CEO succession in sporting organisations: A network perspective

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Lloyd Brian Rothwell, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the UTS Business School at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Table of Contents

Tables

Figures

Abstract

This thesis investigates the social networks of chief executive officers (CEOs) of Australian national sport organisations (NSOs) in the context of succession. In doing so, the importance of CEOs' networks to their appointment is assessed. Further, the specific aspects of CEOs' networks which they view as being advantageous to their selection are identified. In light of the well-established lack of diversity in leadership positions in sport, comparisons are made between the networks of male and female CEOs.

Thirteen CEOs participated in this research (four female, nine male) from eleven NSOs (four professional sport NSOs and seven Olympic sport NSOs). Data was collected using social network surveys and semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that in the context of succession, CEOs perceive networks and networking to be important. An effective network enables access to valuable resources, which might not otherwise be available. In the context of succession, networks also provide access to succession opportunities and facilitate contact (and later trust) between potential successors and key decision-makers. CEOs consider it advantageous to be embedded in relevant social networks at the time of their appointment. While insider successors have the advantage of existing networks within the NSO and their member organisations, outsider successors view their wider networks amongst related stakeholders as beneficial to their candidature. Networking impacts career progression through mentorship, sponsorship, and the provision of wise counsel when needed. Notably, the research found major differences in CEO networks are by gender, insider / outsider status, and type of NSO (professional or Olympic sport) they lead.

This study makes an important and unique contribution to knowledge by examining CEO personal networks, which extends the work of others who have previously linked social networks to CEO succession and selection. Further, this research builds on sport management literature by adding to the small body of work examining executive succession and answering calls to empirically connect social networks to career progression. By identifying differences in the networks and networking experiences of CEOs based on gender, this study adds to the sport management literature which has previously shown females are disadvantaged in these areas and builds on the work of management scholars who have noted differences between males and females.

Chapter One: Introduction and overview

1.1 Research problem

1.1.1 Origins of the study

The inspiration for this research originally derived from a general interest in the leadership of sporting organisations. As a person who has been active in sport across many levels as an athlete, coach, volunteer, and administrator, I developed a natural curiosity in wanting to understand how sport organisations are run and by whom. This led to several additional questions. What makes a good leader in this context? How are leaders identified, developed, and assessed? And then by extension, who is chosen to lead these organisations and what are the defining characteristics that lead to their selection? This interest was sparked by my observations on the recruitment of chief executive officers (CEOs) into sport organisations over many years. In many instances, the recruitment of a particular CEO is judged by a layperson as a reasonable appointment. That is, they appear to have the required characteristics and experiences as leaders in the sport industry. Sometimes they are former athletes or coaches. At times, however, it seemed as though the old maxims 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' or 'jobs for the boys' were the prevailing influences on CEO selection in sport.

Further, on more than one occasion, as both a sports fan and practitioner working in the industry, I found myself surprised upon hearing who high-profile sport organisations were appointing as their new CEO. There was seemingly no immediate standout reason to justify their selection. One such announcement seemed especially outside the ordinary; a successful former professional sports club CEO was named to lead an Olympic national sport organisation (NSO). At first glance, this appeared to be an odd choice in terms of fit. Indeed, I wondered what relevant experience or knowledge would be transferable in this situation. Yet, the appointment was celebrated as being somewhat of a coup for the organisation. Upon further investigation, it appeared as though the underlying reason was that the incoming CEO had excellent networks across the corporate and media sectors and, therefore, was well-positioned to drive much-needed positive commercial outcomes for the sport.

This argument was plausible, as the sport was experiencing a decline in media coverage, sponsorship, results on the international stage, and general public interest. However, several other changes occurred around this time involving the structure of the organisation, turnover of other senior leaders, and the delegation of high-performance program delivery to individual coaches spread across the country rather than being managed centrally. A downturn in fortunes following the highs of the Sydney 2000 Olympics was perhaps inevitable, yet the challenges and strategic decision-making led by the new CEO undoubtedly contributed to a raft of problems in the NSO and the sport. A failure in executive leadership led to a spectacular and public implosion involving athletes, coaches, executives, and directors – culminating in an Olympic team which failed to perform to expectations amidst allegations of a toxic culture.

Thus, an appointment supposed to drive positive commercial outcomes instead produced a dysfunctional culture throughout the sport, including allegations of bullying, harassment, and misbehaviour amongst the national team athletes, coaches, and management. The lack of leadership development and succession planning across all areas of the sport was later highlighted in independent review reports. Given this example, I wanted to better understand how and why CEO succession processes and decisions are made, and how networks fit into the determinants of CEO appointments. This led the framing of the research design, encompassing social networks to investigate the research problem outlined in the following section.

1.1.2 Overview of research problem

Little research has been conducted into the social and relational aspects of CEO succession and selection, and sport leader succession – particularly administrators in leadership positions within sport organisations, such as a CEO. Despite the possible impact of a CEO's social networks on organisational performance, the reasons for the appointment of a new CEO are not well understood. While early succession research often used competitive sport as a context for developing and testing theory, sport has its own unique features. Thus it can be argued that the management of sport, and the leadership of sports organisations, may contain sufficient differences from other aspects of business and organisational research to merit its own line of academic enquiry. Therefore the central focus of this thesis is to investigate the personal social networks of

CEOs of sport organisations in the context of their appointment. As will be outlined, this research will make a unique and significant contribution to the body of research regarding the process of CEO succession, sport leader succession, and applied social network theory.

1.2 Research aim and questions

Based on this introductory overview, this thesis will address the following aim and research questions.

Aim: To investigate the social networks of Australian national sport organisation CEOs in the context of succession

Research Question One (RQ1): How do CEOs perceive the importance of social networks in executive leadership appointments?

Research Question Two (RQ2): What components of social networks do CEOs consider to be advantageous in their appointment?

Research Question Three (RQ3): How may social networks of male and female CEO differ in their characteristics?

1.3 Background

1.3.1 CEO succession

While CEO succession is a popular research topic, there is a knowledge gap concerning how boards manage succession, including what factors are considered and to what extent, and the impact this has on candidate selection (Schepker et al., 2018). The corporate CEO succession literature is fragmented and yet focused on the event without sufficient attention given to wider contextual factors (Giambatista et al., 2005). Empirical qualitative studies in this area remain scarce (Berns & Klarner, 2017) while research largely relies on data from large North American firms (Buckland et al., 2019). Schepker et al. (2018) are an exception as they employed a mixed method approach to collect data through interviews and surveys to provide a thorough and robust view of the succession process using empirical data. Other than the insider-outsider distinction,

little is known why successors are chosen, which reflects the fact that the focus to date has been on organisational performance and strategy rather than social aspects (Nyberg et al., 2021). To some extent, focusing on the event of succession has stymied research as there is no fundamental theory or model of succession; therefore, there is a need for researchers to seek out new methodologies and different theoretical lenses. Within a sports context, the succession literature deals almost exclusively with the appointment of head coaches of competitive sports teams rather than CEOs (For example: Dohrn et al., 2015; Shipherd et al., 2019; Soebbing & Washington, 2011; Wangrow et al., 2018). Similarly, there are few qualitative studies examining sports leader succession (A rare exception being Kattuman et al., 2019), In summary, there is a scarcity of research addressing the relational and social aspects of succession. Likewise, there is a contextual gap concerning CEO succession in sport organisations.

1.3.2 Relational leadership and the network perspective

Relational leadership theory is one of the more popular theoretical approaches to leadership (Frawley et al., 2019). This theory is based on the idea that it is not only attributes and characteristics that are important but also the relationships between people (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006). Uhl-Bien (2006) argues that relational leadership theory focuses not on measuring effectiveness through outcomes but rather on the processes through which leadership is practised. She states that in this context, leadership is primarily about social influence and that social relationships rather than formal management practices drive these processes. Scholars affirm that managing social relations and understanding the impact of relationships is critical for leaders to understand how their organisations function (Cross & Parker, 2004; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008). Building and maintaining relationships is thus a priority for leaders who want to perform their role effectively, and is also necessary for career advancement (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2011). Leadership researchers therefore advocate for the inclusion of network advice in leadership development programs (McCauley & Palus, 2021).

Social network theory posits that outcomes are, at least partially, dependent on the structure of relations between people (Robins, 2015). Individuals and their actions are interdependent and the links between them allow for the transfer of resources

(Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The network perspective has much to offer the relational view of leadership, both theoretically and methodologically, as it has the advantage of being able to consider both the functional and social aspects of leadership (Kukenberger et al., 2019). Balkundi and Kilduff (2006), Carter et al. (2015), and Jokisaari (2017) have all made strong cases for the use of social network analysis (SNA) in studying leadership. They note that the position of a leader in internal and external networks of their work groups is related to the performance of their team. Carter et al.'s (2015) review of social network leadership research identified a number of studies showing the attainment of leadership positions was influenced by an individual's social network. Further, in the context of sport organisations, a CEO with social and relational skills is viewed as essential to organisational success (Marjoribanks & Farquharson, 2016). Thus, there is a strong case for connecting social networks to the study of leadership.

1.3.3 Social network theory and CEO succession

One key factor which has not been adequately conceptualised to date is the CEOs' relationships and connections. Social network theory hypothesises that the position of an actor within a network both constrains and provides opportunities (Borgatti et al., 2018). Given the importance of relationships and dyads to successful leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2011), Cao et al. (2006) argue that CEOs' personal networks impact organisational performance and thus should be an important consideration in succession decisions. The authors contend that the structure of networks, and a person's level of embeddedness within those networks, affects performance capabilities within the organisation (intrafirm networks) and within the external operating environment (interfirm network). They call for greater understanding of the variety within CEO networks by examining their distinctions (such as internal versus external, industry versus non-industry, etc.). Others have suggested work-related networks in relation to career advancement, particularly concerning women in leadership, merit further investigation (Shaymardanov et al., 2023). The importance of networks is reflected in labour market outcomes whereby well-connected employees have better outcomes than their counterparts (Montgomery, 1991). Further, a CEO's informal social networks play an important role for an organisation, as network ties are maintained to ensure continuity of resources, such as supplies and capital (Westphal et al., 2006). Despite

this, the network perspective remains underexplored in the CEO succession literature (Kim et al., 2022).

1.3.4 Gender diversity in leadership

Gender equity research in Australia has found strong links between women serving in leadership roles and improvement in organisational performance (Cassells & Duncan, 2020). Despite this, women remain underrepresented in key roles, holding 30% of directorships and only 14% of chairs. Women hold 7% of CEO roles and 23% of executive leadership team positions in ASX200 companies (Chief Executive Women, 2018). Recent reports suggest the number of women on the boards and in executive leadership positions amongst Australia's largest corporate entities has reached 35% as of 2021 (Wright et al., 2023). In 2016, approximately 22% of board directorships, 20% of chairs, and 21% of CEO positions within NSOs were held by women (Adriaanse, 2016). However, in 2023, women still only represented 25% of chairs and 23% of CEOs (Clearinghouse for Sport, 2023), suggesting progress has been slow at best. As such, sport is often perceived as an industry in which 'old boys' clubs dominate (Hartzell & Dixon, 2019). Notwithstanding the noted benefits of a diverse workforce and a welcoming approach towards diversity when appointing leaders, very few studies have incorporated systems, such as succession management, which can positively impact diversity (Virick & Greer, 2012). Similarly, some scholars consider diversity to be underexplored in leadership theory (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Warren et al. (2019) have called for researchers to identify whether positive factors such as egalitarian cultures, gender diversity on boards, male champions of change, HR investment, and an inclusive climate affect organisational flourishing through diversity and inclusion. This research aims to address some of these deficits.

1.4 Research context

1.4.1 CEO succession

While CEO succession is inevitable for all organisations, it is also considered different from lower-level succession events (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). As the leader of an organisation, the CEO assumes responsibility for strategy and performance. Thus, a CEO succession event will likely affect every employee and stakeholder. As indicated by Darouichi et al. (2021), there is an extensive body of research concerning CEO

succession. This includes several literature reviews. Two of the most recent reviews have been authored by Berns and Klarner (2017) and Schepker et al. (2017). However, the research to date has largely focussed on succession as an event; that is, the 'who' and 'when' rather than the process or the 'how' (Berns & Klarner, 2017). Finkelstein et al. (2009) describe the literature as being focussed on the consequences of succession to the detriment of understanding important contextual factors – such as social and relational aspects.

Much of the existing CEO succession literature is framed around the question of insider/outsider successor origin (For example Cannella Jr & Lubatkin, 1993; Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002b; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). These studies seek to uncover the circumstances in which an insider or outsider is the chosen successor (Balsmeier et al., 2013; Friedman & Olk, 1995; Jung, 2014), and the impact this choice might have on various outcomes, such as organisational performance (Bommer & Ellstrand, 1996; Georgakakis & Ruigrok, 2017), share price (Borokhovich et al., 1996), and culture (Barron et al., 2011).

Others suggest the insider/outsider distinction can also be applied to informal networks and may instead represent behaviour, attributes, and views that are outside of the generally accepted norm (i.e., iconoclastic) (Buckland et al., 2019). For instance, Moore (1988) described women in powerful positions who come from a privileged background as "insiders on the outside" (p. 582) due to their lack of prominence in social networks. As such, Davidson et al. (2002) have called for more studies to be conducted where the outsider definition refers to race or gender.

1.4.2 Context of sport in Australia

Scholars argue that sport and the management of sport is unique and distinguishable from other forms of business (Shilbury, 2022; Stewart & Smith, 1999). While there is no doubt sport is more corporatised than ever before, it remains distinctive in that it possesses "special features" which help define the industry as unique (Smith & Stewart, 2010, p. 1). Yet, there is also a wide variety of organisational structures and governance models within sport. For instance, sport organisations may be for-profit, not-for-profit, public, private, member-owned, and so on. This may vary

based on geographical location around the world and level of sport (such as recreational compared to elite). This logically has the potential to impact networks and organisational decision-making. In a thorough review, Smith and Stewart (2010) conclude that despite the fast-paced change which has occurred in recent decades, there are still unique features of sport including a need to attempt to equalise competition, implementation of anti-competition business practices, unmatched public scrutiny, and athletes as a tightly controlled commodity.

As an industry and a cultural institution, sport generates a large amount of public scrutiny in mainstream and social media, and there are increasing pressures to achieve multi-faceted broadcast and sponsorship deals to improve financial sustainability. Likewise, the community is becoming less accepting of public funding and subsidies being provided for high-performance sport (Gowthorp et al., 2017). Many organisations must now attempt to closely balance the competing challenges of meeting mass participation and elite high-performance targets (Yeh & Taylor, 2008). Indeed, measuring success for sporting organisations is complex and multidimensional (Shilbury & Moore, 2006), with no recognised single approach (O'Boyle & Hassan, 2014)

Sport in Australia is generally governed by NSOs recognised by Sport Australia (the Australian government agency responsible for leading and supporting sport) as the preeminent body for their sport (Sport Australia, 2020a). NSOs administer participation and high performance for their particular sport within Australia and on a representative basis internationally. They are also usually affiliated with international governing bodies and peak bodies, such as the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), Paralympics Australia (PA), and Commonwealth Games Australia (CGA). Many of these organisations administer Olympic sports (e.g., Athletics Australia, Swimming Australia, etc.). There are also highly commercialised NSOs who operate popular professional sporting leagues (e.g., AFL). NSOs typically rely on a mix of government funding and grants, corporate sponsorship, broadcasting revenue (predominantly for professional leagues), and participation levies.

1.4.3 Leadership and management of NSOs

CEOs in sport, as in other industries, are the primary leader of their organisation. In particular, leaders in the sport industry have to be able to collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders such as government, major venues, international bodies, state and district associations, clubs, and commercial organisations (Hoye et al., 2008; Hoye et al., 2018). Moreover, pressures experienced by those in CEO roles, such as stresses of time and people, visible results, multiple and competing stakeholders, and information overload, may be exacerbated in the sport industry due to unpredictable and extensive hours which often include significant out-of-hours and weekend work (Dixon et al., 2023). NSOs in Australia have complex missions encompassing both elite high-performance sport and (desired) mass grassroots participation at community level (Shilbury et al., 2023). Hence, NSO CEOs in Australia lead their organisation *and* their sport. CEOs are thus viewed as the spokesperson for their particular sport (Trosien & Ratz, 2019) The popularity of sport, particularly in Australia, means that CEOs of major sporting organisations have a high public profile. Working in the sport industry is viewed as being glamorous and exciting (Weight et al., 2021). CEOs and chairs receive regular media coverage, and some are public personalities in their own right (Harris, 2013). In the amateur era of sport in Australia, many administrators transitioned into management following the conclusion of their athletic careers. Swanson and Kent (2014) found that sport-specific expertise (management, coaching, playing) provides credibility to those in leadership positions within sporting organisations. In an Australian sport context, the CEO is the central figure in an organisation, responsible, in particular, for managing relationships to ensure the board remains focussed on strategy and allowing the paid workforce to manage operations (Marjoribanks & Farquharson, 2016). A further feature of Australian sport is that administrators move from sport to sport, in many cases, to further their careers.

There is limited research into the background and career path of Australian sport administrators. Only Marjoribanks and Farquharson (2016) highlighted the significance of the social and relational aspects of the CEO role with their findings that CEOs of Australian Football League (AFL) clubs needed a diverse range of skills, including the critical ability to build and manage relationships and interactions. Likewise, industry experts argue CEOs of European professional football clubs need to prioritise

relationships with their fellow executives and their board, along with external stakeholders (Lawrence, 2021). Studies in the US have examined the educational, athletic, and coaching background of general managers (GMs) in Major League Baseball (MLB) (Wong & Deubert, 2010), the National Basketball Association (NBA) (Wong & Deubert, 2011), and the National Football League (NFL) (Deubert et al., 2013). Demographically, GMs in these sports are primarily white and male. As the route to professional sport in North America is often through an elite collegiate sport system, GMs tend to be well-educated and hold university degrees. More MLB GMs than ever before attended prestigious universities, such as Ivy League universities, reflecting the increased focus on statistics and commercial business success (Wong & Deubert, 2010). However, little is known regarding the interactions and relationships between those holding key positions in sport organisations (Foster et al., 2024).

Research shows many women holding top management positions within the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) are former athletes or coaches, with networks playing an important role in their career progression (Fletcher, 1999). There is some evidence that a background in coaching (or indeed as an athlete) may be beneficial for women seeking an administrative leadership role, as it provides a form of social capital in the eyes of others (Taylor & Wells, 2017). However, studies show the relationship between playing and front office experience has no impact on organisational performance (Juravich, 2012). Rather, a GM's level of education appears to be a more effective predictor of team success in professional sports (Juravich et al., 2017; Peeters et al., 2020).

Thus, while sport management research has traditionally followed the same trajectory of the broader management literature, there remains an opportunity to uncover how these theories may differ within the unique and special context of sport (Chalip, 2006; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). In turn, findings in the sport management field may add value to the broader management leadership research (Frawley et al., 2019).

1.5 Research design

1.5.1 Overview of research design

This research applied a mixed method approach drawing on social network theory to examine CEO succession. Further, a pragmatic approach was adopted for this study. Pragmatism is a practical and applied research philosophy (Denzin, 2012) that draws from both qualitative and quantitative assumptions (Creswell, 2003). This approach is best suited for this study as it values the importance of experience and practical usefulness rather than being committed to any single paradigm or approach (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Pragmatism is commonly the philosophical underpinning for studies that contain elements of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (Denscombe, 2008). In this research, a qualitative design was complemented with social network analysis to better understand the context of the results and interpret and understand the data (Angot & Josserand, 2001); this suits a pragmatic underpinning.

The network analysis undertaken in this thesis consists of a series of personal networks, known as ego-centric networks. These networks consist of a focal actor (ego), in this case CEOs involved in succession events, and their ties to network partners (alters). An ego-centric network is a network as it is seen by the central actor (Marin & Hampton, 2007). The strength of using ego-centric networks is their propensity to elicit rich data when compared to a whole network study (Borgatti et al., 2018). Data is gathered by administering an interviewer-administered questionnaire which elicits a list of network partners. Once formed, each network was first analysed individually and then combined for further observation.

Following the social network analysis, qualitative and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. Social network research which adopts only a quantitative approach neglects the qualitative aspects of relationships (Froehlich et al., 2020). Network researchers assert that a multi-method approach incorporating qualitative aspects is essential in ego-centric research (Chamberlain, 2006; Crossley et al., 2015; Perry et al., 2018). Crossley et al. (2015) argue that qualitative data is essential to be able to understand the view from 'inside' the network. Chamberlain (2006) argues that interviews provide important and detailed insights into the relationship ties within the

network. Using both quantitative and qualitative data provides an important means of triangulation and ensures a robust design.

Moreover, using semi-structured interviews allowed the exploration of network-related and CEO succession-related topics to address the research problem more fully. As well as providing an additional layer of depth in examining the network of each participant, interviews were used to probe the CEO recruitment process, leadership development, succession management, the role of social networks, the act of networking, and comparative gendered experiences.

This study was conducted as interpretive research, with the setting being Australian NSOs. Interpretative research aims to understand the meaning of the behaviour of individuals within their social setting. The sample of CEOs is drawn from nineteen of the leading professional sport and Olympic sport NSOs in Australia. CEOs were recruited on the basis of having experienced succession between 2011 and 2020.

1.6 Research contribution

In responding to the research aim and questions, this research contributes to theory and practice as outlined in the following two sections.

