental organisations (e.g., the Football Supporters Association) will only grow in importance. SET can help scholars and practitioners understand how these relationships can be developed in a mutually beneficial way (Flynn, 2005).

This study has important implications for practice. While previous research shows that SDs often struggle to manage the demands of their role (McLeod, 2018), this study sets out strategies and behaviour they can employ to improve their performance. In particular, it shows that SDs need to actively seek out ways to initiate and engage in reciprocal social exchange with their board colleagues (i.e., by providing resources such as skills, insight and diplomacy). In addition, STs could use this study to help inform their election procedures. The findings illustrate how skilled, connected and diplomatic individuals will be better

positioned to perform the role successfully. STs could promote such qualities in candidate nomination processes.

There are limitations to this study that can help to inform future research. This study focused on how certain behaviours (i.e., social exchanges between the SD and the board) influence SD role performance. However, this study did not examine the personality traits that can help SDs to function successfully. Given the challenging nature of the role, particularly with regards to managing divergent interests and mistrust, certain personalities are likely to be more suited to the role. Although this study posits that individuals capable of offering diplomacy can facilitate role performance, it is unclear what other personality traits are beneficial. Exploring these issues will further develop our understanding of SD role performance and stakeholder representation more broadly. Related to this, future research should explore how demographic characteristics of SDs, such as their gender and locality to the club, influence their role performance. It is probable that such factors affect the trust building process, as well as the tendency for other directors to buy into the SD role.

Another limitation of this study is that it relies solely on the perspectives of SDs to inform on the antecedents of their role performance. Other stakeholders, including directors, supporters and club employees, may also offer useful insights into this issue. Future research on this topic is thus advised to take their perspectives into account. Moreover, it is recognised that the social interactions that SDs have with the group they represent is likely to have a considerable influence on performance. Thus, future research is encouraged to examine key social processes and relationships associated with SDs outside the boardroom.

References

- Adams, A., Morrow, S., & Thomson, I. (2017). Changing boundaries and evolving organizational forms in football: Novelty and variety among Scottish clubs. *Journal of Sport Management, 31*, 161–175.
- Addison, J. T., & Schnabel, C. (2009). Worker directors: A german product that did not export? *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society, 50*, 354–374.
- Auld, C., & Godbey, G. (1998). Influence in Canadian national sport organizations: Perceptions of professionals and volunteers. *Journal of Sport Management, 12*, 20–38.
- Bazerman, H., Curhan, J. R., Moore, D. A., & Valley, K. L. (2000). Negotiation. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*, 279–314.
- Brass, D. J., Galaskiewicz, J., Greve, H., & Tsai, W. (2004). Taking stock of networks and organizations: A multilevel perspective. *Academy of Management Journal, 47*, 795–817.
- Breitbarth, T., & Harris, P. (2008). The role of corporate social responsibility in the football business: Towards the development of a conceptual model. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 8*, 179–206.
- Chia-An Tsai, J., & Kang, T. C. (2019). Reciprocal intention in knowledge seeking: Examining social exchange theory in an online professional community. *International Journal of Information Management, 48*, 161–174.
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management, 31*, 874–900.
- Crucke, S., & Knockaert, M. (2016). When stakeholder representation leads to faultlines: A study of board service performance in social enterprises. *Journal of Management Studies, 53*, 768–793.

- Del Brio, E. B., Yoshikawa, T., Connelly, C. E., & Tan, W. L. (2013). The effects of CEO trustworthiness on directors' monitoring and resource provision. *Journal of Business Ethics, 118*, 155–169.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dimovski, B., & Brooks, R. (2004). Stakeholder representation on the boards of Australian initial public offerings. *Applied Financial Economics, 14*, 1233–1238.
- Doherty, A., & Carron, A. (2003). Cohesion in volunteer sport executive committees. *Journal of Sport Management, 17*, 116–141.
- Doherty, A., & Hoye, R. (2011). Role ambiguity and volunteer board member performance in nonprofit sport organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership, 22*, 107–128.
- Dowling, M., Edwards, J., & Washington, M. (2014). Understanding the concept of professionalisation in sport management research. *Sport Management Review, 17*, 520–529.
- Dowling, M., Leopkey, B., & Smith, L. (2018). Governance in sport: A scoping review. *Journal of Sport Management, 32*, 438–451.
- Downs, C. (2019, November 28). Do companies with workers on boards make longer-term decisions? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/do-companies-with-workers-on-boards-make-longer-term-decisions-127643>
- Emerson, R. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335–362.
- Fauver, L., & Fuerst, M. E. (2006). Does good corporate governance include employee representation? Evidence from German corporate boards. *Journal of Financial Economics, 88*, 673–710.

- Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2012). Good boards are strategic: What does that mean for sport governance? *Journal of Sport Management*, *26*, 67–80.
- Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2015). Board strategic balance: An emerging sport governance theory. *Sport Management Review*, *18*, 489–500.
- Fitzpatrick, C. (2014). The struggle for grassroots involvement in football club governance: experiences of a supporter-activist. In *Fan culture in European football and the influence of left wing ideology*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Fitzroy, F. R., & Kraft, K. (2005). Co-determination, efficiency, and productivity. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *43*, 233–247.
- Flynn, F. J. (2005). Identity orientations and forms of social exchange in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*, 737–750.
- García, B., & Welford, J. (2015). Supporters and football governance, from customers to stakeholders: A literature review and agenda for research. *Sport Management Review*, *18*, 517–528.
- Gill, H., Cassidy, S. A., Cragg, C., Algate, P., Weijts, C. A., & Finegan, J. E. (2019). Beyond reciprocity: The role of empowerment in understanding felt trust. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *28*, 845–858.
- Hamm-Kerwin, S., & Doherty, A. (2010). Intragroup conflict in nonprofit sport boards. *Journal of Sport Management*, *24*, 245–271.
- Hielscher, S., Beckmann, M., & Pies, I. (2014). Participation versus consent: Should corporations be run according to democratic principles? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *24*, 533–563.
- Howcroft, J. (2018, January 22). Fans should be at the heart of conversation on football

- governance. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/jan/22/fans-should-be-at-the-heart-of-conversation-on-football-governance>
- Hoye, R. (2006). Leadership within Australian voluntary sport organization boards. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *16*, 297–313.
- Hoye, R., & Cuskelly, G. (2003). Board power and performance within voluntary sport organisations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, *3*, 103–119.
- Hoye, R., & Doherty, A. (2011). Nonprofit sport board performance: A review and directions for future research. *Journal of Sport Management*, *25*, 272–286.
- Inglis, S. (1994). Exploring volunteer board member and executive director needs: Importance and fulfilment. *Journal of Applied Recreation Research*, *19*, 171–189.
- Inglis, S. (1997). Roles of the board in amateur sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, *11*, 160–176.
- Kennedy, D., & Kennedy, P. (2007). Supporter trusts and third way politics. *Sport in Society*, *10*, 285–303.
- Kihl, L. A., & Schull, V. (2020). Understanding the meaning of representation in a deliberative democratic governance system. *Journal of Sport Management*, *34*, 173–184.
- King, N., & Brooks, J. (2016). *Template Analysis for Business and Management Students*. London: Sage Publications.
- Konovsky, M. A. (2000). Understanding procedural justice and its impact on business organizations. *Journal of Management*, *26*, 489–511.
- Kraft, K., Stank, J., & Dewenter, R. (2011). Co-determination and innovation. *Cambridge*

- Journal of Economics*, 35, 145–172.
- Lawler, E. J., & Thye, S. R. (1999). Bringing emotions into social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 217–244.
- Lee, R. (2009). Social capital and business and management: Setting a research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 11, 247–273.
- Liden, R. C., Sparrowe, R. T., & Wayne, S. (1997). Leader-member exchange theory: The past and potential for the future. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 15, 47–120.
- Lioukas, C. S., & Reuer, J. J. (2015). Isolating trust outcomes from exchange relationships: Social exchange and learning benefits of prior ties in alliances. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58, 1826–1847.
- Matten, D., & Crane, A. (2005). What is stakeholder democracy? Perspectives and issues. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 14, 6–13.
- McLeod, J. (2018). A qualitative inquiry into supporter representation on Scottish football club boards. *Soccer and Society*, 19, 889–902.
- McLeod, J. (2020). Role of the board and directors: Board structure and composition. In D. Shilbury & L. Ferkins (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport Governance* (pp. 243–254). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- McLeod, J., Adams, A., & Sang, K. (2020). Ethical strategists in Scottish football: The role of social capital in stakeholder engagement. *Int. J. Business Governance and Ethics*, 14, 298–316.
- McLeod, J., & Shilbury, D. (2020). A content analysis of governance convergence in Indian sport. *The International Journal of Sport Management*, 21, 26–53.