1.6.1 Theoretical contribution

This thesis extends the work of those who have previously conceptualised the importance of CEO social networks for executive succession. In doing so, this study makes a significant and unique contribution to knowledge by focussing on the perspective of the CEO, an aspect which has previously been ignored. Further, this research extends the small body of work studying CEO succession in sport by using a network perspective, and builds on the existing literature linking social networks to employment outcomes in sport management contexts. Also, this research contributes to theory by identifying differences in the personal networks of male and female CEOs.

1.6.2 Practical contribution

The research presented in this thesis provides a number of practical learnings for industry. The importance of social networks, for both individuals and organisations, is

the key feature of this work. That is, for CEOs, networks are linked to career progression and perceived leadership performance. Organisations should be cognisant of the significance of networks in the context of succession and consider whether a network perspective is worthy of inclusion in leadership development and succession management plans. Further, organisations should assess whether such programs are producing an acceptable level of diversity within their pipeline of future leadership prospects.

1.7 Delimitations

This study has several delimitations in its scope. First, the research concerns the personal social networks of CEOs who have been involved in succession. Therefore, other aspects of succession are not considered. Inherent in this thesis is the importance of networks in succession, with the understanding that networks can impact organisational performance. However, this is only explored in the context of the CEOs' perception as to their ability to perform in the job. Second, personal social networks by their nature are solely relevant to the individual actor at the centre of the network. Thus, while larger network forces may be present during succession events, the design of this study is predominantly focussed on CEOs. Third, the study uses only CEO succession events within the stated population of organisations over ten years from 2011 to 2020.

1.8 Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into chapters as follows:

Chapter One has provided background and context to the study while also identifying the research problem. The research design has been briefly introduced by stating the primary and secondary research questions and by outlining the research design.

Chapter Two reviews the academic literature relevant to this study. This doctoral study draws from the research areas of CEO succession, social network theory, and sport leader succession. This chapter provides a critical review of the research to date while highlighting existing themes and theories used to explain succession in these contexts. The aim of this chapter is to identify gaps in these areas of the literature as

they relate to CEO succession in sport organisations and gender, and to justify the use of social network theory as a framework for this study.

Chapter Three presents the research design. The research questions and approach are outlined and justified. The methods for data collection and data analysis are detailed, potential ethical considerations explored, and risk management strategies are specified.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. First, the biographical information of each participant is listed. Second, the personal network of each CEO is displayed and dissected. Additionally, each network is combined to form a whole network to enable further observations and analysis. Third, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews are presented. Lastly, the chapter concludes by listing seven key findings.

Chapter Five interprets the results of the study. The key findings are explained and discussed in relation to the literature. This chapter also summarises the research in the context of the research aim and research questions. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the thesis by summarising the importance of the study and noting any limitations. The contributions of this study to theory, practice, and methodology are highlighted, and possible future research directions to build on this study are identified.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has provided the background and context for this study. The research problem and the appropriate design have been outlined as the most appropriate for answering the research questions and, ultimately, achieving the research aim. Relevant concepts such as CEO succession, gender diversity in leadership, and social network theory have been introduced. This chapter also contains an overview of the structure of the thesis. The following chapter contains a comprehensive review of the relevant literature.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and critiques the key areas of the relevant literature for this study, including CEO succession, social network theory, and sport leader succession, and presents the conceptual framework. This chapter introduces each of these areas and critically assesses the existing literature. In introducing and critically assessing these key areas, key theories and findings are analysed, while gaps specifically relating to CEO succession in sport organisations are highlighted.

Table 1 displays the areas of literature to be reviewed, their relevance to this research, and the key concepts that inform the research design. This includes identifying how and why CEO succession occurs and the potential outcomes resulting from succession. Social network theory is introduced and explained in terms of employment outcomes and CEO succession and in the context of using networking as a tool to impact outcomes. The sport literature is dominated by examinations of head coach succession through three central succession theories: vicious circle, common sense, and ritual scapegoat. Only a small body of work examines CEO or other executive succession in sport. Gender is explored within each of the three areas of literature being reviewed. Lastly, SNA and network perspective studies in the sport management field are reviewed. SNA and network perspectives also allow the present research to make a methodologically and otherwise unique contribution.

Table 1: Literature Review – Relevance and Key Concepts

Section	Sub-section	Relevance	Key concepts
CEO succession (2.2)	When does succession occur?	Background and context of succession: when and why does succession occur?	Insider/outsider, governance, power, CEO attributes
	Selection of a new CEO	Who is appointed and why? What influences succession?	Insider/outsider linked to performance, relay succession
	Outcomes of CEO succession	Why does succession matter?	Impact on organisational performance, future succession events
	CEO succession and gender	Establish disparity and attempts to rectify it	Gender stereotypes and impact on succession
Social networks and CEO succession (2.3)	Social network theory	Key concepts and understanding	Network perspective and foundations
	Social networks and employment outcomes	Impact of networks	Networks linked to outcomes, homophily, strength of ties
	Social networks and gender	Why and how might networks be important in this context?	Network perspective and networking
	Enhancing a social network as leadership development	How to improve outcomes through networks?	Position within network, networking behaviours, mentors, link to gender
	Social networks and CEO succession	Why and how might networks be important in this context?	CEO network impacts organisational capabilities
Succession in sport organisations (2.4)	Leadership and succession in sport organisations	Sport leaders are often thought to be comparable to corporate CEOs	Theory (vicious circle, common sense, ritual scapegoat) and impact on performance
	CEO succession in sport organisations	Current state of research in this area	Process of succession
	Sport leader succession and gender	Establish disparity and attempts to rectify it	Systematic inequality
Social network analysis and network perspective in sport studies (2.5)	Network perspectives and team sports	Network measures impacting performance	Network analysis
	Network analysis and multi-sport events	Network structures	Network analysis
	Network analysis and female leadership in sport	Network measures of gender disparity	Network design to identify inequality
	Network analysis and sport management	Networks and recruitment in sport management	Network linked to recruitment and selection
	Ego-centric designs in sport management research	Previous use of related network designs	Personal network designs

2.2 CEO succession

2.2.1 Introduction

This section deals with the broader body of CEO succession literature. Some key foundational research in this area uses sport leaders as proxies; however, most studies focus on CEO succession in large, public corporations. Early research in this area determined that CEO succession is disruptive and creates instability (Giambatista et al., 2005). Two important scholars in the development of this field of study were Carlson and Grusky (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). In studying the succession of school superintendents, Carlson (1961) linked the concept of an 'insider' with a more stable transition, as opposed to hiring an 'outsider'. He describes an insider as being someone who remains within an organisation or system (in his study, a school system) until they ascend to a leadership position. Conversely, he defines an outsider as someone who leaves their current employer to achieve promotion to a leadership role. Grusky (1964) similarly applied the notion of insider to mean a successor who is recruited from among the existing staff, with an outsider recruited from outside the organisation.

However, an outsider may also represent behaviour, attributes, and views that are outside of the generally accepted norm (i.e., iconoclastic) (Buckland et al., 2019), and Davidson et al. (2002) have called for more studies to be conducted where the definition of an outsider refers to otherness. A nuanced conceptualisation splits outsiders into two further categories: in-group outsiders and out-group outsiders (Kim et al., 2022). This more nuanced definition is based on large conglomerates, encompassing numerous companies under a single parent organisation. According to this prescription, an in-group outsider is already employed within the larger corporate structure but not within the specific company they are appointed to lead. An in-group outsider has the potential to straddle the middle ground between an insider and an outsider in terms of knowledge, relationships, and strategic change.

The generally accepted advantage of hiring insiders is their existing corporate knowledge, which prevents a protracted orientation phase in which the successor needs time to learn about the organisation, the staff, and general operations. On the other hand, an outsider brings a fresh perspective and, consequently, is often seen as an agent for change. The risk in hiring an outsider is found in the areas of relationships and

organisation-specific human capital. That is, an outsider likely lacks social connections and understanding of social networks within the organisation they have been chosen to lead. It is therefore arguable that leader success depends at least partially on the organisational context and the networks in place (Groysberg & Lee, 2010). Successor origin is an enduring component of CEO succession research to this day.

Grusky (1964) used a sporting context to study leadership succession, and associated insider succession with improved performance. Grusky, along with Gamson and Scotch, were instrumental in the emergence of the three classical theories of succession: vicious circle (Grusky, 1960, 1961), common sense (Grusky, 1963), and ritual scapegoat (Gamson & Scotch, 1964). These theories were developed through studies attempting to quantify the post-succession performance of elite sports teams following a change in head coach/field manager. In brief, vicious circle theory holds that succession results in declining performance; common sense theory assumes an improvement in performance following succession, while ritual scapegoating argues that succession has no impact on performance. Professional sport has proved a fruitful source of accessible data and an environment where each organisation has similar goals with which to measure performance, that is, wins (Scully, 1994).

2.2.2 When does CEO succession occur?

Unsurprisingly, poor performance is positively associated with CEO turnover (Coughlan & Schmidt, 1985) in what Giambatista et al. (2005) call one of the least contested aspects of corporate CEO succession research. However, many other factors can affect succession. Indeed, some scholars infer that most succession events are not actually related to performance. Vancil (1987) found that the majority of CEO succession events were due to retirement or leaving an organisation under normal conditions, rather than poor performance. Other studies have come to similar conclusions, deducing that up to 80% of succession events can be attributed to non-performance-related causes (Comte & Mihal, 1990). But, when considering both involuntary and voluntary succession, some claim that performance-related turnover may constitute 50% of all succession events (Jenter & Lewellen, 2014). One possible explanation is that organisations do not always announce the true reason for change (Weisbach, 1988). Where performance is a factor, the board of directors may actually be

more concerned by a deviation from expected performance than poor performance in itself – and base their turnover decisions on this metric (Farrell & Whidbee, 2003). An extension of this idea is that performance may be assessed against the industry average, with a subpar result leading to higher CEO turnover (Eisfeldt & Kuhnen, 2013). It is also possible that while an organisation may be performing poorly, the CEO might actually be performing well, but boards might find it difficult to distinguish between the two (Cragun et al., 2016).

Organisational performance in itself does not adequately explain CEO succession (Berns et al., 2021). First, for involuntary succession to occur, the board must initiate the processes needed to exit the incumbent. As such, the board needs to be cognisant of performance and be willing to act. Smaller boards are arguably more efficient and streamlined and, therefore, tend to display greater diligence in monitoring performance (Jensen & Murphy, 1990). Hermalin (2005) asserts that greater board diligence can have several impacts, including shorter CEO tenures and a rise in the number of outsider successors. Board composition may also be a factor, with outsider directors supposedly more likely to initiate forced succession (Huson et al., 2001; Weisbach, 1988). Likewise, boards containing directors who have previously initiated forced succession are considered to be more likely to do so again, as they have already displayed a willingness to act on poorly performing CEOs (Cai & Nguyen, 2018). Such directors learn from the experience and are able to better identify poor performance in the future (Ellis et al., 2021). Where board members hold multiple directorships, their ability to maintain focus and adequately monitor performance is negatively impacted, which may allow a CEO of a poorly performing organisation to escape scrutiny and forced succession (Méndez et al., 2015).

Power can be an important factor in succession. A powerful incumbent CEO may be able to avoid being forced out of their position, even when displaying poor performance (Pitcher et al., 2000; Plian, 1995). This power may be derived from sharing characteristics and identities with influential board members (You et al., 2023). In these situations, the CEO may instead dismiss members of the top management team, giving the appearance that action has been taken (Boeker, 1992). A powerful CEO may manipulate the composition of directors on the board to protect themselves against

dismissal. For instance, a strong CEO can influence the director selection process, resulting in a board dominated by insiders loyal to the CEO (Weisbach, 1988).

Power is not exclusively the domain of the CEO (and/or the board). Shen and Cannella Jr (2002b) use the power circulation theory of control to identify potential successors within an organisation. This can result in contenders actively politicking to seize control of the organisation. These power struggles can be a significant antecedent to CEO dismissal and subsequent insider succession. Friedman and Olk (1995) use a similar framework. They describe several scenarios including Horse Race (multiple internal candidates characterised by much politicking amongst the candidates) and Coup d'Etat (sudden change instigated by an internal faction and often led by the eventual successor).

The incumbent's length of tenure is a factor. While the power of an incumbent can vary with time, it is assumed to increase over time (Fredrickson et al., 1988). Thus, a CEO tends to become more entrenched as time goes on. Conversely, a newly appointed CEO is more vulnerable, especially during the first three years of their tenure (Fredrickson et al., 1988). Furthermore, a new leader is at a higher risk of early dismissal when their predecessor left the organisation voluntarily and was in place for a longer period; however, outsiders seem to be less at risk of early dismissal following succession (Desai et al., 2018).

The size of an organisation and the characteristics of the incumbent can also influence when and how succession occurs. Some scholars also argue that candidate availability is an antecedent to succession as the potential disruption from CEO dismissal might be minimised if a candidate who is ready to take over is waiting in the wings (Mooney et al., 2017). In these instances, a reputable candidate may cause the board to see succession as a solution to current problems, and therefore initiate forced succession (Fredrickson et al., 1988; Ocasio, 1999).

The literature shows that the factors leading to CEO succession are more complex than just poor performance. Yet, the research in this area lacks nuance and social context. Notably, most studies to date focus on large public organisations (Ma et al., 2015; Zhang, 2021) and adopt an accounting or finance lens (Berns et al., 2021).

This reflects a dominant quantitative approach and demonstrates a need for empirical studies which examine the social and relational aspects and context of succession.

The following section deals with the selection of a new CEO.

Table 2: Causes of CEO Succession

Author	Conclusions/significance	Conceptual basis	Outcome
Berns et al., 2021 Comte & Mihal, 1990 Vancil, 1987	Cause of succession is not only limited to poor performance.	Voluntary versus involuntary turnover	Antecedents also include CEO personal attributes, power separation between board and CEO, external environment
Hermalin, 2005 Jensen & Murphy, 1990	Impact of board structures on initiating succession.	Board diligence	Outsider-dominated boards and smaller boards more likely to initiate forced succession
Pitcher et al., 2000 Plian, 1995 You et al., 2023	Powerful CEO can delay or avoid forced succession.	Insider/outsider, board composition	Powerful incumbent based on factors such as tenure and board composition can delay or prevent forced succession
Friedman & Olk, 1995 Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002b	Internal rivals can lead to a power struggle and force a succession event.	Categorisation of candidates beyond traditional insider/outsider	Ambitious insiders who gain internal power may agitate for succession and position themselves as the logical alternate successor
Desai et al., 2018 Fredrickson et al., 1988	New CEOs are vulnerable early in tenure.	Characteristics of board and incumbent CEO	Power generally increases with length of tenure

2.2.3 Selecting a new CEO

The selection of a new CEO is a key component of the succession process. The dominant conceptual approach to CEO selection focusses on successor origin, that is, identifying the conditions under which an insider or outsider is appointed and why. This approach assumes that insider successors are less disruptive than outsiders (Kavadis et al., 2022; Vancil, 1987). The most common model for insider selection is relay succession, where an heir apparent is identified as the CEO-in-waiting prior to succession. More complex models exist, which include multiple candidates and power or political struggles to influence selection (Friedman & Olk, 1995; Graffin et al., 2008; Joshi et al., 2021; Zajac & Westphal, 1996). Researchers have also identified situations whereby certain skills or experiences may be particularly valued by an organisation (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Guthrie & Datta, 1997; Nyberg et al., 2021; Ryan & Wang, 2012). Further, previous succession events also shape succession, with organisations likely to persist with past strategies (Finkelstein et al., 2009). However, some scholars argue the simplistic delineation of insiders and outsiders is insufficient to capture adequately the context of succession (Davidson et al., 2002). Instead, a wider view is required to encapsulate additional understandings and variables when attempting to quantify the impact of succession (Kim et al., 2022; Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002b).

2.2.4 Insider and outsider succession

The selection of an insider signals stability and a continuation of current strategies rather than the sense of change that accompanies the selection of an outsider. The reason is that an insider does not need time to learn the inner workings of an organisation and build internal social networks from scratch like an outsider would (Bai & Mkrtchyan, 2023). The most common form of insider succession is the heir apparent model, otherwise known as relay succession. According to Vancil (1987), this is the healthiest method of CEO succession, being a relay of sorts whereby power is gradually handed over and hence is a smoother, less traumatic experience.

The likelihood of an heir apparent succession proceeding is higher when an organisation is performing strongly, and thus looking to continue on its current trajectory (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). Some describe a planned relay succession as a "routine succession", which is viewed positively because stakeholders know what to

expect (Kavadis et al., 2022, p. 1). The idea of an anointed successor, or heir apparent, is often mentioned when describing succession within sporting organisations in the media – for on-field leadership roles and administrative positions. For example, Kevin Roberts was described as the heir apparent when he was appointed second-in-command at Cricket Australia in 2015 (Brettig, 2018). He was subsequently named CEO in 2018.

Some organisations have several internal candidates. In these circumstances, there is less likely to be a single designated heir apparent, and the organisation will instead wait until the moment of succession before making a choice (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). This is known as a 'horse race' and is more prevalent within organisations with an established leadership development pipeline which can produce multiple candidates capable of becoming CEO (Berns & Klarner, 2017, p. 83). At times, an internal candidate will be elevated to the CEO role from outside of the incumbent senior management team. This is known as a leapfrog CEO (Frangos, 2016). It is argued that a leapfrog candidate is best suited when an organisation is performing well, but the industry in which it operates is in decline; hence, the board is looking for stability but is also seeking a different skill set and fresh strategic outlook (Cheng, 2019).

Insider directors are often the leading internal candidates (Borokhovich et al., 1996), and when this is the case, the likelihood of forced succession increases (Mobbs, 2013). Some organisations deliberately conduct a lengthy process in seeking their next CEO. This has been termed marathon succession (Intintoli, 2013), lasting on average six months (Intintoli, 2007), and is effectively the opposite of a relay succession (Tao & Zhao, 2019). During this time, an interim appointment is often made. Liang et al. (2012) recommend the middle road when selecting an interim CEO: a loyal veteran who is "neither aggressive nor ambitious" (p. 375)

2.2.5 Role of the board in candidate selection

The structure and composition of the board are also factors in determining who will be the new CEO. First, boards with previous experience in CEO succession are more likely to proactively plan for succession (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020). Additionally, the trend towards boards taking a more active role in monitoring performance has been linked to the belief that managerial ability is being prioritised

over firm-specific knowledge (Murphy & Zabojnik, 2007), that is, leadership portability. Jung (2014) agrees with the thesis of performance monitoring and suggests that smaller boards are more likely to appoint an outsider as successor. The likelihood of outsider succession also increases as the number of outsider directors rises (Borokhovich et al., 1996). If a board perceives a lack of internal controls related to reporting and performance monitoring mechanisms, it will likely appoint an outsider, reasoning that any potential internal successor has contributed to the current status (Baer et al., 2023).

However, the situation may be further complicated by the personal motives of each director. Insider boards can be reluctant to appoint an outsider, as this may lead to significant changes to policies and strategies which the inside directors have developed (Borokhovich et al., 1996). Likewise, not appointing an insider may reflect poorly on the board and CEO as the inability to identify and develop an appropriate successor may imply a failure of leadership (De Vries, 1988; Kowitt, 2024). In contrast, outsider boards are more likely to appoint simply the best candidate, whether an insider or outsider, as a strong CEO will enhance their personal reputations (Borokhovich et al., 1996). There is also an association between holding multiple directorships and internal CEO succession (Balsmeier et al., 2013).

Sub-groups or cliques amongst the directors can impact board cohesion, which affects performance monitoring and thus the likelihood of a forced CEO succession. Cliques based on demographic traits may increase conflict and thus decrease performance monitoring ability; however, informational diversity – through factors such as education and experience – provides a sound basis for robust and thorough consideration when examining CEO performance (Shin & You, 2023). This suggests social network analysis may be a worthwhile means of examining the role boards play in initiating succession and choosing a new CEO.

The board is also a potential source of CEO successors, and it is not unusual for outsiders to have been appointed as a director prior to becoming CEO (Parrino, 1997). Such was the case when Kevin Neil, a former CEO of the Canberra Raiders (an NRL team), was appointed CEO of Swimming Australia in 2008, six months after having joined the board with no previous knowledge of or experience in the sport (Hanson

Media, 2008). Candidates who are directors can potentially combine the perspective of an outsider with the organisational knowledge of an insider (Hoitash & Mkrtchyan, 2018).

The importance of a board planning for CEO succession is supported both theoretically and empirically (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020). Scholars argue that without a succession plan, organisational disruption is magnified and competitive advantage is lost (LeCounte et al., 2017). Effective succession planning requires robust procedures around talent identification, leadership development, decision making, and an ability to respond to dynamic circumstances (Schepker et al., 2018). Empirical research in this area demonstrates that better post-succession outcomes are due to having a highly engaged board with effective systems in place to improve objectivity and reduce outside influence (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020).

2.2.6 Role of power in candidate selection

Power and organisational performance are key factors when considering insider succession. Researchers have noted that the balance of power between the main actors who possibly influence the selection of a successor and the politics between them can impact the selection process. The main actors are commonly the board as a collective, the chairperson, and the incumbent CEO. An incumbent CEO may influence the succession event by acting as a gatekeeper by limiting access to candidates and information to suit their personal wishes (Schepker et al., 2018). This may include attempts to limit or dissuade any potential insider successors with the hope of remaining in office as long as possible (Joshi et al., 2021). In these instances, any potential successor is viewed as a threat. Outgoing CEOs have the greatest influence over the selection process if they have a record of strong profitability and growth, and a long succession and selection timeframe (Friedman & Olk, 1995). A powerful CEO who departs voluntarily through retirement will advocate for an insider successor who mirrors the outgoing CEO, while powerful boards will likewise favour candidates whose demographic characteristics resemble theirs (Zajac & Westphal, 1996). A powerful CEO may also have the authority to set remuneration levels for their leadership team. A smaller pay disparity between an outgoing CEO and their most

senior executives signals likely insider succession, as salary is often related to perceived competency and human capital (Essman et al., 2021).

Some scholars suggest powerful CEOs position their heir apparent as their successor as a means to preserve their legacy (Graffin et al., 2008). Cannella Jr and Albert (2001) assert that outsider directors will accede to the incumbent's wishes in times of strong performance; however, when performance is poor, they are less likely to support the heir apparent so as to move on from the influence of the incumbent. Canella Jr and Shen (2001) also affirm that the longer an heir apparent is in place, the more likely they are to be eventually appointed as the successor. In these instances, planned relay succession will likely produce better outcomes for the organisation, as the impact on performance of an insider appointed without a relay period is potentially the same as an outsider's (Tao & Zhao, 2019). Cannella Jr and Lubatkin (1993) link the existence of an heir apparent, or lack thereof, to the incumbent's power to influence the selection outcome. They conclude that only if this socio-political factor is weak, will poor performance result in outsider succession.

The use of political dynamics to study CEO succession was largely pioneered by Ocasio (1994), who demonstrated that CEO power can influence the board's perception of the CEO's' ability. In his work, Ocasio asserts that power is in fact the dominant influence on succession, trumping other aspects such as board composition. This has influenced later research, which has further developed theory in this area and produced additional models, such as those by Shen and Cannella Jr (2002b) and Friedman and Olk (1995). The two models produce various typologies of succession with power as a central influence.

Shen and Cannella Jr (2002b) use a power circulation theory of control, which includes followers, contenders, and outsiders, to provide a variation of the insider/outsider distinction. Followers and contenders are both potential insider successors, with contenders actively lobbying and scheming as they try to seize control of the organisation. This power struggle can be a significant antecedent to CEO dismissal and subsequent insider succession (Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002a). A follower is a more traditional insider, as defined by Carlson (1961) and Grusky (1964), in that they are prepared to wait for their natural opportunity for promotion rather than instigate

politicised action to speed up the process. The model developed by Friedman and Olk (1995) uses a similar categorisation. As previously mentioned, they create four scenarios: Crown Heir, Horse Race, Coup d'Etat, and Comprehensive Search (a comprehensive process based on corporate realignment). There are potential challenges for organisations whose practices fit these models. For instance, unsuccessful challengers in the Horse Race scenario will likely choose to leave the organisation rather than remain in a role subservient to their colleague.

As previously mentioned, Ocasio (1994) advances the use of Pareto's circulation of power theory of control in examining executive succession and corporate control (Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002a). He proposes that selecting a new CEO comprises elements of a political competition, as well as an ideological battle concerning strategy and direction (Ocasio & Kim, 1999). This approach builds on the institutionalisation of power in organisation theory. Political dynamics evolve from and depend on the department from which the CEO originated (e.g., finance, marketing, sales). Thornton and Ocasio (1999) examined executive succession as a political action governed by rules defined by power as a result of prevailing institutional logics. Institutional logic is a link between individual actors and thought, with socially constructed practices and rules within the organisation. It integrates "…structural, normative, and symbolic as three necessary and complementary dimensions of institutions" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101). This approach to studying institutions emphasises how culture within an organisation enables and constrains social action (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The way an executive deploys their power to influence succession is therefore dependent upon the prevailing institutional logic.

However, Schepker et al. (2018) argue that potential influences based on power can be negated if a robust process is put in place to guide and plan for succession. Without firm systems, the process is easily corrupted by biases in decision making by either the board or the CEO. This highlights the significance of objectivity guided by careful planning and implementation of succession plans, with the ability to pivot based on dynamic circumstances where required. Succession planning by a board reduces the risk of a downturn in performance, which is said to occur in the post-succession period (Cvijanović et al., 2023).

2.2.7 Skills and attributes impacting candidate selection

Some research studies attempted to identify when certain skills or backgrounds, such as industry-specific experience, are sought after by organisations experiencing succession (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Nyberg et al., 2021). For example, poor performance can result in the appointment of a "mobile" CEO, that is, one who has worked for multiple employers and thus conceivably possesses a range of skills honed in different environments (Ryan & Wang, 2012, p. 2). While some may see this as "job-hopping", which can indicate movement between jobs due to poor performance, a diverse set of experiences is arguably preferable to entrenchment as this often indicates an unwillingness to change and evolve (Won & Bidwell, 2023, p. 8).

Similarly, a CEO with what is termed a functional skill base will be attractive to organisations that have been performing poorly (Guthrie & Datta, 1997). In times of uncertainty around future performance, an outsider will be appointed as an agent for change (Bai & Mkrtchyan, 2023; Farrell & Whidbee, 2003). Fee et al. (2018) contend that industry factors are more important in the context of hiring rather than firing. When an industry shock occurs, outsiders from external industries with a different skill set are more valuable as potential successors (Eisfeldt & Kuhnen, 2013). Fast-growing organisations tend to hire younger CEOs (Guthrie & Datta, 1997), while older CEOs are often recruited to manage more complex organisations (Joos et al., 2003). Another study suggests that outsider successors have significant individual talents, such as interpersonal abilities and execution skills (Kaplan et al., 2012). These attributes are conceivably needed to overcome the potential advantages of otherwise hiring an insider.

Datta and Rajagopalan (1998) found that different industries value different characteristics when appointing a CEO successor. For example, some industries prefer a high level of education and functional skill set over organisational-specific knowledge. Companies with a creation/innovation-oriented culture are prone to executive turnover but prefer 'home-grown' insiders as successors because they share the values and knowledge of their predecessor (Fiordelisi & Ricci, 2014).The limited research in this area mostly suggests that industry specialisation is highly prevalent in concentrated industries while differentiated industries offer more opportunities for mobile CEOs (Datta et al., 2002). Little is known about candidates not chosen as successors in

comparison to those who were (Magnusson & Boggs, 2006), other than unsuccessful internal candidates being more likely to leave the organisation following a competitive succession process (Chan et al., 2022).

Lastly, past succession events likely also shape future successions (Ocasio, 1999). The subsequent rules and processes that directors rely on when managing succession events result in historical insider succession facilitating further insider succession. Similarly, directors can feel obligated to select outsiders as CEO successors in times of poor organisational performance, based on previous succession events. Hence, an organisation is likely to persist with previous strategies when it comes to CEO succession. However, while these norms exist, they are not automatically applied (Finkelstein et al., 2009).

This section described research related to the selection of a CEO successor. While there is some understanding that succession is a complex phenomenon requiring a wider contextual framework (Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002b), most studies continue to analyse succession through the insider–outsider concept. Thus, the extant research has focussed on identifying the circumstances under which an insider or outsider will be appointed. Some scholarly research addresses the way boards tackle succession over time (Berns & Klarner, 2017) and examines the role third-party executive recruitment firms may play in the CEO succession process (Schepker et al., 2018) – particularly when it comes to influencing the pool of potential candidates (Nyberg et al., 2021). Scholars have acknowledged that successors bring different network resources with them depending on their origin (Chung & Luo, 2013), but this has yet to be thoroughly examined through network observations. The present research addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence of the personal networks of CEOs. The personal network of a CEO indicates their ability to access resources and, therefore, their potential effectiveness, particularly when dealing with stakeholders.

The following section reviews the literature associated with the outcomes of CEO succession.

Table 3: Selection of CEO Successor

Author	Conclusions/significance	Variable	Outcome
Kavadis et al., 2022 Vancil, 1987 Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004	Insider relay succession (heir apparent) is the least disruptive form of succession.	Insider/outsider	Insider candidates demonstrate continuity and tend to produce better organisational performance than outsiders.
Bai & Mkrtchyan, 2023 Lauterbach et al., 1999	Outsiders are appointed as agents of change.	Insider/outsider	Outsider candidates are more likely to be appointed when an organisation is performing poorly and thus needs a change in strategic direction.
Baer et al., 2023 Ocasio, 1994 Schepker et al., 2018 Zajak & Westphal, 1996	Selection of successor is impacted by factors such as power, board composition, industry conditions, and organisation characteristics.	Insider/outsider, voluntary versus involuntary	Succession appointment can be influenced by the internal power of incumbent CEOs and Chairs whereby specific characteristics are desirable in an incoming CEO.
Friedman & Olk, 1995 Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002b	Internal rivals can lead to a power struggle and force a succession event.	Categorisation of candidates beyond traditional insider/outsider	Ambitious insiders who gain internal power may agitate for succession and position themselves as the logical alternate successor.

2.2.8 Outcomes of CEO succession

The selection of a new CEO has various impacts on the organisation experiencing succession. Most notably, this includes organisational performance, which has been a popular topic for researchers to date. However, appointing a new CEO also impacts the wider composition of an organisation. The new CEO may be subject to subsequent early dismissal depending on the circumstances of their succession, creating a situation where additional succession is itself a possible outcome.

As previously argued, outside successors are commonly positioned as agents for change. Thus it is unsurprising to find that outsider CEOs are indeed more likely to impose large-scale strategic change (Lauterbach et al., 1999). For example, outside successors increase the probability of top management team turnover following succession, especially when the succession is preceded by poor organisational performance (Kesner & Dalton, 1994). In such organisations, substantial change is required to pivot and turn around declining organisational performance. When an

outsider is hired, there are generally two possible broad outcomes: organisational adaption or organisational disruption (Schepker et al., 2017). Some, therefore, see the CEO selection of an outsider as risk-taking behaviour, likely to result in a more extreme outcome (either positive or negative) than if an insider were appointed (Quigley et al., 2019).

Organisational adaption represents a positive view of outsiders, noting an outsider CEO brings external knowledge and thus is more likely to promote innovation and learning, leading to improved performance. However, according to the disruption view, an outsider CEO leads to decreased performance due to a lack of understanding of internal processes and poor integration with existing executive managers, which can result in the aforementioned propensity to move on existing senior managers. Outsiders may also have fewer intra- and interorganisational networks, which can impact their ability to drive performance (Connelly et al., 2016). Schepker et al. (2017) argue that the costs incurred through disruption will often be greater than the potential benefits of new strategic directions. This suggests that appointing an insider is more advantageous, regardless of circumstances.

Yet even though insider successors are associated with stability and improved long-term performance, there is still a general disruptive effect on short-term firm performance. Overall, CEO succession appears to negatively impact organisational performance for around three years, sometimes by as much as 10% to 20% (Tao & Zhao, 2019), after which it improves (Schepker et al., 2017). This is consistent with the findings of a study by Pascal et al. (2016), which found that internally recruited CEO successors are less risky and achieve higher performance. While insiders initiate less strategic change than outsider CEOs, a successor who has prior board experience elsewhere will make more changes than other insiders (Zhu et al., 2020).

Planned succession in itself has the capacity to improve outcomes by providing increased certainty and potentially achieving a well-suited CEO–organisational fit (Cvijanović et al., 2023). It has been postulated that this is because openly planning for succession may be correlated with strong corporate governance (Bae et al., 2023). CEO succession events with longer planned relay succession perform even better (Tao & Zhao, 2019). Nevertheless, a newly appointed CEO can often find that power is more

dispersed across an organisation following succession (Miller, 1993). This is due to the successor lacking the social capital of their predecessor. Thus, a strategy of leading by consensus may be required in the short term. Context is obviously important, and Georgakakis and Ruigrok (2017) recommend that succession management plans should specifically target an organisation's needs and contain provisions to allow the successor to integrate more quickly into the organisation. This is crucial for organisations seeking strategic change and wishing to maximise the potential benefits of hiring an outsider.

Conversely, unplanned succession can result in the need for a quick appointment within a short time frame. Directors appointed as CEOs in unplanned succession are commonly viewed as an obvious and quick solution to a leadership vacuum (i.e., an emergency choice) but are likely to lead to deteriorating organisational performance and, as a result, a short tenure (Hoitash & Mkrtchyan, 2018). There are also occasions where board members or chairpersons assume the role of interim CEO when appointing an immediate and permanent replacement is not possible. While interim CEO successors generally result in a drop in performance, this can be minimised if the interim appointee is the chairperson (Ballinger & Marcel, 2010). Others suggest poor performance occurs when the interim CEO is a "placeholder" rather than an interim aspiring for the role on an ongoing basis (Baer, 2019).

Grusky's (1963) vicious cycle theory suggests that the disruptive nature of succession is such that organisational performance is always negatively impacted to some degree, which places the incoming CEO at risk of being dismissed. The new leader is at a higher risk of early dismissal when their predecessor left the organisation voluntarily, and when the predecessor was in their role for a longer period, although the risk for outsiders is less than for insiders (Desai et al., 2018). Evidently, this is due to forced succession allowing the board some time in planning for a replacement before initiating the dismissal of the incumbent. However, a social network perspective of succession argues that the embeddedness of an incoming CEO in key networks is a buttress against performance dips and that networks, along with legitimacy conferred by stakeholders, can actually benefit organisational performance (Chung & Luo, 2013).

Using the typologies of Shen and Cannella Jr (2002b), described in the previous section, Barron et al. (2011) found that 'contender' candidates who become CEO are

vulnerable at first but eventually embrace their mandate for change, which makes top management turnover likely. Having a strong personal network then becomes crucial, as the new CEO will need to recruit or co-opt senior managers who will be loyal and share the vision for change (Wangrow et al., 2022). In the case of follower or non-combative insider succession, up to a third of heirs apparent are, in fact, not appointed as successors (Cannella Jr & Shen, 2001). If the heir apparent is not appointed and instead exits the organisation, it may negatively impact the organisation by way of stakeholder reactions (Shen & Cannella Jr, 2003). Additionally, political manoeuvring within an organisation can cause further departures, as the supporters of unsuccessful challengers may also find their positions untenable (Dalton & Dalton, 2007). This effect is more pronounced when the incoming CEO begins their tenure with high levels of power (Boumosleh & Cline, 2023). Directors may also be more likely to exit an organisation following succession. Farrell and Whidbee (2000) found this to be true for outsider directors following forced succession, particularly if a director has strong ties to the former CEO. However, directors who are not close to the departing CEO and remain on the board may be offered additional directorships. This suggests that forcing CEO turnover carries potential risks and rewards for directors (Farrell & Whidbee, 2000). Additionally, these scenarios demonstrate that CEO succession is likely to impact internal social networks, and thus cohesion and performance. An incoming CEO will need to act quickly to ensure adequate access to informational and entrepreneurial resources or risk further turnover.

While poor performance is the commonly accepted result of outsider succession compared to insider succession, the literature does not adequately explore why this is the case (Keil et al., 2022). The use of archival data in many studies hampers the ability to understand this aspect of succession. Thus, scholars argue for a wider range of both quantitative and qualitative data to be considered when evaluating organisational performance after CEO succession (Lafuente & García-Cestona, 2021). Extant research also does not adequately consider the external disruptive factors which can influence post-succession outcomes (Lee & Tsai, 2023). Further, the body of research focussed on the post-succession period is highly fragmented, which makes drawing well-corroborated conclusions difficult (Ma et al., 2015).

This section has discussed outcomes at an individual and organisational level following CEO succession. These include performance, additional turnover of top management staff, and further succession events.

Table 4: Post-Succession Effects

Author	Conclusions/significance	Conceptual basis	Outcome
Schepker et al., 2017 Tao & Zhao, 2019	CEO succession impacts post-succession organisational performance.	Insider/outsider Adaption/disruption	CEO succession negatively impacts performance in the short term regardless of CEO origin. Insiders tend to perform better in the longer term–with long relay successions achieving even better results.
Bae et al., 2023 Cvijanović et al., 2023	Planned succession improves outcomes.	Succession planning	Planned succession improves outcomes by projecting robust governance, providing certainty, and appointing CEOs who fit the organisation.
Boumosleh & Cline, 2023 Dalton & Dalton, 2007 Kesner & Dalton, 1994	Succession can lead to additional turnover within the senior management team.	Insider/outsider	Unsuccessful insider candidates and their supporters are more likely to leave following succession, especially if prior performance was poor and the incoming CEO has high levels of power.
Desai et al., 2018	Succession can lead to further CEO succession.	Insider/outsider	New leaders are at risk of forced succession early in tenure, especially following a long-term incumbent who left voluntarily.

2.2.9 CEO succession and gender diversity

While more women attain leadership roles now, appointing a female CEO is still viewed as an unusual strategic decision requiring board discretion (Knippen et al., 2018). Many reasons have been given for the disparity between male and female CEO appointments, including inherent bias, power, and traditional constructs of leadership (Gipson et al., 2017). Moreover, women are not only less likely to be appointed as leaders but when they are, the organisation has been chronically underperforming and

the female CEOs are more likely to experience forced succession regardless of organisational performance and be classed as ineffective (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

One reason for bias against appointing a female CEO is implicit bias. However, some argue in favour of shared traits and demographic characteristics and therefore against diversity, which conceivably again disadvantages potential female CEOs. Georgakakis and Ruigrok (2017) explicitly place socio-demographic similarity as a positive factor in their outsider CEO succession and organisational performance model. Yet, such approaches conceivably place short-term integration ahead of the longer-term strategic advantages realised with increased diversity. Additionally, outsider CEO succession research has shown that new CEOs who have experience with more diverse boards can achieve a higher level of organisational performance as well as reducing the likelihood of post-succession turnover (Zhu & Shen, 2016). Yet, this aspect of CEO succession has not been widely explored in the literature.

It is generally understood that poor performance increases the probability of CEO turnover; however, this too may be influenced by the gender of the incumbent. While it is acknowledged that the cause of forced turnover is difficult to ascertain from publicly available information, one study found that female CEOs are 45 per cent more likely than male CEOs to not only experience forced succession but also be dismissed regardless of organisational performance.(Gupta et al., 2020). Furthermore, 'minority' CEOs are likely to be apportioned blame in the media for poor organisational performance (Park & Westphal, 2013). Women more often ascend to leadership positions in precarious situations when an organisation is consistently underperforming – a "glass cliff" appointment (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, p. 83). This may be due to organisations who are in crisis looking to send a strong signal of intent to change (Reinwald et al., 2022).

There are limited scenarios which will improve the outcomes for women during a CEO succession event. These include larger organisations which spend more on corporate social responsibility (CSR), organisations with male directors who have prior experience on a board containing a critical mass of females, organisations operating in a female-dominated industry, and the presence of an organisational network with other organisations with female director representation (Cooper, 2017; Havrylyshyn, 2022;

Hillman et al., 2007). Some scholars believe selecting a female as a successor can improve the prospects for a troubled organisation or one with a poor performance record. This is particularly the case when it comes to decreasing risk through the implementation of significant strategic changes (Martin et al., 2009; Rigolini et al., 2021). Others believe this is a result of gender stereotypes, whereby women are seen as atypical leaders. In these instances, women are hired to signal a change in direction following leadership failure by the previous leader (Kulich et al., 2015). This is more likely when the crisis is described as relational rather than financial, further propagating gender stereotypes (Kulich et al., 2021).

The following section introduces social network theory and links CEO succession to social networks.

2.3 Social networks and CEO succession

2.3.1 Introduction

This section introduces social network theory and the significance of relationships for various outcomes, including employment. The importance of actively working to improve one's social network is highlighted and linked with leadership development and organisational performance, before reviewing the existing social network literature as it pertains to CEO succession. The underlying theoretical premise within this section is that networks impact outcomes while also acknowledging that networks are dynamic and evolve over time – including through intentional action by an actor.

2.3.2 Social network theory

Social network theory has its roots in sociometry, sociology, and social anthropology (Scott & Carrington, 2011; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social networks are "a set of actors connected by a set of ties" (Borgatti & Foster, 2003, p. 992). The emphasis of social network analysis is on the relationships amongst actors, the structure of those relationships, and the outcomes which result from these connections (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). While there are different methods of analysis, they all focus on the links between the actors or units being studied (Angot & Josserand, 2001). Wasserman and Faust (1994) recognise relationships as the primary principle of SNA

but describe four additional key concepts: the actors within a network and the actions they take are interdependent; the ties between actors provide an avenue for the transfer of resources; networks can either provide opportunities or enforce constraints on actors; and networks model the patterns of relationships. In the context of this study, the perceived need to have intraorganisational and interorganisational ties to provide opportunities or enable the transfer of resources are of significance. A theoretical approach to networks sees social interaction as the basis of behaviour rather than individuals, and the patterns of relationships have consequences – such as who knows what, who is advantaged, and so on (Perry et al., 2018). At least in part, network theorists assert that an actor's position within a network determines their opportunities and constraints (Borgatti et al., 2018; Perry et al., 2018). Similarly, the overall architectural structure of a network has implications for the operation of the network as a collective (Robins, 2015).