- McLeod, J., Shilbury, D., & Ferkins, L. (2019). Board roles in Scottish football: An integrative stewardship-resource dependency theory. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2019.1699141.
- McLeod, J., Shilbury, D., & Zeimers, G. (2020). An institutional framework for governance convergence in sport: The case of India. *Journal of Sport Management*, DOI: 10.1123/jsm.2020-0035.
- Miller, T. L., Grimes, M. G., McMullen, J. S., & Vogus, T. J. (2012). Venturing for others with heart and head: How compassion encourages social entrepreneurship. *Academy of Management Review*, 37, 616–640.
- Morrow, S. (2015). Power and logics in Scottish football: The financial collapse of Rangers FC. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 5, 325–343.
- O’Boyle, I., & Shilbury, D. (2016). Exploring issues of trust in collaborative sport governance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 30, 52–69.
- O’Boyle, I., Shilbury, D., & Ferkins, L. (2019). Toward a working model of leadership in nonprofit sport governance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 33, 189–202.
- O’Brien, J. (2017). CA Osasuna: Identity, ownership and governance in Spanish club football. In B. García & J. Zheng (Eds.), *Football and Supporter Activism in Europe* (pp. 121–139). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ong, C. H., & Wan, D. (2008). Three conceptual models of board role performance. *Corporate Governance*, 8, 317–329.
- Osterloh, M., & Frey, B. S. (2006). Shareholders should welcome knowledge workers as directors. *Journal of Management and Governance*, 10, 325–345.
- Parent, M. M., Naraine, M. L., & Hoye, R. (2018). A new era for governance structures and

- processes in Canadian national sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32, 555–566.
- Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 393–404.
- Sakires, J., Doherty, A., & Misener, K. (2009). Role ambiguity in voluntary sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23, 615–643.
- Sayak, D. (2020, February 6). Delhi football fans to run football clubs with Football Delhi. *The Bridge*. Retrieved from <https://thebridge.in/football/delhi-football-fans-to-run-football-clubs-with-football-delhi/>
- Schoenberg, G., Cuskelly, G., & Auld, C. (2016). The role of intragroup dynamics in nonprofit governance models: A systematic quantitative literature review. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 21, 1–22.
- Schulz, J., & Auld, C. (2006). Perceptions of role ambiguity by chairpersons and executive directors in Queensland sporting organisations. *Sport Management Review*, 9, 183–201.
- Sibson, R. (2010). “I was banging my head against a brick Wall”: Exclusionary power and the gendering of sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24, 379–399.
- Sparrow, A. (2019, October 7). Corbyn: we will give football fans more say in how clubs are run. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/06/corbyn-we-will-give-football-fans>
- Supporters Direct Scotland. (2017). *SD Scotland Index*. Retrieved from <http://www.supporters-direct.scot/research/sd-scotland-index/>
- Tacon, R., & Walters, G. (2016). Modernisation and governance in UK national governing bodies of sport: How modernisation influences the way board members perceive and