Social network analysis involves visualising and measuring connections or links ('ties') between actors ('nodes'). Nodes may not necessarily be representative of people; they may be an organisation, event, team, or other active entity. Each actor has their own set of attributes such as age and gender. Ties between nodes can be of varying strength and take many forms; however, the most commonly used basis of ties in SNA are acquaintanceship or friendship and other personal communication linkages (Borgatti et al., 2018). The relationship and connection of two actors is known as a dyad, while a connection of three actors is a triad. SNA can also utilise network visualisation to help illustrate the features of a network, including pathways between actors who may not have a direct connection (e.g., friend of a friend). Networks can be focused on one specific actor (ego-centric network[1]) and their immediate relations (alters) or a whole network (socio-centric network), which theoretically is a complete census of a defined population. Accordingly, the level of analysis in SNA can focus on individuals, ties, or the entire network.

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[1] In network science, 'ego' refers to a specific individual and their direct social ties rather than a person's sense of self-importance.

Figure 1: Visualised Representation of a Social Network
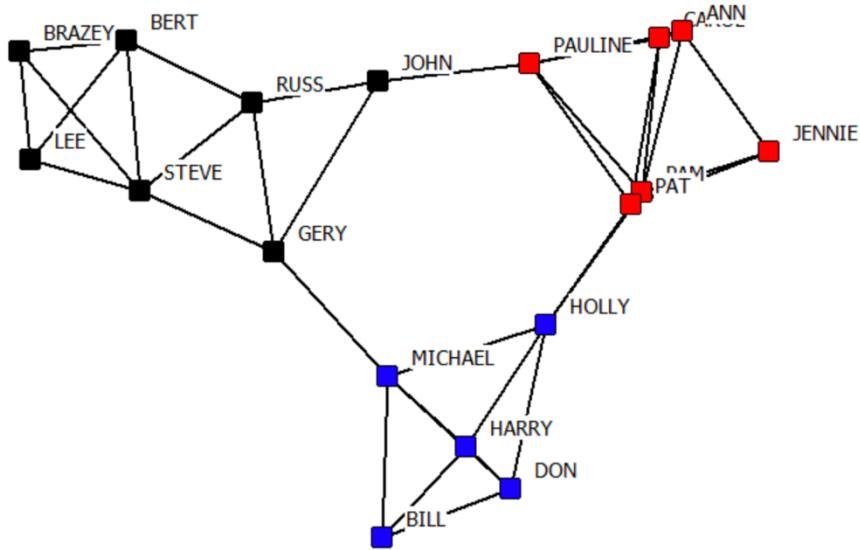
Source: Borgatti et al., 2018.

2.3.3 Social networks and employment outcomes

The importance of networks in employment outcomes has long been an area of interest for both sociologists and labour economists (Bramoullé & Saint-Paul, 2010). In his seminal work, Granovetter (1973) conceptualised the weak tie theory. This theory relies on the premise of broad networks being able to provide access to nonredundant information. Access to such information is dependent upon the structure of the network, that is, where an actor is positioned in relation to others, how many ties or connections they have, and how many mutual contacts they have with other actors. Network position can determine power as well as access (Jokisaari, 2017). Thus, certain actors will receive novel information before others in the network. Strong ties are direct connections between individuals who know each other well. Such ties are more likely to be shared between people who have similar demographic attributes and belief systems (McPherson et al., 2001).

Marsden (1987) found that networks tend to be homogeneous, as people naturally gravitate to other people with similar characteristics such as age and gender (Jacqueline et al., 2007). Additionally, differing moral and social values are a predictor of greater social and physical distance within a network (Dehghani et al., 2016). Others have identified inherent barriers to expanding social networks, such as language and culture, which means insider networks lack novelty (Currarini et al., 2016). It has also

been argued that ties formed on the basis of homophily endure whereas ties between people who are dissimilar are lost faster, although it is not yet understood why this is the case (Tulin et al., 2021). These arguments seemingly support the proposition that weak ties can be a source of novel information and create opportunities for people who in any other way might be considered outsiders.

Weak ties link otherwise unconnected groups of actors through mutual connections. These dyads act as a bridge between sections of a network (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2014). Granovetter (1983) posits that those with fewer weak ties are deprived of information and hence are disadvantaged in the labour market. He proved the 'strength of weak ties' by studying people acquiring new jobs. He observed the role that trust and reputation gained through networks plays and the uneven playing field that exists. Historically, studies have shown between 30% and 60% of job placements are of people not actively seeking new roles but obtaining jobs through their networks regardless (Granovetter, 2018). However, this is dependent upon individual circumstances, such as age, education level, and geographic location (Ioannides & Datcher Loury, 2004). The most common network function in seeking employment is referral, but a range of interventions can also impact outcomes, such as CV production, interviewing skills, and other aspects related to networking efficacy (De Schepper et al., 2023; Wanberg et al., 2020).

Burt's (1992) structural hole theory is based on the same principles as weak tie theory. He asserts that a sparse network containing structural holes is more beneficial than a dense network with strong ties between every member (Burt, 1992). However, a bridge or weak tie is not valuable in itself; it is only useful if the information in question is of value to the actor (Lin, 2008). Adler and Kwon (2002) and Rost (2011) suggest relationships, location, and network structure are of importance.
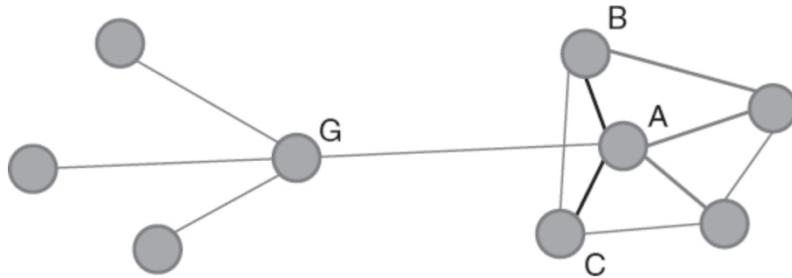
Node "G" linking otherwise unconnected sections of the network (Scott & Carrington, 2011)

Based on these key social network theories, Uzzi (1997) argues an actor must proactively work to manage their relationships with other actors who occupy structural holes to access potential benefits. Borgatti and Halgin (2011) label the weak tie and structural hole theories collectively as network flow theory. However, others argue only the inherent trust and power contained within strong friendship ties can produce real change (Krackhardt et al., 2003). Murray et al. (1981) and Bian (1997) posit that while weak ties can indeed be useful in employment outcomes, more jobs are found as a result of strong ties rather than weak ties. This is especially the case in specialised industries with limited demand. Lin et al. (1981) suggest the more experienced a worker is, the more reliance there is on strong ties between them and the hiring organisation. Strong ties were found to be more influential than weak ties in the recruitment of senior non-playing staff in high-level professional football clubs (Parnell et al., 2023).

2.2.4 Social networks and gender

Social biases and gender-based inequality are reinforced by social networks (Beaman et al., 2018). Women are typically excluded from the most influential networks, which are commonly comprised of those who hold organisational and political power (Linehan, 2001). Within the context of sport, networks are shown to perpetuate the tendency for men to hold positions of power at the expense of women (Esteban Salvador et al., 2023). Evans and Pfister (2020) note that directors of sport organisations are likely to be influenced by their personal networks when making hiring decisions, which often leads to homogenous reproduction. Other research has shown networks have discounted women from senior sport leadership roles in France (Caprais et al., 2020), Norway, and the United States (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). In Polish NSOs,

male directors largely felt that females were not capable of serving on their boards, while women insisted informal social networks acted as 'old boys' clubs, locking women out (Organista, 2021). Gender equity clearly remains a worldwide issue.

Network analysis has been used to examine the social networks of women working in leadership roles within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) college sport system. Katz et al. (2018) found that networks contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and those few females who were employed in such roles were not influential within the broader network. This study's significance is the use of SNA to prove the existence of the long-suspected 'old boys' club (Singer et al., 2019). Similarly, Walker and Bopp (2011) note the vast inequality evident in US collegiate basketball coaching positions, where women hold 42.6% of head coaching roles of female teams and less than 3% of male teams. Their research concludes that male-dominated networks are a significant barrier for women to pursue careers in what remains a male-centric workplace. This is supported by research in other contexts, including Australia where the influence of 'old boys' clubs functioning as closed networks is prevalent, typically excluding women and serving to maintain male dominance in leadership positions (Hotham, 2023; Marshall et al., 2022).

Ties to people of high status can be an indication of an actor's quality (Podolny, 2001), and in a sport context, it may correlate to career success (Kirzinger, 2016). However, white males are more likely to have these high-status connections (McDonald, 2011). For instance when men have a social relationship with their manager, and the manager is also a man, they progress faster in their career than women do (Cullen & Perez-Truglia, 2019). A seminal study by Brass (1985) found similar relationships to power and promotions within a newspaper publishing company, whereby networking and interactions within the firm were largely gender-segregated and males were building networks with the decision-makers. Job finding networks typically have high levels of gender homophily (Berger, 1995; Fernandez & Sosa, 2005). Yet, despite researchers calling for empirical research to identify which aspects of networks differ between genders, and whether (and how) this impacts on career success (Ibarra, 1993), a comprehensive answer remains elusive (Woehler et al., 2021).

Women's only networks are unlikely to be effective in countering traditional

male-dominated networks (Linehan, 2001). Such networks may still see women unable to access power and capital (McAdam et al., 2019; Norman & Simpson, 2022). In the case of female directors on a UK sport board, they declined to form a rival female network despite feeling like outsiders due to the gender-based clique formed by their male counterparts, as doing so would be counterproductive to their goal of an inclusive and cohesive board (Piggott & Pike, 2020). However, Yang (2019) suggests that a scenario in which female leaders have an inner circle (strong ties) of otherwise unconnected women will result in improved employment outcomes. But this premise relies on having an extremely efficient network delivering non-redundant information, which likely requires significant effort to maintain.

McAdam et al. (2019) found that when networking, women were more interested in the social relationship aspect rather than the business focus exhibited by men. Carboni et al. (2019) suggest that while women are more likely to have enduring network ties than men, these relationships tend to be related to bonding over family and children, whereas men see networks as a means to an end. While men may have more weak-tie connections, these are likely to be connections to high-placed and powerful individuals, resulting in a more strategic network (Bushell et al., 2020). Conversely, Watson (2012) argues that women are more likely to have smaller networks with stronger ties based on informal relationships.

2.3.4 Enhancing a social network as leadership development

The importance of networks is reflected in labour market outcomes in that well-connected employees have better outcomes than their counterparts (Montgomery, 1991). In addition to Granovetter's (2018) research regarding networks and job opportunities mentioned above, industry sources also estimate a high percentage of jobs are filled using referrals from friends or through professional networks (Job Vite, 2019). Jobs found through networks are likely to be of higher status, pay more, and last longer (Arbex et al., 2019). Scholars have also noted that managerial promotions are positively linked to social network size (Kim & Cannella Jr, 2008), with high achievers at the executive level tending to have larger networks (Lalanne & Seabright, 2022). This applies across internal (intraorganisational) and external (interorganisational) networks. Therefore, individuals engaging in network behaviour can enhance their personal social networks and positively boost employment outcomes.

Networking is defined as "…a form of goal-directed behaviour, both inside and outside of an organisation, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships" (Gibson et al., 2014, p. 150). Further, networking behaviour within organisations is also linked to improvements in organisational performance (Collins & Clark, 2003). This indicates that the social networks (intraorganisational and interorganisational) of senior managers are an asset to their organisation – for example, leading to increased sales and stock performance.

Scholars have also found that leaders who occupy central positions in their social networks (internal and external) achieve better results and are perceived as better leaders by their peers, subordinates, and supervisors (Mehra et al., 2006). Hence, social networks can positively impact objective and subjective leadership performance. Mehra et al. (2006), therefore, recommend organisations assist their leaders to actively participate in networking activities while others call for leadership development programs to encompass network enhancement (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). Both strong and weak ties can be beneficial in networking. Weak ties may lead to information about job opportunities, but strong ties are more likely to be associated with mentorship and sponsorship (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Overall, networking should include building relationships across three spheres – organisation, industry, and community – as this likely provides access to structural holes (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Forret & Sullivan, 2002).

Networking affects four aspects of a social network: size, strength, pattern of ties, and available resources (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). This provides access to information, resources, and opportunities for professional and personal development, such as sponsorship or mentoring (Seibert et al., 2001). Networking behaviours such as cultivating professional relationships with external contacts and attending industry conferences are linked to positive career outcomes and increased remuneration (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Mentoring provides an important avenue for coaching and increased exposure (Bower & Hums, 2014) and is especially important for women who work in the sport industry as it can help to overcome gender barriers, act as an essential means of leadership development, and help women ascend to leadership positions (Hancock et al., 2017; Hancock & Hums, 2016; Wells &

Hancock, 2017). The networking benefits which come from mentoring are reportedly greater for women than men (Joo & Cruz, 2023). Yet, women in sport organisations are reportedly hesitant to partake in networking activities and view doing so much less strategically than their male counterparts do (Zdroik & Babiak, 2017).

Participation in formal mentoring programs is associated with an increase in personal network size (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Further, Picariello et al. (2021) found such programs play a crucial role in the career progress of women leaders in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Cosentino et al. (2021) note that female executives in Canadian professional sport organisations affirmed the need for women to have well-placed mentors and sponsors, often men. In addition, women should have role models, network (also outside of sport) – something the participants agreed most women do not do well – and be more self-promoting and self-confident in terms of skills, also something women tend not to do well (Sotiriadou & Pavlidis, 2019). Researchers argue that effective networking for women can improve their business and financial skills, while also building a network of valuable contacts who can affirm their value within a broader network (Greguletz et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2019).

2.3.5 Social networks and CEO succession

When an individual joins an organisation, they bring both their human capital and their social network connections with them (Scott & Carrington, 2011). However, the ties and connections they *do not* have are equally important. Kotter (1982) describes networking as a key function of the best executives, noting that newly appointed outsiders often struggle to build an internal network fast enough to be effective. Thus, in contrast to outside succession, scholars link insider succession to improved performance as a new insider CEO can immediately utilise the benefits of existing networks (Virany et al., 1992). Conversely, the network perspective of outsider advantage is that they are not constrained by internal network embeddedness when it comes to implementing change (Kim et al., 2022) and are more likely to have access to novel information and innovative ideas (Vestal & Guidice, 2019). Some suggest a "boomerang" CEO, that is, one who leaves an organisation only to later return, may be a middle ground between insiders and outsiders, combining the perspective of an outsider with the ability to leverage existing networks like an insider (Keller et al., 2021, p. 3).

The importance of human capital has been thoroughly researched as a factor in CEO selection (Busenbark et al., 2016), yet social networks and their relationship to succession have not received the same amount of attention from scholars. However, the small body of literature in this area does make it clear that networks are an important factor in succession. For instance, financial investors view social network ties between board members responsible for CEO succession as a favourable trait, particularly when the successor is an insider (Tian et al., 2011). Seemingly, a cohesive board is perceived to be in a better position to make a reliable decision when choosing a new CEO. Importantly, scholars identify the networks of a CEO as an important resource which can be leveraged to the advantage of the organisation (Cao et al., 2006; Cao et al., 2015; Geletkanycz et al., 2001). This suggests prospective CEOs may be more attractive to employers based on the network they would bring with them to the role. And further, networks can be a predictor of CEO turnover with larger networks considered to increase the possibility of voluntary succession, and can also impact candidate selection within a succession event (Berger et al., 2013; Liu, 2010, 2014; Wiersema et al., 2018).

2.3.6 CEO networks and organisational performance

SNA has been used as a lens to help understand the impact CEO succession has on organisational capabilities. Cao et al.'s (2006) findings suggest that reciprocal relationships built through internal and external networks have strategic value and, therefore, impact organisational capabilities. Hence, Cao et al. (2006) argue that a board appointing a new CEO should consider internal and external networks, including those formed in previous employment. A CEO with high levels of connectedness within their organisation is arguably strategically placed when it comes to disseminating and receiving information. This in turn can improve decision making and drive innovation. Similarly, a CEO with a strong external network is a valuable source of information and resources, which can lead to organisational improvements.

A CEO with a heterogeneous social network leads to better organisational performance, including through greater innovation and the ability to access external opportunities (Fang et al., 2012). This most likely occurs in large, multi-national, high-tech firms with diverse boards (Fang et al., 2012). CEOs with more diverse networks are also less likely to become entrenched as they have many competing stakeholder

claims to satisfy. Entrenchment typically means poorly performing CEOs are less likely to be subjected to forced turnover than they otherwise would be (Antounian et al., 2021) Dess and Shaw (2001) posit that voluntary turnover can cause a significant reduction in access to advantageous resources gained through the social network of the departing CEO. More broadly, disruptions to intraorganisational communication networks caused by the turnover of employees who occupy structural holes (Burt, 1992) – bridges between otherwise unconnected different sections of a whole network – has been shown to negatively impact performance (Shaw et al., 2005).

Taking the aforementioned network impacts into account, Cao et al. (2006) argue the disruption and negative effects caused by CEO succession (Grusky, 1963; Keil et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2005) can be negated by appointing a successor who is entrenched in both internal and external networks. If the successor CEO is an outsider, they must quickly establish connections to establish a flow of information to be able to make effective decisions. Ji and colleagues (2014) note that these initial leader–worker relationships are more likely to be with employees who have higher network centrality. This would suggest the importance of establishing key network ties to high-status individuals to enable a steady flow of information and advice to negate the disadvantages that come with being an outsider (Cross et al., 2021). Keil et al. (2022) argue that upon appointing an outsider, the board should work to ensure the incoming CEO is integrated within interorganisational and intraorganisational networks, noting that otherwise negative stakeholder sentiment will contribute to poor organisational performance. However, an outsider with already existing strong network ties to stakeholder organisations can become a valuable source of resources (Kehoe et al., 2022). In the sport industry, this may include member organisations, government departments, media, and peak bodies. The assertion that a CEO's network is of organisational value is notable in the context of this study as it justifies the need to consider social networks in the context of succession.

Those who emphasise the value of a CEO's personal network to an organisation argue that such a network should be rewarded through a commensurate remuneration package (Geletkanycz et al., 2001). Where a CEO has exceptional connectivity and existing management lacks networks within the industry, the CEO will likely receive above-average remuneration (Engelberg et al., 2009). However, while a CEO with a

large social network has the potential to improve organisational performance, the reverse point has also been argued. For example, Kirchmaier and Stahopooulos (2008) maintain that employing a CEO with a large social network in fact leads to weaker performance. Their assumption is that, given the propensity for homophily within social networks, a system of social support and protection insulates the CEO from diverse thinking and, therefore, the costs of maintaining networks outweigh the potential opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Specifically, when the CEO of an organisation with declining performance has a large network of homogeneous contacts with a similar background as the CEO, advice from that network can contribute to a continued "downward spiral" (McDonald & Westphal, 2003, p. 24). Others perceive CEO network centrality to be a negative determinant of performance due to entrenchment (El-Khatib et al., 2015; Walters & McCumber, 2019).

Within network research, centrality broadly refers to a position of prominence within a network. However, centrality is not assumed to correspond with a certain job title within an organisational chart. Organisational research uses proxies to denote centrality, but network research is more precise, using measures such as degree centrality, eigenvector centrality, and closeness centrality. In essence, centrality connotes influence and power within a network and does not necessarily correlate with organisational charts.

2.3.7 CEO networks and succession

Liu (2010, 2014) is one of very few scholars conducting empirical research using network analysis to examine specifically CEO succession. She has done so by using publicly available biographical information to construct affiliation networks. These networks establish ties based on a mutual affiliation with an event, workplace, or the like. In this case, Liu's (2010, 2014) affiliation networks are constructed using shared employment histories and educational backgrounds to assume a connection between actors. Liu examined the impact of social networks on employment outcomes for CEOs, such as turnover and succession. Observing that CEOs are connected to other executives and directors outside of their own organisation, her research showed that those who were better connected were more likely to have alternative employment options, and thus had a higher turnover rate than those who were not so well connected

(Liu, 2014). Renneboog and Zhao (2020) used a similar data set and reached similar conclusions. Furthermore, they noted that those CEOs with more indirect connections (weak ties) seemed to have an advantage in locating new opportunities. As previously noted, this is due to receiving non-redundant information via bridging ties. However, the nature of such affiliation networks is that they lack nuance and detail and cannot explain the findings in detail.

Director ties may also be a source of potential successors whereby the board leverages their own personal networks to access candidates (Renneboog & Zhao, 2020). Indeed Liu (2010) found having ties to existing directors improves the likelihood of being appointed as successor. In voluntary succession events, insider candidates can benefit from strong social ties to the incumbent CEO (Hilger et al., 2013). Wiersema et al. (2018) show that social network ties formed through previous employment or having attended the same university (and shared demographic traits) as the incumbent CEO improve the chances of a candidate being selected as the new CEO in a succession event (Wiersema et al., 2018). This form of connection, bonding, shows an understanding that actors within such a network see themselves as similar, which further enhances trust and social cohesion (Ocasio et al., 2020). However, their sample is limited to insider candidates. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the importance of networks in that affiliation and shared experience increase the possibility of being chosen as the CEO successor.

Conversely, a well-connected outsider is more likely to be appointed to executive positions than insiders who are less connected (Berger et al., 2013). Given outsiders are usually installed as an agent of change, Wangrow et al. (2022) argue any such successor should possess a strong personal network. The authors reason that to effectively drive change, the new CEO will need buy-in and support from their leadership team. Thus, an outsider CEO should be looking to attract like-minded individuals to their new organisation by leveraging their personal network. At times, a smaller network might be of value to a CEO. Underperforming organisations may seek out potential successors who have fewer ties in the hope they will remain focussed on internal matters (Kirchmaier & Stathopoulos, 2008).

Once appointed, CEOs with strong social network ties to the directors of their organisation enjoy significant advantages (Nguyen, 2012). For example, Flickinger et

al. (2016) agree that a powerful CEO may be able to avoid forced succession despite poor performance. They found that when compared to the Chair, CEOs with high levels of embeddedness and centrality are less likely to be dismissed. Liu (2010) also noted that incoming CEOs with ties to current directors are less likely to experience subsequent succession.

Most CEOs who are dismissed struggle to find a new job, and when they do, it is often an inferior position (Fee, Hadlock, & Pierce, 2018). This is unsurprising, as dismissal effectively signals failed leadership (Berns et al., 2021). However, well-connected CEOs who have been dismissed are more likely to find new, and in many cases, better jobs (Nguyen, 2012). Further examination reveals networks provide character references for CEOs who have been dismissed and can help overcome the stigma associated with dismissal (Schepker & Barker III, 2018).

The following section examines leadership and succession within the context of sport. While a large body of work studies sport coach succession – which is often likened to corporate CEO succession – there is limited research examining CEO succession in sport organisations.

Table 5: Networks: Employment Outcomes, Succession, and Diversity

Author	Conclusions/significance	Conceptual basis	Outcome
Borgatti et al., 2018 Borgatti & Faust, 1994 Perry et al., 2018 Wasserman & Faust, 1994	Network studies focus on the importance of relationships. Social networks impact an actor's opportunities and constraints.	Ties between actors Network architecture	Position within a network and the nature of the ties within said network can provide an actor with both opportunities or constraints.
Bramoullé & Saint-Paul, 2010	Social networks are important to employment outcomes.	Strength and evolution of ties	Ties to employed people help the unemployed find work.
Granovetter, 1983, 2005	Referrals from within a social network can give access to jobs.	Strength of ties	Referrals play a significant role in people finding or changing jobs. Weak ties are important to obtain novel, nonredundant information.

de Janasz & Forret, 2008 Forret & Dougherty, 2004 Forret & Sullivan, 2002 Kim & Cannella Jr, 2008 Koss-Feder, 1999	Network position and active networking lead to positive employment outcomes, such as resources, mentoring, promotions, and increased remuneration.	Homophily Maintaining relationships Alignment with mentors/sponsors	Networking behaviour is positively associated with career success measures; however, this is stronger for men than women.
Beaman et al., 2018 Katz et al., 2018 Linehan, 2001 Shaw & Frisby, 2006	Social networks reinforce inequality between men and women within a leadership context.	Homophily Gender stereotypes Network position and architecture	Men tend to refer other men. Women are often excluded from male-dominated networks.
Kotter, 1982 Virany et al., 1992	Networks are important for those in leadership positions such as CEOs.	Referrals and sponsorship Relationship building Insider/outsider	Being able to leverage relationships can promote improved performance and enhance credibility.
Liu, 2010, 2014 Renneboog & Zhao, 2020 Wiersema et al., 2018	Social networks can impact CEO succession.	Network connectedness Strength of ties	Greater connectedness creates opportunities for CEOs to depart for other organisations. Internal connectedness leads to entrenchment. Connections to the incumbent CEO improve the likelihood of being appointed successor.
Geletkanycz et al., 2001 Cao et al., 2006 Cao et al., 2015	The social network of a CEO can impact organisational performance.	Importance of CEO ties	CEO networks are often valued by organisations and succession can influence organisational performance based on the networks of the outgoing and incoming CEO.

2.4 Leadership and succession in sport organisations

2.4.1 Leadership in sport organisations

Sporting organisations often have complex missions, requiring a focus on numerous and sometimes competing goals. Professional team sports, however, are largely defined by the simple metric of winning or losing. With such a magnified focus, the organisation is most often judged solely by their "on-field" performance. That being so, and given the high profile professional sport often enjoys, leadership in sport is most

often conceptualised in this context, in both academic literature and mainstream media (Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

The head coaches of elite sports teams (sometimes called managers – e.g., association football, baseball) have often been used as a proxy to examine corporate CEO succession (Ter Weel, 2011). Many studies therefore use CEO succession literature as the theoretical basis for investigating succession amongst head coaches and managers. Ndofor et al. (2009) note that both roles are responsible for operational and strategic decision making, have to satisfy multiple constituent groups, and operate in a precarious employment environment where they may be seemingly irrationally terminated for poor results. The unique nature of competitive sport means coaches and managers are often the public face of sports teams and, therefore, bear the brunt of the negative publicity when teams are perceived to be underperforming. Head coaches are also often compared to CEOs in the context of remuneration and performance expectations, and the resulting pressure on the incumbent to keep their job. In their discussion on scapegoating and CEO remuneration, Ward et al. (2011) use an example of a well-known college football coach to demonstrate that performance expectations, rather than actual performance, are often the cause of termination.

In their seminal paper integrating the three main theories used to explain post-leader succession performance in the National Hockey League (NHL), Rowe et al. (2005) argue that their findings can be applied to non-sport domains, citing the comparison between CEOs and coaches. They also use the example of a general manager (GM) of a professional sport franchise requiring a mix of sport-specific and business skills as an additional reason to apply learnings from the sport leader literature to corporate CEO literature. As such, a number of other studies directly link sport leader succession and CEO succession, for example, regarding the link between performance and pay (Mixon et al., 2013), relay succession (Davidson et al., 2008), candidate availability as a predictor of succession (Foreman & Soebbing, 2015), and pressures to turn organisational performance around (Buraimo et al., 2017).

In summary, while most studies in the sport leadership literature focus on elite athletes and coaches, there is a strong argument that findings can be applied to a corporate CEO setting. Similarly, reviews of the CEO succession literature, such as

Kesner and Sebora (1994), encompass sport leader succession research, including the key theory-generating studies developed by Grusky (1960, 1961, 1963) and Gammon and Scotch (1964). These theories (vicious circle, common sense, and ritual scapegoat) were discussed in Section 2.2.1. This notwithstanding, the context of Australian NSOs is, in particular, unique due to the structure of sport and inherent complex missions encompassing both high performance and participation. As such, there is a gap in the literature in terms of CEO succession in sport organisations. The remainder of this section will examine the sport leader succession literature in further detail.

2.4.2 Sport leader succession

Why does succession occur?

As with corporate CEOs, the traditional view in sport is that poor performance results in leader succession (Wangrow et al., 2018). McDonald and Karg (2014) point out that less than one quarter of coaches in Australia's two major football codes (AFL and NRL) remain in their job for four years or more. Unsurprisingly, a sharp decline in performance is observed in the weeks (up to two months) leading up to succession (Balduck et al., 2010). Sport studies investigating coach succession in the National Football League (NFL) (Allen & Chadwick, 2012) and National Basketball Association (NBA) (Wangrow et al., 2018) also highlight performance expectations as an important determinant, along with actual performance. When a team is underperforming, the organisation feels compelled to make a change (Gómez-Haro & Salmerón-Gómez, 2015), often while enduring significant public criticism from their supporters and the media (Flores et al., 2012).

Succession theories

Scholars continue to test the major foundational theories in sport leader succession, using the seminal concepts of vicious circle (first introduced in Grusky, 1960, 1961), common sense (Grusky, 1963), and ritual scapegoat (Gamson & Scotch, 1964). A number of these are mentioned below. This highlights the lack of alternative (and innovative) approaches in this field. Results have been mixed, although some say scapegoat seems to be applicable in the majority of cases (Gammelsæter, 2013). In studying the US College Football system, Dohrn et al. (2015) rejected the vicious cycle theory and found support for common sense theory (in low-revenue and mid-revenue

teams) and ritual scapegoating (in high-revenue teams). However, another study showed support for the vicious circle theory due to a drop in performance following succession (Soebbing & Washington, 2011). Flores et al. (2012) concluded ritual scapegoating best explained managerial succession in Argentinian soccer, as did Balduck et al. (2010) when examining Belgian soccer. Research on English football has identified an element of vicious circle theory that explains succession (Audas et al., 2002; Hughes et al., 2010). Audas et al. (2006) studied NHL data and concluded performance declines following succession (vicious circle), but this effect is only prevalent in the short term.

The most noteworthy study in this area is Rowe et al. (2005), which revisits the ritual scapegoating theory, vicious circle theory, and common-sense theory in examining sixty years of NHL data. The authors measured performance (points gained from win/lose/tie), succession (in-season, out-of-season), environmental constraints, lag performance, rivalry, coach ability (career win-loss record), with control for team level effects (29 team dichotomous variables). Their study supports the concept of leader succession impacting performance, however, argues that timing may be the most important contextual element. Their conclusion is that new leaders, in this case GMs and coaches, need time to familiarise themselves with the organisation and to have an impact meaningful enough to impart a change in performance. The evidence supports this position, with a positive impact on performance noted for the season following the succession. Rowe et al. (2005) support common-sense theory while confirming previous research findings in ritual scapegoating theory (between season succession: no impact on performance) and vicious circle theory (within season succession: decline in performance). Such an approach demonstrates the complexity of succession and the importance of considering a medium- to long-term approach when assessing performance impacts, as the disruption can negatively affect short-term results.

This area of research is dominated by quantitative studies using publicly available statistical data. There is little empirical research investigating qualitative factors that could impact performance, such as leadership style, technical coaching knowledge, or other organisational dynamics (Andersen, 2011). Studies to date have largely failed to capture the complexity and dynamism of the succession process. A typical study in this regard is Johnson et al. (2017). They attempt to analyse factors influencing team performance following coaching succession in NCAA basketball.

Johnson and colleagues acknowledge the abundance of works which essentially replicate previous research conducted using the three major succession theories. Thus, Johnson et al. (2017) attempt to add other various contextual factors to their research but essentially conclude that most quantitative variables are, in fact, insignificant. Their results suggest partial adherence to common sense theory and vicious circle theory. Gammelsæter (2013) describes the sport leader succession literature as "heavily flawed" for these reasons and argues strongly for qualitative research to be undertaken to better understand the context of sport and management.

Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986) attempted to account for coaching ability in their analysis of NBA coach succession by including variables such as coaching experience and previous win-loss records; however, this has its own challenges. Similarly, Wangrow and colleagues (2018) suggest human capital built up over time may moderate the likelihood of dismissal due to poor performance. While there may be some evidence that experienced coaches who have previously experienced success can achieve better results than inexperienced coaches or coaches with poor records, some characteristics and traits cannot be measured in a quantitative study. For instance, desirable attributes of coaches include so-called "soft skills", such as communication, sense of humour, ability to relate to athletes, and teaching capability (Cassidy et al., 2008). Goodall et al. (2011) found that NBA coaches who have experienced high-level success as players have a positive effect on team results within their first season of taking charge. However, these studies are scarce.

Qualitative approaches to succession

In recent years, attempts have been made to incorporate additional perspectives in examining leader succession – including a small number of qualitative studies. One such approach considers the impact of coaching turnover on the athletes. Purdy et al. (2018) conducted a small qualitative study of European basketball players within a conceptual framework of career and professional identities. Their findings indicate that a mid-season change of coach disrupts the work environment and thus has an emotional cost for athletes. Similar findings were present in the collegiate sport system (Heller et al., 2016), leading some to argue for athlete support when coaching changes are initiated (Fridley et al., 2022). Further, the impact a coach has is substantial and can affect the culture of a program, and thus individual styles, traits, and characteristics (including

gender) need to be considered when making hiring decisions (Shipherd et al., 2019). Yet, it is understood that coaching succession events are not uncommon in professional sport.

A single study has been located which addresses coaching succession and team performance using a qualitative methodology. Kattuman et al. (2019) observed a professional European soccer club over the course of a year in both training sessions and games. Unfortunately, the researchers were not permitted to directly interview the players, but their observations were supported by input from support staff and management. The investigators studied the behaviour of the preceding and succeeding coaches, and associated changes within the team. This included task-based and motivation-based work considering factors such as shooting for goal and team cohesion in addition to game outcomes. The conclusion in this case seems clear: an improvement in performance appeared to be led by a change in leadership. The significance of this study is that it directly observes the changes in players and subsequent match results, based on the leadership behaviour of the new coach. Given this is a single study with restrictions, further work is needed. Nevertheless, it is a first step towards better understanding the impact a change in leadership has on a sports team. As such, Kattuman et al. (2019) espouse the importance of leadership for performance and call for more detailed process-focussed studies on leader succession in sport.

Succession variables

Several other succession-related aspects have been applied in the research, including attempts to predict when succession will occur (Wangrow et al., 2018), why it occurs (Bruinshoofd & Ter Weel, 2003), background of the successor (Roach, 2016), length of tenure prior to succession (Gómez-Haro & Salmerón-Gómez, 2015), gender and succession (Cunningham et al., 2019), and the impact succession has on student-athletes (Johnson et al., 2018). Additional studies have used contexts such as betting markets (Bernardo et al., 2019), national culture (Foroughi et al., 2018), race (Kopkin, 2014), workplace deviance (Foreman et al., 2019), and attitudes of season ticket holders (Karg et al., 2015) to explore succession. However, these tell us little as to how succession occurs.

Governance and succession

Sports governance literature appears to focus mostly on systems and principles of good governance rather than explicitly studying succession or turnover. However, some studies investigate director appointments. Within the Olympic movement, there are often few or no processes in place for board renewal, with entrenchment a significant issue. Examples of entrenchment abound within international federations, such as World Aquatics, previously known as FINA - Fédération Internationale de Natation (see later section). NSOs use either delegate or independent boards, or a combination of both. Best practice suggests independent skills-based boards are desirable. Several studies have also researched the role of nomination committees in director selection. Despite the significant impact that nomination committees have in the governance of an NSO, they appear to have little engagement with membership. Therefore, in corporate and sport contexts, nomination committees can rely heavily on their members' networks to propose potential new board members (Stenling et al., 2021). Power is also a central feature of sports boards, and it has been suggested that "rent-seeking" occurs whereby board members use their position to benefit themselves rather than the organisation (McLeod et al., 2021).

Critique

Overall, few studies have examined the appointment process of leader succession in a sporting context. The insider/outsider distinction is a popular lens for examining CEO succession more broadly but has been applied sparingly in this area. One notable exception is the work of Allen et al. (1979). In this study, the authors sought to replicate and extend Grusky's (1963) study of succession in Major League Baseball. They found that the teams that appointed an outsider as manager typically performed worse than the teams that hired an insider, highlighting insider succession as less disruptive than outsider succession. This corresponds with the works of scholars from the mainstream CEO succession literature, such as Cannella and Shen (2001) and Zajac and Westphal (1996). However, these studies are all very limited in how they apply the insider/outsider distinction, using only the traditional definition (where outsiders are not currently employed within the hiring organisation).

Concerningly, papers in this field have almost exclusively studied male sporting teams and/or male leaders. One exception is a study on coaching succession in NCAA women's basketball (being Pierce et al., 2017), which focuses on predictors of future

success following succession. They found a change in coach had only minimal impact on results, but previous team performance was significant. Although the authors note the lack of research exploring the selection aspect of succession, they, as do most studies in this area, limit their focus to quantifying wins and losses. While this and other similar studies broaden the literature (Cannella Jr & Rowe, 1995; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986), there is no insight into factors other than quantifiable statistics, such as previous win percentage and years of previous experience.

Additionally, as previously discussed, there is little variation in the geographic distribution of works in this field. Karg et al.'s (2015) is one of the few papers from outside of North America and Europe. They examined changes in the attitude of season ticket holders following coaching changes in Australian football teams. Their findings indicated that the appointment of a new coach, as opposed to the sacking of a previous coach, impacts the attitude of fans. Given the differences in the organisation of Australian sport, there is a clear gap in the literature to account for the contextual variance. For instance, in professional sports clubs in Australia, a head coach is often also tasked with overseeing developmental pathways for the elite players of the future rather than focusing only on a single team.

2.4.3 CEO succession in sport organisations

There is little research specifically examining CEO succession in sport organisations. Schoenberg (2012) appears to be the only scholar to have done so to this point. His study, investigating the role of the board in appointing a successor, positions the CEO as being of increasing importance in sport organisations as the sector has become more professional. Schoenberg conducted a case study of Victorian state sport organisations (SSOs) and found that the directors of these organisations approach the issue of CEO succession as an operational, ad-hoc task, with little or no forward planning and strategic integration. When boards display a lack of commitment to succession planning, it leaves open the possibility for incumbent CEOs to impose their own will on the process (Joshi et al., 2021). The three successors in Schoenberg's (2012) case study all fit the traditional description of outsiders, although at least one successor likely had informal social network ties to the hiring organisation. The same organisation had the previous CEO manage the process in their new role as a board

member. While they were assisted by a specialist recruitment agency (which the former CEO selected), it suggests the social network literature may have application to sport organisations. Thus, further exploration is warranted into how networks may influence CEO selection in sport organisations, including in terms of the insider/outsider distinction. Schoenberg (2012) concludes by calling for an increase in qualitative research and the use of a wider range of methodologies. He further suggests NSOs as future case study organisations. Despite this, no scholars have heeded these suggestions to date. Thus, this study will extend knowledge by addressing these gaps in addition to further investigating the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within sporting organisations.

In contrast to the proliferation of coaching succession papers, only three studies attempt to assess the impact of a change in the 'front office' management of professional sports teams; however, this too is based on on-field results only, which fails to appreciate a wider organisational perspective. The first study is by Goff et al. (2019) and concludes that talent among potential successors is such that a change does not significantly affect the quality of the team. However, the talent pool is highly specialised in each individual sport. For example, GMs in the NBA and NFL often possess a background in player development, such as coaching or scouting, in addition to business skills. This is likely attributable to the importance of acquiring players through various drafts and trades (Deubert et al., 2013). But Goff et al. (2019) provide no detail as to how or why successors are hired, and thus no opportunity to assess the network-based conclusions from Section 2.3.3 which suggest such decisions in highly specialised industries with limited demand are influenced by strong ties (Bian, 1997; Murray et al., 1981). The second study is by Hersch and Pelkowski (2019) and examines organisational performance following a change in ownership of MLB teams. While they found no conclusive effect on team performance on the field, there was a short-term increase in player payroll and an increased probability that the GM and manager would be dismissed. The third study, a doctoral research project, studied MLB team presidents to examine the performance impact of a successor based on distant charismatic leadership as a predictor of leader ability, finding improved performance in several metrics, including on team winning percentage and game attendance (Weingarden, 2004). However, the study uses archival data and published biographies

and thus lacks qualitative detail and social context. Weingarden (2004) encourages further executive succession research in sport and other non-traditional contexts.

Power is also a relevant aspect when considering sporting organisations. The nature of NSOs means the incumbent CEO and the board regularly lack an understanding of each other's roles, which leads to tensions arising; however, it is vital for the board to dedicate themselves towards improving their capacity and sharing leadership with the CEO (Ferkins et al., 2009). Indeed, there is support for collective leadership amongst the boards of federated sport organisations (Ferkins et al., 2018). Hoye and Cuskelly (2003) agree that the ideal balance is for an even distribution of power between the board and executive. Their research into Victorian SSOs found five potential patterns as defined in the not-for-profit literature: "executive dominated, chair dominated, fragmented power, power sharing, and powerless" (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003, p. 109). The paper does not explicitly investigate CEO succession; however, there appears to be no difference in the ability of effective or ineffective boards (usually fragmented or powerless boards) in the CEO selection and review process.

However, there is scant understanding of how board composition and behaviour may affect CEO succession within a sport organisation. While the previous section mentioned several potential board/executive power distribution models, more recent Australian research uncovered instances where directors of NSOs do not feel they play a leadership role within their organisations (O'Boyle et al., 2020; O'Boyle et al., 2019). In these instances, power resided only with either the Chair, the CEO, or a combination of the two. The authors suggest that this may be due to governance systems based on delegate representation rather than newer, fully independent boards (O'Boyle et al., 2020). There are numerous gaps in the literature requiring further investigation. This study takes an initial step by focussing on social networks and relationships of CEOs involved in succession, identifying those individuals within a network who are important in fulfilling a range of functions from the CEO's perspective.

2.4.4 Sport leadership succession and gender

Gender inequality in leadership positions within sport organisations has been linked to factors such as stereotyping (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003), sexism (Hindman & Walker, 2020), power (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Shaw & Penney, 2003; Veraldo

& Ruihley, 2017), and social identity (Grappendorf & Burton, 2017). Different forms of bias (including stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination) are also widely cited as the cause of underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in sport (Cunningham & Ahn, 2019). Shaw and Hoeber (2003) affirm that men remain overrepresented in managerial roles within sporting organisations. Their study attributed this to traditional gender-based stereotypes being applied to specific employment roles as stated in role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These findings are reinforced in comprehensive reviews of the research on the under-representation of women in leadership positions in sport, undertaken by Burton (2015) and Evans and Pfister (2020).

Female representation on international sports federation boards is extremely low. As of 2017, women held less than 20% of positions on National Olympic Committee boards, with cultural attitudes towards women a significant contributor to underrepresentation (Ahn & Cunningham, 2017). A 2016 multinational study showed women were also underrepresented in NSOs as directors (19.7%), chairs (10.8%), and CEOs (16.3%) (Adriaanse, 2016). In 2023, women still only comprised 25% of chairs and 23% of CEOs in Australian NSOs (Clearinghouse for Sport, 2023). Studies also show that men dominate the Paralympic movement (Piggott & Matthews, 2024) and women who obtain leadership roles are considered outsiders (Itoh et al., 2017).