- enact their roles. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8, 363–381.
- Takos, N., Murray, D., & O’Boyle, I. (2018). Authentic leadership in nonprofit sport organization boards. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32, 109–122.
- Van Buren, H. (2010). Taking (and sharing power): How boards of directors can bring about greater fairness for dependant stakeholders. *Business and Society Review*, 115, 205–231.
- Welford, J., García, B., & Smith, B. (2015). A “healthy” future? Supporters’ perceptions of the current state of English football. *Soccer & Society*, 16, 322–343.
- Westphal, J. D., & Zajac, E. J. (1997). Defections from the inner circle: Social exchange, reciprocity, and the diffusion of board independence in U.S. corporations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 161.
- Widmer, C. (1993). Role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload on boards of directors of nonprofit human service organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 22, 339–356.
- Yeh, C. M., Hoye, R., & Taylor, T. (2011). Board roles and strategic orientation among Taiwanese nonprofit sport organisations. *Managing Leisure*, 16, 287–301.
- Yeh, C. M., Taylor, T., & Hoye, R. (2009). Board roles in organisations with a dual board system: Empirical evidence from Taiwanese nonprofit sport organisations. *Sport Management Review*, 12, 91–100.
- Zafirovski, M. (2005). Social exchange theory under scrutiny: A positive critique of its economic-behaviorist formulations. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*, 1–40.
- Zeimers, G., & Shilbury, D. (2020). The interconnected roles of the chair. In D. Shilbury & L. Ferkins (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport Governance* (pp. 262–275). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Table 1: Stages of template analysis (King & Brooks, 2016)

Template analysis stage	Explanation	Application to present study
1. Data familiarisation	This stage requires the researchers to read each transcript multiple times to become familiar with the data.	All four members of the research team independently read the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data.
2. Initial coding	This stage involves applying codes to sections of the data that reflected <i>a priori</i> and emergent themes.	<p>All members of the research team were involved in the coding process. Over two meetings, the team engaged in a time-consuming process of analysing the data collectively to arrive at a shared interpretation. Disagreements and uncertainties were resolved through discussion. Due to the collective approach taken, inter-coder reliability was not measured in percentage terms.</p> <p>As the researchers were using SET to frame their understanding of SD role performance, it was agreed that ‘reciprocal exchange’ and ‘negotiated exchange’ would be the two broad <i>a priori</i> themes. Where SDs appeared to be engaging in acts of reciprocal or negotiated exchange, appropriate codes were applied. For example, participants frequently implied that when they provide skills to the board, the board often reciprocate by giving them greater influence. This occurrence was coded as ‘skills’.</p>
3. Clustering	This stage involves clustering together initial codes that relate to each other under broader themes.	<p>Example:</p> <p>The codes of ‘skills’, ‘supporter insight’ and ‘diplomacy’ were clustered together under the theme of ‘reciprocal exchange’. The codes of ‘supporter buy-out’ and ‘financial agreements’ were clustered under ‘negotiated exchange’.</p>
4. Producing the initial template	At this stage, clusters of themes are used to formulate the template, which is manifested as a hierarchical list. The initial template was developed after the coding of 10 interview transcripts (as is advised by King and Brooks, (2016)).	<p>Example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Exchange <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Reciprocal exchange <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Skills 1.1.2. Supporter insight 1.1.3. Diplomacy

5. Developing the template	This stage involves applying the initial template to the remaining transcripts (i.e., reading through the data to examine whether the template accurately reflects the meaning of the data). When the researcher encounters data that does not reflect the template, the template is adjusted by either adding, removing or merging themes	<p>Example:</p> <p>As the researchers developed the analysis, they interpreted that reciprocal exchange was the process through which the SDs achieve ‘trust’ and ‘buy-in’, which, in turn, appeared to facilitate role performance. The hierarchical order of the template was reorganized to reflect this interpretation, with additional themes added.</p>
6. Producing the final template	When the template is applied to all of the data, and it is considered to accurately reflect it, the template is finalised	<p>Example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role performance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Trust <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Reciprocal exchange <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1.1. Diplomacy 1.2. Buy-in <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1. Reciprocal exchange <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1.1. Skills 1.2.1.2. Supporter Insight
7. Writing up	The final stage involves using the template as a guide to scrutinize patterns in the data, interpret the data, and structure the study’s findings	<p>Example:</p> <p>Once the template was finalised, the researchers noted that the themes of trust and buy-in, and SD ultimately role performance, were not associated with negotiated exchange processes. Thus, it was decided that negotiated exchange should not be incorporated into the findings.</p>

Table 2: The general duties of UK directors

Section CA06	The general duties
171	Duty to act within powers conferred by the company constitution
172	Duty to promote success of the company for the benefits of its members as a whole
173	Duty to exercise independent judgement
174	Duty to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
175	Duty to avoid conflict of interest
176	Duty not to accept benefits from third parties
177	Duty to declare interest in proposed transaction or arrangement

Figure 1: The influence of social exchange on SD role performance