Women leaders who work in male professional sports are subject to sexism from their co-workers and other people with whom they interact (Hindman & Walker, 2020) and are subject to different expectations than their male counterparts. For instance, one study found that female leaders in sport need to be "robust", organised, and better communicators than men (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). A win-at-all-costs culture perpetuates male dominance in holding leadership roles (Burton & Leberman, 2017), and successful leadership as a construct in sport is perceived as a masculine identity (Grappendorf & Burton, 2017). Multiple implicit leadership studies show masculinity is perceived as a central trait of leaders in sport, although recent studies demonstrate that this view may be changing (Swanson et al., 2020).

There is some evidence that women are more likely to be appointed as a replacement head coach when succession occurs due to poor performance (Wicker et

al., 2019). This aligns with the more general practice of an outsider being appointed as a successor in a poorly performing organisation. The CEO succession literature also shows women are more likely to be appointed as successor in precarious situations. Ahn and Cunningham (2020) note that the global federation for association football (soccer), Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), took a similar approach when it began appointing women to leadership positions in a time of crisis in 2015.

Several studies have addressed gender diversity within sport in Australia. While diversity is a desired attribute within sport organisations, it appears to be aspirational rather than reality. O'Shea (2017) examined the sports management career experiences of men and women in Australian sporting organisations. Her study found that recruitment and promotion were subject to inequality, despite those within the organisation believing it was solely merit based. Thus, she concludes power is perpetuating ongoing unintentional bias in favour of males over females. This is similar to women's experiences internationally, such as in The Netherlands (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008) and the USA where male leaders often choose to hire a man over a woman as they are more likely to fit in with the existing culture, that being, male-dominated (Vianden & Gregg, 2017).

2.4.5 Summary

In summary, the extant literature concerning succession in sport is concentrated on the role and effect of those in non-playing roles who are directly involved in athlete or team performance (such as field manager or coach). If organisational performance and leader succession are to be better understood, scholars must also consider the role of leader succession for positions such as director and CEO. There is a dearth of qualitative studies regarding CEO succession in general, and in their literature review, Farah et al. (2019) call for researchers to employ qualitative methods to better understand the mandate provided by a board in selecting an insider or an outsider, particularly in the case of an outsider where it is assumed strategic change is the goal. To illustrate the need for research in this area, the NRL, in 2019, expressed their concern over the high rate of churn amongst club CEOs, with a total of fifty succession events in just five years across the sixteen teams (Proszenko & Phillips, 2019).

Almost all research is focussed on measuring the performance of a competitive sporting team, with little or no attention given to a broader definition of organisational performance. It should be remembered that many sport organisations, including NSOs, as in this study, have more complex missions than just winning at an elite level, which require a more complex definition of success. NSOs are not only responsible for the performance of an elite team. They also manage participation, facilitate coaching development, run events, coordinate volunteers, apply for government grants, and solicit sponsors (O'Boyle, 2015). O'Boyle and Hassan's (2014) review of the existing research shows that scholars use a large range of variables and dimensions to measure NSO performance, including board stability, key partnerships, strategic planning, application of sports science research, flexibility, productivity, volume and quality of services, planning, system of governance, and volunteer expertise.

While Sport Australia previously allocated funding based on the potential for high performance (i.e., sports with a greater chance of winning Olympic medals received more money), this has since been scrapped in favour of returning to a more balanced whole-of-sport approach, encompassing core participation and a high-performance strategy. Further, Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) describe the importance of an organisational culture where a commitment to diversity underpins management in which diversity is valued as a social responsibility and driver of performance within sport organisations.

As outlined above, there are significant gaps in this area of the literature. This study attempts to remedy this by providing insights into the social networks of CEOs in the context of succession, thus offering a new perspective on leader succession within sport management.

Table 6: Sport Leader Succession

Author	Conclusions/significance	Conceptual basis	Outcome
Gamson & Scotch, 1964 Grusky, 1960, 1961, 1963	1. Vicious circle theory 2. Common sense theory 3. Ritual scapegoating theory	Impact of leadership on organisational performance	In-season succession leads to poor performance and further succession. Poor performance leads to succession, so bad teams will replace their manager more often. A GM affects performance rather than the on-field manager.
Rowe et al. 2005	Integration of the three traditional leader succession theories into a single model	Impact of leadership on organisational performance	Between-season succession has no impact (scapegoat). Within-season succession worsens performance (vicious circle). New leader takes time to take charge and will improve following season (common-sense).
Anderson, 2011	There is a need for studies of managerial tactical decisions and strategic skills, and managerial behaviours associated with team performance when examining succession.	Impact of leadership on organisational performance	Impact of leaders needs to be measured in broader terms than wins and losses
Gammelsæter, 2013	Existing literature lacks the qualitative elements required to explore the contextual details necessary to fully understand the process and impact.	Impact of leadership on organisational performance	Need for broader scope and attention from sport management scholars
Schoenberg, 2012	SSO approach to CEO succession is largely ad-hoc in nature and lacks a strategic approach.	Strategic fit of CEO	Current processes are not commensurate with the uniqueness and significance of CEO succession

Table 7: Gender, Leadership and Succession

Author	Conclusions/significance	Conceptual basis	Outcome
Adriaanse, 2016 Clearinghouse for Sport, 2023 Gipson et al., 2017	Women are underrepresented in leadership positions.	Leader selection Leadership development Leadership styles Power	Performance outcomes are similar for leaders regardless of gender.
Cunningham & Ahn, 2019 Fink et al., 2001 Hindman & Walker, 2020 Madden, 2004 Satore & Cunningham, 2006	Causes include bias, power, and stereotyping.	Organisational culture Constraints	Importance of experience and contact with diversity to improving culture in this area. White males are often appointed with lesser qualifications. Women leave coaching positions earlier than men due to organisational constraints.
Ahn & Cunningham, 2020 Shaw & Leberman, 2015 Wicker et al., 2019	Women ascend to leadership roles in poorly performing organisations.	Career pathways Work-family conflict Networks	Poorly performing organisations are more likely to take a risk when appointing a CEO successor – such a crisis in a sport organisation can increase the possibility of a woman being appointed.
Gupta et al., 2020 Shaw & Leberman, 2015	Women leaders are subject to more scrutiny and are more likely to be subjected to forced succession.	Gender stereotypes and leadership: token theory, role congruity	Women are at greater risk of forced succession than men regardless of performance.
Walker et al., 2017	Need to examine within sports administrative leadership positions	Glass wall, Homologous Reproduction	Research gap exists in relation to "glass wall" at administrative level of sport organisations.

2.5 Social network analysis and network perspective in sport studies

2.5.1 Introduction

In 2008, Quatman and Chelladurai endorsed SNA as a valuable lens for conducting research in the sport management discipline. Through a systematic literature review, Wäsche et al. (2017) found that SNA remains a relatively new methodology in sport management research, with the majority of empirical studies to date being exploratory or descriptive in nature and focused on sport performance. Skinner et al. (2020) state that as an emerging approach, social network theory and associated methods provide an opportunity for sport management scholars to extend knowledge and explain real-world happenings. However, SNA has yet to be widely deployed

within sport management research (Andrew et al., 2019) despite calls for SNA to be linked with leadership in this context (Mueller et al., 2021). As stated by Fonti et al. (2023), advances in broader management network-related theory have occurred through research in sports settings; therefore, researchers should continue to explore opportunities in these areas.

2.5.2 Network perspectives and team sports

Social network analysis has been used to examine the networks involved in competitive sports teams, community sport organisations, and commercial sporting clubs. SNA is viewed as complementing more traditional methods for evaluating performance of competitive sports teams (Ribeiro et al., 2017). Studies in this area show the importance of team cohesion to performance in women's collegiate basketball (Warner et al., 2012), the evolution of social structures within a female volleyball team (Anderson & Warner, 2017), athlete leadership within sports teams (Fransen et al., 2015a), the impact of team leaders over and above that of the coaching staff (Fransen et al., 2015b), leadership and its relationship to task cohesion (Loughead et al., 2016), the impact of the central midfield positions in football teams on building attack (Clemente et al., 2015), the relationship between well-connected intrateam passing relations and team performance in youth football teams (Gonçalves et al., 2017), the importance of passing networks for goal scoring in European football teams (Mclean et al., 2018), the importance of trust between community sport organisations when promoting collaboration (Barnes et al., 2017), and the impact of relationships on commercial performance (Pieters et al., 2012).

2.5.3 Network analysis and multi-sport events

Several studies have used network analysis as a tool to examine relationships within the context of multi-sport events. Parent et al. (2017) used SNA to study the relationships in a cross-sectoral network in the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games to determine stakeholders' network capital in relation to centrality. This study identified the complexity of the temporary network required to stage Olympic Games, while highlighting the key role of the national government and local organising committee. Similarly, Naraine et al. (2016) researched stakeholder network governance structures across large multi-sport events using a stakeholder theory lens. Their findings

demonstrated the difference between networks for international and domestic events, with the role of the government key in international events, and a decentralised network with multiple core stakeholders in domestic events (Naraine et al., 2016). A comparable framework was used by Parent et al. (2015) to identify the network of stakeholders involved in staging the first Winter Youth Olympic Games. Thomson (2015) examined the interorganisational network involved in the 2009 World Masters Games, finding limited cooperation between actors in achieving sport development legacies.

2.5.4 Network analysis and female leadership in sport

Network analysis has been used to examine the social networks of women working in leadership roles within the NCAA college sport system. Using an affiliation network, Katz et al. (2018) found that networks play a role in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and that those few females who were employed in such roles were not influential within the broader network. This is demonstrated by observing sociograms and calculating eigenvector scores, which indicate who is most influential in the network by measuring connectedness. The significance of Katz et al. (2018) is that SNA is used to prove the existence of exclusionary networks, which negatively impact diversity within the sector (Singer et al., 2019). As such, their study is unique up to this point. As suggested by Nixon (1993), SNA appears to be a useful and productive tool to examine such scenarios within managerial recruitment in sports contexts where "stacking" has been known to occur (p. 319).

2.5.5 Network analysis and sport management

More recent SNA studies in sport management have centred on coaching lineage and influence in Australian Rules football (Marmulla et al., 2023), soft power through sponsorship (Chadwick et al., 2020), COVID-19 and the UEFA Euro football tournament (Parnell et al., 2020), identifying which leagues and countries host the most influential players in the European Football Championships (Duymus et al., 2022), susceptibility to corruption within FIFA (Junghagen & Aurvandil, 2020), and the football world ecosystem more broadly (Parnell et al., 2021). Parnell et al. (2023) have used a network approach to examine the recruitment of senior leaders within professional football clubs – an important study in the context of this thesis, although their methodology is limited to qualitative interviews with no empirical network data.

2.5.6 Ego-centric designs in sport management research

Ego-centric designs are underrepresented within the sports context, and few studies use empirical data collected through surveys or other direct means (Wäsche et al., 2017). Quatman and Chelladurai (2008) identify a single study as using an ego-centric approach. In fact, Sagas and Cunningham (2004, 2005) have two similar studies using similar methodologies. The authors use social capital gained through networking to explain the different career outcomes for white versus black college football coaches (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005) and male versus female college sport administrators (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). However, the network aspect of their research is limited to a name generator used to estimate the number of individuals who have provided networking support (such as mentoring or advice) to assist the respondents in their career progression. Pieters et al. (2012) use ego-centric networks but in an interorganisational context where actors are organisations rather than individuals. Similarly, Naraine and Parent (2016) map the stakeholder ego networks for NSOs on social media. The aforementioned soft power study by Chadwick et al. (2020) also uses ego-nets but between nation states and organisations, while Lefebvre et al. (2021) use only qualitative analysis when examining the personal development ego networks of elite coaches. Katz et al. (2019) examine sport consumer behaviour by using ego-centric network analysis to determine consumers' intention to renew college football season tickets. They collected network data via a self-reporting name generator and then used regression analysis to draw conclusions. Similarly, Cocco et al. (2021) used ego-centric network analysis and multi-level modelling to analyse supporter groups in American soccer. This doctoral study therefore makes a novel methodological contribution by using an ego-centric network approach using empirical data *and* qualitative interviews within a sports management context.

2.6 Summary

2.6.1 Synthesis

CEO succession literature is largely focussed on the consequences of succession and is framed within the insider–outsider distinction. While poor organisational performance is often cited as the preeminent reason for CEO succession, there are, in fact, several other important factors (Berns et al., 2021). Further, forced succession is

dependent on the board of directors having the capability and wherewithal to initiate such a process. Board structure and composition play a role in determining when and how succession may occur (Beaman et al., 2018; Kirzinger, 2016; Shen & Cannella Jr, 2002a; Taylor & Wells, 2017). Power is a key element of succession, and a powerful CEO may even be able to avoid forced succession in this way (Pitcher et al., 2000; Plian, 1995). A CEO may have internal rivals who can manufacture succession to suit their own personal cause. Power often accrues over time and can lead to entrenchment. Hence, CEOs are most at risk of forced succession earlier in their tenure (Desai et al., 2018; Fredrickson et al., 1988). The selection of a new CEO is covered extensively in the literature, however, largely through the insider/outsider lens without considering the social aspects of succession. Insider succession, usually by means of relay succession, is regarded as less disruptive and largely a continuation of current operations (Kavadis et al., 2022; Vancil, 1987; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). Alternatively, outsider succession is typically associated with poor organisational performance prior to succession and a need to initiate strategic and structural change (Bai & Mkrtchyan, 2023; Lauterbach et al., 1999). There are a substantial number of variables in selecting a successor, including power, board composition, industry conditions, and organisational characteristics (Baer et al., 2023; Ocasio, 1994; Schepker et al., 2018; Zajac & Westphal, 1996). Succession events impact an entire organisation. CEO succession is most often evaluated in the context of organisational performance. However, succession can also result in additional changes, including turnover of senior management team members (Boumosleh & Cline, 2023; Dalton & Dalton, 2007; Kesner & Dalton, 1994), changes to the power dynamics within an organisation, and further CEO succession events (Desai et al., 2018).

Key leadership succession theories are rooted in the context of professional team sport, and head coaches are often used as a proxy for CEO succession research. As such, head coach succession has been explored extensively, while CEO succession in sport organisations has mostly been ignored to date. More so than in corporate CEO succession, poor performance is a key antecedent for head coach succession (Balduck et al., 2010; Gómez-Haro & Salmerón-Gómez, 2015; Wangrow et al., 2018). While there are varying levels of support for the vicious circle, common sense, and ritual scapegoat theories, each can likely be applied if succession is viewed as a more complex phenomenon, with contextual and social factors also to be considered. However, few

studies have attempted to capture these elements of succession. Instead, research in this area typically uses publicly available quantitative data to measure post-succession performance by professional or college (male) sports teams in North America and Europe (Gammelsæter, 2013). Most NSOs in Australia have more complex missions, with elite performance only one component of organisational performance. Thus, a more nuanced approach is needed to fully appreciate succession in this context. The sole study examining CEO succession in sport organisations studied the board processes during succession in SSOs.

Despite the evidence linking diversity with improved organisational performance (Cassells & Duncan, 2020), women remain underrepresented in leadership positions in both corporate (Chief Executive Women, 2018; Crossley et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2023) and sport organisations (Adriaanse, 2016; Ahn & Cunningham, 2017; Clearinghouse for Sport, 2023). Reasons for this disparity include inherent bias, power, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and propagation of traditional leadership constructs (Havrylyshyn, 2022; Lawrence, 2021; Won & Bidwell, 2023). Not only are female candidates less likely to be appointed to leadership positions, but when they are, it is more likely to be in situations where the organisation is performing poorly (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Similarly, female leaders will be subjected to heightened levels of scrutiny and are more likely to experience forced succession than their male counterparts, regardless of performance (Gupta et al., 2020; Shaw & Leberman, 2015). As most of the sport literature in this area examines coaches, there is a need to further explore diversity in high-level administrative positions.

The importance of networks in employment outcomes has been a popular area of interest for sociologists and labour economists (Bramoullé & Saint-Paul, 2010). Studies in this area examine the role of relationships between various actors in determining opportunities or imposing constraints. For example, key foundational research in this area found that referrals are of vital importance in finding out about potential job openings (Granovetter, 1983, 2018). The network tie provides access to information that may not be otherwise available. Similarly, network ties are also a social status symbol and project legitimacy (Podolny, 2001). Thus, actively working to improve one's social network is an important career advancement strategy (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Forret & Sullivan, 2002). However, existing networks can also further buttress existing

inequalities, such as those between men and women seeking to ascend to positions of leadership (Beaman et al., 2018; Caprais et al., 2020; Esteban Salvador et al., 2023; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Networking is viewed as a key function of effective leaders (Kotter, 1982) and the social network of a CEO can be of strategic value to an organisation (Cao et al., 2006; Cao et al., 2015; Geletkanycz et al., 2001). While there is disagreement as to whether extensive networks have a positive or negative impact on organisational performance, it is argued that appointing a CEO with high levels of embeddedness in internal and external networks may mitigate the disruptive effects of succession (Cao et al., 2006).

2.6.2 Gaps in the literature

Criticisms of the CEO succession literature centre on the fact that researchers have long focussed on succession as an event rather than a process. This has been described as being more about the 'who' and 'when' rather than 'how' (Berns & Klarner, 2017). Scholars continue to focus on these fundamental aspects of succession, which has hampered the development of new knowledge in this area (Zhang, 2021). Zhang (2021) argues that CEO succession research does not adequately account for causality when considering whether the resulting impact on organisational performance is positive or negative, which she describes as "…the endogeneity issue…" (p. 379). The extant literature relies heavily on publicly available quantitative data and tends to overlook the contextual factors around succession.

As such, the social aspect has been largely ignored to date. The roots of CEO succession research are found in early sport leader succession studies. Since then, sport leader succession research has continued to focus on the impact a change in coach has on the performance of competitive sports teams. These studies primarily use male professional or collegiate teams based in North America or Europe. Research examining succession of CEOs in sport organisations is almost non-existent. Given the nature of the sport industry, sport organisations, and leadership in sport, this is a significant gap in the literature. NSO CEOs face unique challenges (Dixon et al., 2023), are the leader of their entire sport in the country (not just a singular organisation) (Trosien & Ratz, 2019), and must collaborate extensively with a wide array of stakeholders across multiple sectors (Hoye et al., 2008; Hoye et al., 2018).

A small number of studies have used network perspectives to examine various phenomena involving CEOs (For example, Engelberg et al., 2009; Geletkanycz et al., 2001). However, very few do so in studying CEO succession (Liu, 2010, 2014; Renneboog & Zhao, 2020). Those that do use large data sets to map affiliation network ties, which are based on a quantitative approach that maps actors' opportunities to connect with others, and none are within a sports context. Hence, a more qualitative approach is needed to incorporate the use of ego-networks, which capture a richer data set. Ego-networks use survey-based name generators whereby each network is formed based on the responses of ego. Additionally, these networks can also capture more nuanced data, such as tie strength. While Katz et al. (2018) used SNA to examine the differences between the networks of male leaders and female leaders working in US collegiate sport, finding that networks play a role in the underrepresentation of women in these roles, they too used affiliation data to map network ties. Wells and Kerwin (2017) have called for further research to examine the role social networks may play in career advancement within sport organisations.

Table 8: Critiques of CEO Succession Literature

Author	Conclusions /significance
Kesner & Sebora, 1994 Laufente & Garcia-Cestona, 2021 Ma et al., 2015	1. Large but fragmented body of literature 2. Mostly quantitative studies using archival data 3. Need to explore new methodologies
Giambatista, Rowe & Riaz, 2005 Berns et al., 2021	1. Need for research to move beyond main effects research 2. Need to increase use of different theoretical lenses and use of a wider range of approaches
Berns & Klarner, 2017 Nyberg et al., 2018 Schepker et al., 2018	1. Research remains event-based 2. Lack of research addressing role of board throughout the succession event 3. Lack of research examining the role of executive recruitment firms influence

2.7 Conceptual model

This section identifies, defines, and describes the operationalisation of the key concepts in this study. This information is displayed in Table 9. Following this, the concepts are linked to provide the conceptual model for this research.

Table 9: Key Concepts, Definitions, and Operationalisation

Concept	Definition	Operationalisation
Social network theory	Relationships among actors and patterns and implications of these links	Provides opportunities or constraints
Insider/outsider	Distinction between whether a candidate is already employed within an organisation or not; can also refer to gender or other characteristics	Intraorganisational network/interorganisational network
Gender	Self-identity based on the social constructs of male, female, and third-gender categories	Outcomes may be different dependent on gender
Mentoring/sponsorship	Professional relationship with an actor who can provide advice, support, and direction	Career progression and other employment outcomes
Network position	Location of an actor within the architecture of a social network	Access to potential employment opportunities
CEO succession	Processes whereby an incumbent CEO leaves an organisation and leadership transfers to a new CEO	Selection of incoming CEO

The proposed model below shows the connection between the major concepts underpinning this research. Examining the literature reveals that the concepts of CEO

succession, sport leader succession, and gender are linked to social network theory. This, along with the gaps in the existing literature, is directly connected to the research problem and research design.

Social network theory provides the lens through which this study is conducted. As described above, social network theory is focussed on the relationships between actors and the patterns of these relationships. Social network theory places interactions at the centre of behaviour, rather than individuals, and the structure of networks facilitating interactions have consequences. Thus, social network theory posits that an actor's position within a network determines their opportunities and constraints. Well-connected people have better work-related outcomes than those who are not so well-connected. Landmark studies and various accounts from industry consultants have demonstrated the importance of social networks in finding a new job, including high-level positions such as leadership roles (Granovetter, 1983, 2018; Job Vite, 2019; Parnell et al., 2023). Managerial promotions have also been linked to network size (Kim & Cannella Jr, 2008; Lalanne & Seabright, 2022).

However, all networks are not equal, nor are they static. Positioning within a network is of high importance for leaders. Occupying network positions with a high degree of centrality, both in intraorganisational and interorganisational social networks, can improve both actual and perceived performance (Mehra et al., 2006). Also, the benefits obtained through a network are not automatic; an actor must actively maintain relationships to retain their ties. In addition, an actor can use networking behaviour to improve their network. Networking behaviour is of benefit to organisations as well as individuals (Collins & Clark, 2003), and thus leadership development programs which incorporate networking are encouraged (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). Networking activities can affect a network's size, strength, pattern of ties, and available resources (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

One aspect of networking, mentoring, is an important avenue for coaching and increased exposure. Mentoring is helpful in several ways. For example, it includes the provision of career advice, development, and increased exposure (Bower & Hums, 2014). Researchers note the positive impact mentoring has on career advancement for women (Joo & Cruz, 2023). This is because women are typically excluded from the

most influential networks, comprising those who hold power, which – given the lack of female leaders described above – are often men. Therefore, social networks may perpetuate existing inequalities.

CEO succession is most often contextualised within the insider/outsider distinction. Traditionally this distinguishes between those who are already employed within an organisation (insider) and those who are not (outsider). However, this distinction can also be applied to other characteristics, such as gender and racial background. As scholars argue that networking is a key function of the best leaders, it can be challenging for an incoming outsider CEO to build an internal network (Keil et al., 2022). Indeed, this may be an explanation for why insiders generally achieve better results than outsiders. A CEO's social network is important for several reasons. First, as with other actors, it can provide an avenue for career advancement and employment opportunities. For instance, social network ties can elevate a well-connected outsider above a less well-connected insider in a CEO succession event (Berger et al., 2013). Second, network ties with board members can be linked to power and thus a decreased risk of forced succession (Flickinger et al., 2016; Liu, 2010; Nguyen, 2012). The uniqueness of a CEO position further highlights the importance of social networks. Numerous scholars argue that the social network of a CEO impacts organisational performance (Cao et al., 2006; Dess & Shaw, 2001; El-Khatib et al., 2015; Fang et al., 2012; Kirchmaier & Stathopoulos, 2008; Walters & McCumber, 2019); however, there is disagreement as to whether this is positive or negative. Given a CEO's personal network is unique to them and social networks impact performance, succession can be viewed through this lens. The proposed conceptual model is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proposed Conceptual Model
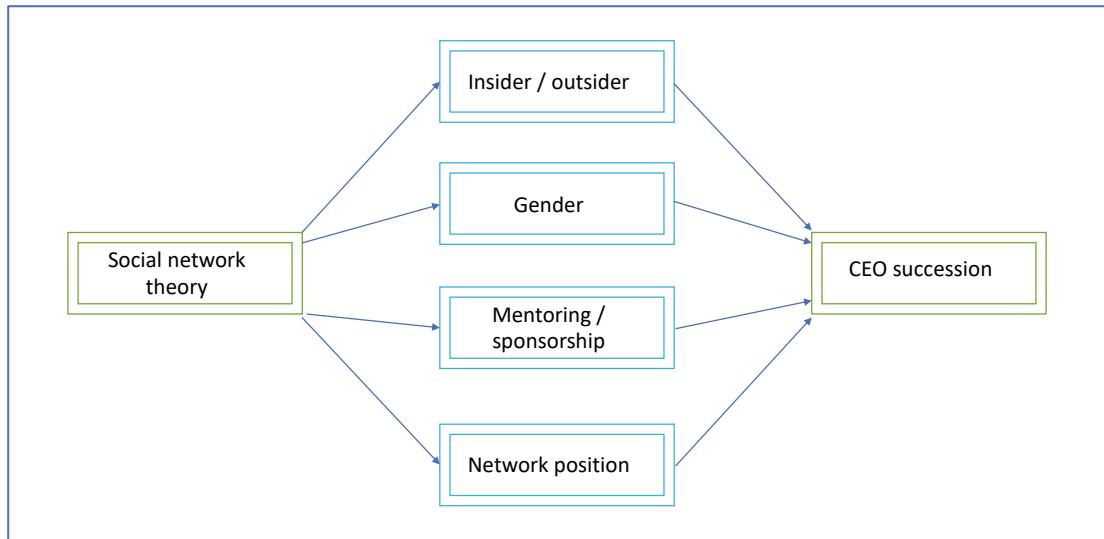
The following chapter will describe and justify the methodological approach of this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology for this study. As such, the approach taken is influenced by the discussions and critiques contained in the previous chapter. The research design comprises a mixed methods approach using social network analysis (SNA) of qualitative data. This chapter outlines the reasons for adopting this design, details the steps involved in collecting and analysing data, and addresses ethical considerations for this study.

3.2 Research objectives

The objective of this doctoral study is to investigate the personal social networks of CEOs who experience succession events. As has been demonstrated, social networks can have several important influences around succession. These can include providing access to and obtaining a new job, positive referrals through mentoring or other networking behaviour, reinforcing challenges for women in obtaining leadership roles, and being a potential asset for an organisation.

Three research questions are addressed in this study and are preprinted here for clarity in the context of explaining the research design:

Aim: To investigate the social networks of CEOs of Australian national sport organisations in the context of succession

Research Question One (RQ1): How do CEOs perceive the importance of social networks in executive leadership appointments?

Research Question Two (RQ2): What components of social networks do CEOs consider to be advantageous in their appointment?

Research Question Three (RQ3): How may social networks of male and female CEO differ in their characteristics?

3.3 Researcher positionality and reflexivity

Positionality and reflexivity are an important component of rigorous qualitative research (Sveinson et al., 2025). Positionality refers to understanding where a researcher stands in relation to others and the research topic (Skinner et al., 2020). Reflexivity involves a researcher being self-aware of the relationship between themselves and those being studied (Veal & Darcy, 2014), and recognises that "research cannot be value-free" (Bryman, 2016, p. 17). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge that their approach and conduct during the process can impact the findings and thus the implications of their studies (Sveinson et al., 2025). It is hence recommended to include a positionality statement in publications and outputs communicating the research findings (Singer et al., 2019).

I did not know any of the participants personally, nor have any first-hand knowledge of the circumstances pertaining to their succession events. The CEO role in sport is challenging, time-consuming, and stressful. NSOs are the leading organisations in the Australian sport industry, and as such CEOs have a high profile and some are well-known public figures. Thus, there was a risk that gaining access to prospective participants would prove an insurmountable obstacle. However, in numerous cases, but not all, my network facilitated access via a weak tie (bridging tie). In these instances, I was afforded an introduction to CEOs via an email with a brief description of who I was and my research proposal.

As a researcher I was aware of my own background and how this may impact their perception of the research topic. That is, I am a white Australian male who has been involved in the sport industry for much of my life. This being the case, I had anecdotal experiences and impressions related to the key concepts being studied before commencing the research: networks and networking, leadership, succession, and gender. It was important for me to focus on these concepts guided by the literature and experiences of the participants, rather than any pre-conceived personal perceptions. I strove to avoid any narrow interpretations and considered possible alternative explanations (Saldaña, 2021). The process of reflexivity in data collection and analysis undertaken encompassed consideration of prescriptions suggested by Skinner et al. (2020). In particular, this included taking notes throughout the research in relation to

methodological concerns, theoretical meaning and understandings, and identification of possible patterns or themes in the data being collected.

3.4 Research paradigm

A researcher's personal worldview affects how research is designed and conducted. Each paradigm has a system of assumptions and beliefs around reality and knowledge. As a research approach, pragmatism avoids the questions of truth and reality and, instead, focuses on solving practical, real-world problems (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). Researchers operating under a pragmatic approach are not committed to any one philosophy or interpretation of reality; rather there is a focus on the 'what' and 'how' of the research (Creswell et al., 2003). The importance, therefore, is to establish why multiple forms of data are needed. This gives researchers freedom of choice when considering methods, techniques, and procedure (Andrew et al., 2019). Thus, the methods selected to collect and analyse data are chosen on the basis of being most likely to address the research questions and objectives (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The emphasis in pragmatism is on communication and shared meaning making (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

Pragmatism is often connected with mixed method research, but this is not always the case (Denscombe, 2008). However, pragmatism allows the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, creating an opportunity to complement the advantages of multiple approaches when using one will not produce adequate results on its own. With this in mind, pragmatism uses abduction, moving between induction and deduction to connect theory with data (Shannon-Baker, 2016). This 'toing and froing' is similar to more traditional sequential mixed methods research (Morgan, 2007). The duality of objectivity and subjectivity within pragmatism is captured through intersubjectivity (Morgan, 2007). Similarly, study results are not assumed to be generalisable or context specific. Rather, intersubjectivity is asserted. Thus, the transferability of research using a pragmatic approach requires a thoughtful process of analysing the knowledge gained and considering the potential implications in another empirical issue (Morgan, 2007).

The pragmatic approach is devised from the work of scholars such as John Dewey (2008) and suggests researchers focus less on ontology and epistemology and instead devote their attention to the actual research question and how to solve the research problem (Parvaiz et al., 2016). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) implore researchers to focus their attention on the research problem and then use the appropriate methods to derive knowledge about the problem. Pragmatists are more concerned with the what and the how (Creswell, 2003). Thus, a pragmatic worldview is less concerned with notions of realism and relativism; instead, it has at its heart the coming together of beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2020). In determining an appropriate methodology, pragmatism advocates workability whereby inquiries are directly connected to the actual methods of research (Morgan, 2007). However, caution must be taken to ensure research is not conducted solely under the guise of expediency; rather, thoughtful and intelligent action as prescribed by Dewy can mitigate potential issues of rigour (Hall, 2013).

Adopting a pragmatic approach acknowledges that the human element of research is unpredictable and results are relative as opposed to resolute (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). A flexible but robust approach encompassing a range of appropriate data collection tools best suits this research topic. Pragmatism as a philosophy is a "workable solution" for mixed method research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). The focus in a pragmatic approach is on finding practical solutions to best address the research problem.

3.5 Mixed methods

Research using both qualitative and quantitative data is known as mixed methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Proponents, such as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), argue that many research questions are best answered using a mixed methods approach rather than being confined to a single method or approach. This study employs a mixed method approach combining elements of quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows the researcher to better understand a problem by utilising the strengths of each as an individual methodology (Skinner et al., 2014).

Bryman (2016) suggests the main criticism of mixed method research is that quantitative and qualitative research are incompatible in terms of epistemological positions. This argument is overcome in this study by using the pragmatic worldview, which identifies the most appropriate means of answering the research questions. Additionally, a mixed method approach recognises the strengths in both methodologies and thus sees them as compatible (Bryman, 2016). Yin (2006) posits that a true mixed methods research design should integrate mixed methodologies in relation to research questions, units of analysis, samples, and instruments; methods for collecting data; and analytical strategies. In this way, multiple methods are used within a single study. However, this does not necessarily mean using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

SNA in this study offers a fusion of quantitative and qualitative methods, with an iterative mix of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Yousefi Nooraie et al., 2020). Perry et al. (2018) suggest a multi-method approach is essential when conducting ego-centric network research. While SNA adopts a quantitative methodology to analyse data, it is only through qualitative means that social aspects of a network can be investigated and network features contextualised. As Crossley et al. (2015) put it, qualitative methods help to elicit the meaning of each alter (the nodes – often representing other actors - to whom the central actor is connected to) and the story behind their relationship. Chamberlain (2006) specifically argues in favour of combining qualitative interviews with ego-centric network analysis. He maintains that this is a means of triangulating data and provides information pertaining to the relationship ties within the network in rich detail. Only by collecting qualitative data can the meaning and social significance of network ties be deduced.

Crossley and colleagues (2015) assert that the quantitative aspects of SNA provide an outsider's view of the network; however, qualitative data is needed to access the view from inside the network. Edwards (2010) posits that mixed method SNA research enables researchers to view the content and processes within a network. Given the dynamic nature of networks, incorporating interviews is helpful in interpreting SNA findings (Ryan & D'Angelo, 2018). Similarly, other researchers have highlighted the importance of using SNA as a framework for further discussion with research subjects in a qualitative data collection phase (Coviello, 2005). Crossley states that quantitative

and qualitative approaches are best used in conjunction in order to fully understand social networks (2010). In effect, an integrated approach caters for the strengths and weaknesses of each method and is thus a more robust and informative model. Mixed method designs in SNA are still an emerging field (Yousefi Nooraie et al., 2020); however, it is the most appropriate design for this study.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data is necessary here to address the stated research problem and fully answer the research questions. That is, mixed methods provide a more thorough understanding of the personal networks of CEOs and explore the social aspects of succession. A network perspective is over and above using SNA simply as a means for data collection and analysis. Qualitative data is needed to contextualise network findings (Palonen & Froehlich, 2019) and fully appreciate a network perspective of CEO succession. For this study, it means exploring narratives concerned with the specific process of selection in addition to topics linked to CEO succession: leadership development, succession management, networking, and gender. A study adopting a network perspective and using mixed methods produces more nuanced and meaningful research (Palonen & Froehlich, 2019) by improving data quality, which leads to more robust findings (Hollstein, 2014).

3.6 Research design

Creswell's (2014) definition of an explanatory sequential design informs this research. A study of this nature uses qualitative data to explain the results from the quantitative phase in greater detail (Creswell & Clark, 2017) (see Figure 4). One of the key features of this research design is that the network analysis process assists in purposefully identifying a sample from which to select interviewees and refining the interview guide for each participant. While Creswell and Clark (2017) note that this type of research design is relatively straightforward to carry out in distinct phases, challenges include the time required to carry out the research and the need for clearly defined criteria for selecting the interview participants.

Figure 4: Research Design
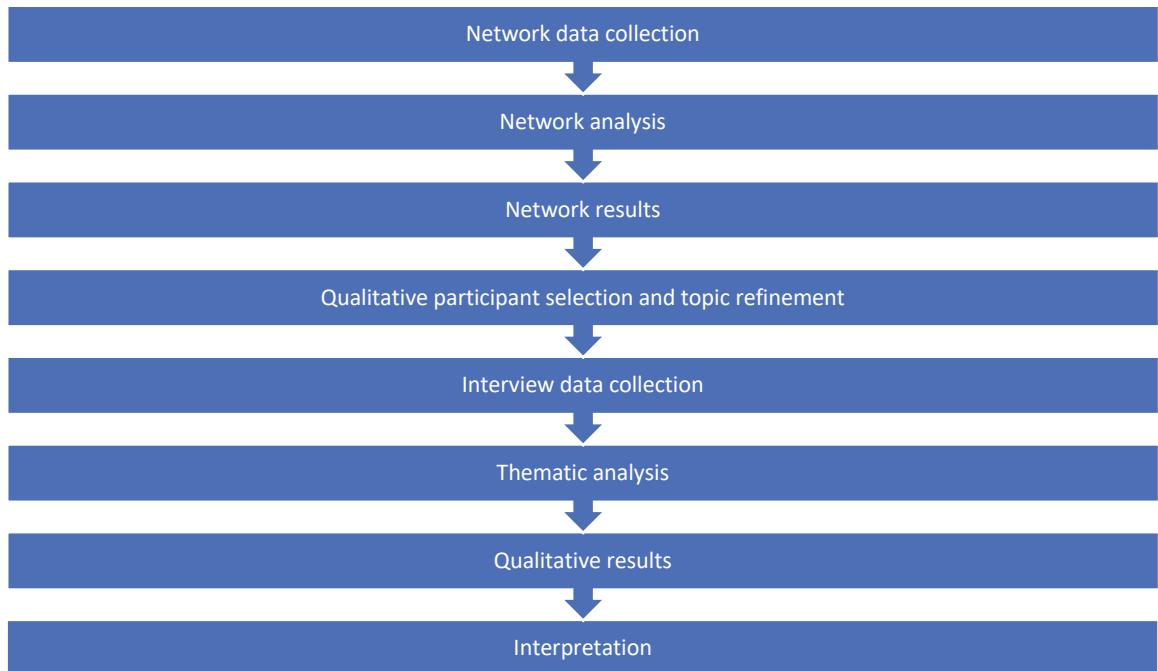
3.7 Interpretive research

Interpretivism is considered to have roots in hermeneutics, with sociologist Max Weber and philosopher Wilhem Dilthey playing a central role in its evolution (Neuman, 2007). An interpretive methodology explores how individuals construct or understand their world rather than attempting to unearth one true reality. This particularly suits a qualitative or mixed method social network study which focuses on the meaning and intricacies within networks rather than solely on the quantitative features of the network structure. Instead of a purely statistical approach to studying social networks, Crossley (2010, p. 8) emphasises the importance of interpretation as such: "Reducing relationships to numbers ignores this dynamic, evolving nature of the relationship" (p. 8). The focus of interpretivism is not to explain or construct reality but to understand it (Thietart, 2001).

In interpretive research, participants provide their own interpretation of their situation and behaviour, which allows for complexity and contextual factors to be explored (Veal & Darcy, 2014). In mixed method interpretive studies, the researcher gives participants a voice and engages them in dialogue (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). Howe (2004) argues for an interpretive mixed method research framework in

which the fundamental principles are inclusion and dialogue. He highlights the importance of "understanding people in their own terms, in their own social settings" (2004, p. 54). The researcher should have an empathetic approach towards the lived experience of the participants rather than a preconceived notion of meaning (Neuman, 2007). However, this means that there may be multiple interpretations of a phenomenon, and hence, a clear pattern in the data may not emerge. Nevertheless, one of the advantages of an interpretive approach is the ability to understand the diverse ways of experiencing a complex phenomenon in different contexts. The focus is on understanding the social context rather than being able to generalise to a whole population.

Sandberg (2005) asserts that achieving validity and reliability in interpretive research is achieved in the following ways:

- Communicative validity: mutual understanding between researcher and participants – therefore, dialogue is preferred as opposed to strict one-sided questions and answers; coherent interpretations – consider the whole dialogue as opposed to selected quotes in isolation
- Pragmatic validity: knowledge in action – ground situations and narrative in concrete lived experience situations
- Transgressive validity: search for differences and contradictions rather than coherence; recognise differences in gender within lived experience

This research focuses not only on the relationship or connection between people but also on the impact of that connection and the social structure surrounding the actors. The qualitative data can help to validate the quantitative data obtained through the social network questionnaire and, in this sense, triangulate the SNA data.

3.8 Network methods

3.8.1 Social network analysis in sport management studies

Two main social network methodological and conceptual considerations inform the present research. Katz et al. (2018) use affiliation networks to conduct a network analysis to examine gender (in)equality in leadership positions within the US collegiate sport system. This includes calculating eigenvector scores, which are a measure of how

influential an actor is across the whole network. Eigenvector scores are higher where someone is connected to others who themselves are well-connected.   et al. (2023)use a network approach to examine the recruitment of high-level non-playing staff in elite professional football clubs. Their research uses qualitative interviews to ascertain the strength of relevant network ties, in addition to bridges where a third party acts as a broker. In network terms, it is an example of a structural hole (Burt, 1992).

3.8.2 Fundamentals of social network methods

Network analysis involves visualising and measuring connections or links ("ties") between actors ("nodes"). Nodes may not necessarily be representative of people; they may be an organisation, an event, teams, or another active entity. Each actor has their own set of attributes, such as age and gender. Ties between nodes can be of varying strength and can take many forms; however, most commonly used in SNA are acquaintanceship or friendship and other personal communication linkages (Borgatti et al., 2018). The relationship between two actors is known as a dyad, which is the fundamental unit of networks (Robins, 2015). SNA can also utilise network visualisation to help illustrate the features of a network, including pathways between actors who may not have a direct connection (e.g., 'friend of a friend').

Networks can be focused on one specific actor ("ego") and their immediate relations ("alters") or a whole network, which theoretically is a complete census of a defined population. Analysis is used to describe the structure of the network and the positioning of actors within it. Common metrics include network size, network cohesion, and centrality (degree, closeness, betweenness, and eigenvector). These measures ascertain who is directly connected to whom, who is indirectly connected to whom, the role of each actor in connecting other actors to each other, and an actor's proximity to powerful and influential actors. In doing so, SNA helps explain social activity. Software programs such as UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002) and NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002) are used to analyse and view data and produce a visualisation of a network, that is, a sociogram. A sociogram is a descriptive tool and represents the perception of the social network as conceived by the participant (D'Angelo & Ryan, 2021).

3.8.3 Ego-centric networks

Ego-centric network methods focus on the network surrounding a particular individual actor. This is in contrast with a sociometric approach, which is essentially an entire network of a defined population. However, it should be noted that an ego-net is also part of a broader network structure and does not exist in isolation. Data for an ego-net is self-reported using network-specific surveys called name generators, which consist of a set of questions designed to elicit a list of people an individual has relationships with. Therefore, every alter within an ego-net will have a tie to the central actor. A name interpreter can then be used to generate additional information regarding the attributes of each alter and their relationship. The alters in an ego-net may also have direct connections to other alters within the network. Research studying ego-nets typically sees social support as a key function of networks and thus is interested in how relationships benefit an individual (Perry et al., 2018).

Figure 5: Visualised Ego-centric Network
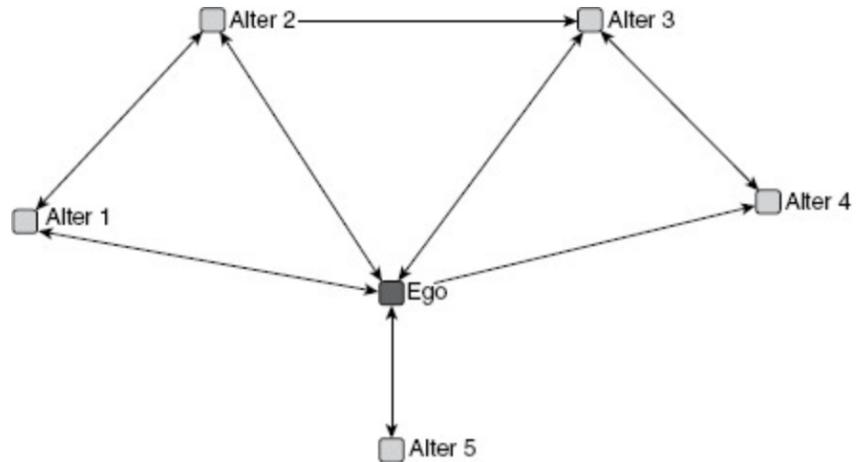
Source: Crossley et al. (2015)

An ego-net SNA is favoured for this study rather than a sociometric approach. The advantages and limitations of an ego-net study are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: Advantages and Limitations of Ego-centric Network Analysis

Advantages	Limitations
Can use probability samples to generalise to an entire population – more conducive to making inferences from samples to populations	Puts burden on respondent for providing information as opposed to other methods – such as an affiliation network, which uses joint experiences as a proxy for estimating network ties
Easier to create a boundary for an ego-net	Relies on ego to accurately self-report
Data collection is more manageable and thus appropriate for a doctoral study	Is limited to the local network and lacks the full context of the broader network
Respondents and alters can be anonymous, which encourages honest reporting	

Source: Crossly et al. (2015); Perry et al. (2018)

The most significant limitation relevant to this form of social network method design is the accuracy of data, mostly due to the need for respondents to accurately recall and report information. However, studies show that alters tend to corroborate the existence of reported ties in ego-centric network research (Marsden & Hollstein, 2022), and Wright and Pescosolido (2002) have found errors of less than 5% due to recall or forgetfulness. Nevertheless, others posit that these kinds of omissions occur at a much higher rate (Crossley et al., 2015). Recall error is most likely to impact network size (Perry et al., 2018) but can also affect structural features (Brewer, 2000). Respondents tend to best remember people they have regular contact with and feel close to (Fischer & Offer, 2020). Several strategies are suggested to minimise potential recall bias errors.

Giving a respondent numerous opportunities to remember their contacts through prompting and targeting is one way to do this (Borgatti et al., 2018). However, social network researchers need to balance implementing exhaustive secondary questioning to elicit accurate data with efficiency and expediency for both the investigator and respondents (Bidart & Cacciuttolo, 2013). Providing context is one of the most effective approaches to helping respondents recall information (McCarty et al., 2019; Perry et al.,

2018; Robins, 2015). Researchers should therefore structure their data collection instrument so that respondents are asked to list names of people who belong to a specific sub-set of contacts, which helps to prompt memory triggers. These commonly include groups such as immediate family, work colleagues, and the like. Using exchange and content-based name generators can add a further layer of context to further minimise recall errors (Perry et al., 2018). These methods can increase recall by a moderate amount and are the recommended standard for ego-net studies (Brewer, 2000). Lastly, network scholars argue employing relatively short surveys and using SNA in conjunction with qualitative methods produces reliable data with a high level of validity (Marsden & Hollstein, 2022).

3.9 Data collection

This study uses two forms of data collection: an interviewer-administered social network questionnaire in an interview setting and qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data collection methods and their connection to the research questions are listed in Table 11.

Table 11: Data Collection Strategy

Research question	Primary data source	Data/Evidence

How do CEOs perceive the importance of social networks in executive leadership appointments?	• Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews	• Narratives connected to appointment process
		   ○ Self-assessed strengths as a potential successor
		   ○ Perception of what the NSO was seeking in a successor (experience, relationships, attributes)
		   ○ Recruitment process (application, direct approaches, use of intermediaries to gauge interest)

What components of social networks do CEOs consider to be advantageous in their appointment?	• Social network data collection instrument
	• Network observations and measures
	• Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews
		• Personal networks of CEOs
		   ○ Network composition
		   ○ Size of network
		   ○ Strength of ties
		• Responses to questions around networking and desired attributes
		   ○ Perceived value of networks
		   ○ Impact of network on career progression
		   ○ Networks in context of leadership development and succession

How may social networks of male and female CEO differ in their characteristics?	• Social network data collection instrument
	• Social network analysis
	• Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews
		• Compare and contrast personal social network composition based on gender and type of NSO (size, function, strength of ties)
		• Responses to gender-based experience questions
		   o Observations and experiences based on gender
		   o Impact on networks
		   o Progress to date in addressing imbalance
		   o Role of networks

3.9.1 Network data collection

The network data sought for this study was a specific sub-set of contacts: ties to work-related actors. First, CEOs involved in succession events within the selected organisations were identified from publicly accessible records such as annual reports, websites, and news articles. For each CEO involved in a succession event, the researcher sought to ascertain the network composition from both within the organisation and within the broader relevant stakeholder organisations. From here, data analysis was used to assess the level of embeddedness within intraorganisational networks and interorganisational networks. Network data in this study, as suggested by the research questions, is an independent or explanatory variable. The elements of social network data collection can be found in Table 12.

Table 12: Elements of Network Data Collection

Element	Questions
Ego	Age, gender, marital status, education, employment history, details of CEO position within NSO
Name generator	Intraorganisational and interorganisational: task advice, strategic information, buy-in, social support
Name interpreter	Standard measures and attributes: age, gender, education (if known), employment history (if known), tie function
Edge interpreter	Strength of tie (closeness, duration, frequency of contact), durability of tie, alter to alter ties

Questions for each element can be found in Table 13. Note that questions are close-ended questions with a selection of possible responses and scales provided.

Table 13: Questions for Network Data Collection

Element	Questions
Ego	What is your highest level of education completed?
Name generator	Are their work contacts from whom you've regularly sought information and advice relevant to your job? If/when you left your CEO job, are there individuals who you would identify as being crucial for your replacement to achieve buy-in with? Is there anyone within the work environment who you would feel comfortable discussing personal matters with?
Name interpreter	Is alter male/female/not specified? What role did alter have within the NSO or stakeholder organisation?
Edge interpreter	How long have you known alter? How well do you know alter (1–3 scale)?

Limitations on the number of alters are imposed only in the following way. The first list of alters was limited to intraorganisational contacts. That is, respondents identified people they had a relationship with inside the NSO in which they were CEO. The second list asked respondents to identify alters within organisations they regarded as stakeholders of the NSO. That is, respondents provided a list of interorganisational contacts. This means the number of alters a respondent could supply was not limited, which eliminated potential biases from order effect (Marsden & Hollstein, 2022). Each of the research participants was given the option of using a pseudonym as they recalled their network; however, in most cases, each respondent spoke of "roles" or positions rather than personal names. This formed the basis of the personal network for each CEO. Additional information was sought regarding the relationship a CEO had with each of the nominated persons.

Each respondent participated in an interviewer-administered survey containing a name generator and name interpreter component in an interview setting. This elicited a list of names and their function within the network. Name generators can be administered either face-to-face, by telephone, or online. Face-to-face is typically the preferred means of survey where possible (McCarty et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2018) as it is cognitively less challenging for the respondent than self-administered questionnaires. While it is more time consuming for a researcher, face-to-face also allows for the researcher to converse with the respondent. This can be useful in fully explaining concepts and clarifying questions the respondent may have. Face-to-face is also less predisposed to biases that may arise from satisficing (Perry et al., 2018). During the planning phase of this study, the researcher intended to conduct data collection in person with each participant. However, due to the travel involved, consideration was also given to using videoconferencing software. In the end, all but one participant were interviewed via videoconference due to constraints associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research regarding videoconferencing for data collection is somewhat scarce (Gray et al., 2020). However, emerging studies in this area show that using new technology, such as Zoom, is both a viable source of data collection and a positive experience for researchers and participants (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020). Although many people are now familiar with this form of technology, there are some potential difficulties and challenges with using an internet-based platform. These include the need for appropriate hardware, a consistent internet connection, a suitable physical location without distraction, and an understanding that building rapport will be a different experience via video compared to in person (Lobe et al., 2020).

Data collection for an ego-net study as per McCarty et al. (2019) consists of four elements: 1. Questions about the ego, 2. Name generator, 3. Name interpreters, and 4. Edge interpreters (questions about relationships). There are numerous types of name generators. This study used an exchange-based name generator. These generators aim to help explain the function and activation of network ties (Perry et al., 2018). The name generator used in this study took a similar approach to that of Podolny and Baron (1997), which is a well-known tool for ego-centric research in workplace settings (Marsden & Hollstein, 2022). The name generator identifies subgroups within a

workplace consisting of person-based and position-based ties which are elicited based on the following functions: task advice, strategic information, buy-in, and social support.

Ties are also allocated a value between 1 and 3 (where 3 is the strongest). Ascertaining tie strength is typically assessed by asking about closeness, frequency of contact, and relationship durability – or some combination thereof (Jokisaari, 2017). This information was sought through the edge interpreter. Using a set script and a relatively short instrument ensured a consistent approach and reliable ego-centric network data (such as size and resource content) (Marsden & Hollstein, 2022). Data collection for each ego-net is detailed in Table 12.

3.9.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were used to expand on, and extend, concepts derived from social network analysis, such as cohesion, which increases understanding and personal context (Anderson & Dixon, 2019; DeRoo, 2019). An interview guide was developed as the instrument (Veal & Darcy, 2014), which allowed for a flexible, conversational approach, whilst still ensuring all topics were covered (Bryman, 2016). Interviews were recorded so that the interviewer could remain focused on the participant, while also recording tone and inflection (Morgan & Guevara, 2008). The interviews were subsequently transcribed to enable a systematic analysis later.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify interview subjects, which meant identifying people who best fit the research question and problem (Creswell, 2003). Purposive sampling chooses organisations and informants who are specifically of interest to a study (Silverman, 2013). This technique is a strategic approach designed to elicit data specifically related to the research questions (Bryman, 2016). Thus, the researcher identified organisations with actors most likely to provide valuable data and from which various subjects could be recruited. Given the eventual sample comprised thirteen participants, all of whom had unique and interesting networks, all were identified as suitable for interview.

Following initial social network analysis, an interview guide was developed. Interviews probed the CEO recruitment process and selection criteria, leadership development, succession management, social networks, networking activity, and gendered experiences. These topics gave context and additional detail within the overarching framework of social networks and their importance to CEO succession. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2020).

Questions and prompts were guided by the visual representation of participants' personal networks and included the following topics:

- Career history, including education and employment
- Recruitment processes for self and current/previous organisations
- Desirable attributes/experiences for appointment as CEO
- Existence of leadership development training programs in sporting organisations
- Known existence of succession management programs
- Connections within the industry – social, advice, colleagues
- Extent to which connections assisted participant's career path
- Gendered experiences
- Role of mentors and associates in career success/challenges
- Experience of networking within the industry
- Mandate/expectations from the board as an incoming CEO
- Experience in exiting the organisation – why and how (voluntary/involuntary)

In the end, all but one participant who completed the social network interviewer-administered survey also undertook a semi-structured interview. While all participants were identified as being suitable interview subjects, one left his place of employment following the social network interview and did not respond to further requests. (This participant is later identified using the abbreviation 'Oly CEO 1' – Olympic sport CEO #1). Final interview guides incorporated the above topics as well as further probing lines of enquiry which emerged from the social network data collection transcripts, visual network observations, and analysis. For instance, a participant identified as 'Pro CEO 3' (Professional sport CEO #3) made mention of a powerful political figure whose

support was a significant factor in progressing her career. Similarly, insider progression was explored whereby it could be ascertained whether existing relationships and corporate knowledge were considered to be advantageous, and indeed if there were any perceived disadvantages of being an insider (or not an outsider). Doing so provided multiple points of data to establish a "chain of evidence" (Drucker-Godard et al., 2001, p. 199) and validate findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These questions were developed by analysing networks and interview transcripts in conjunction with the key concepts found in the literature review (Chapter 2). Additional follow-up questions requesting more information were then added to the relevant interview guides.

3.10 Sampling

3.10.1 NSOs

This study investigates the social networks of CEOs in Australian NSOs in the context of succession. Sport Australia (2020a) recognises nearly 100 NSOs and NSODs (National Sporting Organisation for People with Disability). The larger NSOs, such as the AFL, are highly commercialised, largely through broadcasting rights, operate substantial professional leagues with annual expenditure budgets of up to $500,000,000 and employ several hundred staff. The smallest NSOs may employ only one permanent staff member and operate largely with the assistance of volunteers on budgets of $1,000,000 or less. Typically, an NSO is governed by a board of directors who employ a CEO to manage and lead the organisation operationally. Board size varies from organisation to organisation. Some NSOs have up to eleven directors, while others have as few as five. There is no set governance structure for NSOs; however, Sport Australia proscribes principles of good governance and standards required to be eligible for public funding (Sport Australia, 2020b). Many NSOs were formed as federations, with each state sport organisation providing a delegate to be appointed as a director to represent their interests on the national board; however, it is now not uncommon for boards to also, or wholly, incorporate independent directors.

The sample frame therefore includes CEOs from nineteen of the leading Australian NSOs. While there would be potential benefits in expanding the scope of this research to include other actors among these networks and within the succession process, given the focus is on the personal networks of the CEOs and their perceived

impact from their perspective, they alone form the basis of this project and therefore the selected sample.

The selection of these organisations is both illustrative and purposive. While the organisations all operate in the same environment, there is variety within the sample, particularly the distinction between professional sport organisations and Olympic sport organisations. Thus, the sample includes different segments from the industry. The sample criteria for respondents were to:

- have been CEO, or equivalent, of one of the above organisations during the period 2011-2020 and
- have experienced a succession event – as either the outgoing CEO or incoming CEO.

Appendices 3 and 4 illustrate the NSO sample frame, consisting of the seven (7) Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports (COMPPS) organisations and the twelve (12) largest Olympic Sport NSOs by annual turnover. Each listing consists of the sport, organisation, number of directors, and approximate annual expenditure as of the year 2020. In total, the COMPPS organisations (currently) comprise 60 directors and an annual expenditure of $1.9 billion. In total, the Olympic sport organisations (currently) comprise 98 directors and an annual expenditure of $189 million.

3.10.2 Sample size and selection

There is no specific recommended sample size for ego-centric network studies. McCarty et al. (2019) note that qualitative and mixed method SNA studies do not seek to obtain a statistically representative population sample. Instead, the researcher needs to use alternate strategies to ensure rich data is acquired. For instance, the purely qualitative study of the development networks of elite coaches by Lefebvre and colleagues (2021) has a sample size of nine (9) and used a two-step interview process. Mixed method SNA studies can help to ensure rich data by using a design where network visualisation informs the qualitative interview data collection. For example, Bellotti (2008) uses a mixed method SNA/qualitative design in her study of friendships of 23 single people living in Milan. However, she does ensure variety within the sample

based on gender, education level, and locations within the city. In this sense, it is desirable to obtain a sample that is representative of the sample population (Perry et al., 2018). Parent et al. (2017) interviewed 45 individuals in their study of governance networks within the organisation of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games. While the authors noted that data saturation was reached halfway through the process, they continued to ensure adequate representation of each organisation within the sample. This study sought data from 36 succession events which occurred between 2011 and 2020. These are detailed in a table in Appendix 5. Of the incoming CEOs, 30 were male and six (6) were female. Of the outgoing CEOs, 31 were male and five (5) were female. The researcher sought to achieve a sample representative of gender diversity and organisations across both the professional and Olympic sport categories.

3.11 Data analysis

3.11.1 Social network analysis

This research investigated the characteristics of the personal social networks of CEOs involved in succession events within NSOs. As a matter of course, the following measures of ego-nets recommended by Borgatti et al. (2018) and Crossley et al. (2015) provided guidance for SNA and were used where possible. These guidelines are displayed in Table 14. While this provides the basis for analysis, descriptive statistics and visual observations of each network similarly yield noteworthy results. Binary comparisons between male and female, and professional sport CEOs and Olympic sport CEOs, highlight contrasts based on gender and type of NSO.

Table 14: Ego-net Measures

Measure	Description	Data Needed
Tie central tendency	Size of ego-net, frequency of contact, tie strength	Ego-alter ties
Tie dispersion	Variation in tie strength, frequency of contact	Ego-alter ties
Alter central tendency	Proportion of alters within attribute categories: gender, etc.	Ego-alter ties, attributes
Alter dispersion	Distribution of alter categories	Ego-alter ties, attributes

Ego-alter similarity	Similarity of ego to alters by attribute category	Ego-alter ties, attributes
Structural shape	Standard SNA measures such as density, effective size, constraint, etc.	Ego-alter ties, alter-alter ties

Source: Borgatti et al. (2018); Crossley et al. (2015)

Following observation and analysis of each individual network, they were combined to form a whole network. There were limitations in analysing the whole network; however, it allowed the researcher to identify common ties amongst the sample (based on position held within the organisations – e.g., AOC CEO) and therefore potential structural holes. Calculating the eigenvector also indicated which CEOs and alters were better connected than their contemporaries. Lastly, the whole network was divided into fragments using the Girvan-Newman algorithm to recognise clusters (Borgatti et al., 2018). This process breaks the network down into smaller communities based on betweenness.

3.11.2 Interviews

Data analysis is the process of "... making sense out of text and image data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). An inductive approach was used, meaning there was no predetermined structure and therefore the data itself determined the structure of the analysis (Burnard et al., 2008). Such an approach is the most common form of analysis in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2016). The analysis took the form of a thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis is "...a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). This process commenced with open coding of interview transcripts, noting emerging themes and categories. Bazeley (2009) advocates a thorough and well-defined approach to produce more robust findings through a three-step formula, "Describe, compare, relate" (p. 10). Miles and Huberman (1984) describe the analysis of qualitative data as consisting of four steps. These are displayed in Table 15.

Table 15: Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis

Step	Task	Description
1	Data reduction	Refine and organise data so that conclusions can be drawn and verified
2	Data display	Assemble data in a format that clarifies major directions of the research
3	Conclusion drawing	Note meanings and patterns
4	Verification	Test conclusions for plausibility and robustness

Source: *Miles & Huberman, 1984; Silverman, 2013*

While a pragmatic approach to thematic content analysis is thorough and rigorous, it is also time consuming (Burnard et al., 2008). As such, the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software package NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2020) was used to facilitate the analysis. First-order coding was informed by the research questions and the conceptual model which was developed out of the literature review (Neuman, 2007). Codes were assigned to words or sections of text within each transcript (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher also looked for patterns and commonalities to identify emerging themes. Key concepts, ideas, and themes were identified and then grouped together in a list following open coding to make meaning. Data were then organised into themes and sub-themes in relation to the research questions; the data (including examples of date and codes) is presented in Table 24 in Chapter Four.

3.12 Ethical considerations and risks

It is a requirement of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) that research involving humans receives approval from the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee before proceeding. This process is in line with the University's obligations under the Australian Code for the Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Approval was granted on 10 September 2021 under UTS HREC Reference ETH21-6331. Further, the following aspects of research ethics were considered and addressed prior to commencing data collection: social benefit, researcher competence, free choice, informed consent, risk of harm to the subject, honesty and rigour, and authorship and acknowledgement (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

In conjunction with the ethical considerations listed above, several risks were identified in connection with this research. First, given the nature of the sport industry, it was imperative to ensure anonymity as far as is practical. Participants, and their network contacts, have been anonymised and/or given pseudonyms. This is one of the strengths of using ego-centric network analysis. During the collection of network data, respondents were given the choice of using pseudonyms or using a system of numbers (Alter 1, Alter 2, etc.). However, in most cases, participants found it easier to identify their contacts based on either the job title (e.g., Chairperson, High Performance Director, etc.) or a description of the function supplied (e.g., Mentor).

Additionally, informed consent has been rigorously adhered to, and participants were given the opportunity to check transcripts for accuracy if they so desired. Interviews were scheduled at a time of the participants' choosing. Initial planning would have allowed participants to choose a venue away from their immediate work area if they wished, but due to COVID-19 protocols all but one participant completed their interviews via videoconferencing. Data was collected and stored on UTS equipment solely for the purpose of this research.

A study such as this is dependent upon willing participants. In this case, participants were recruited via the researcher's personal networks, the assistance of a well-placed industry source who facilitated introductions, and the networks of the researcher's doctoral supervisors. As stated in the previous paragraph, initial planning would have seen the researcher schedule in-person interviews for each participant, which would have entailed domestic travel along Australia's eastern seaboard. However, COVID-19 curtailed these plans, and instead, videoconferencing was used extensively to conduct data-collection interviews.

3.12.1 Statement regarding the impact of COVID-19

Large portions of this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2023. As with other industries, sport was severely impacted due to measures implemented to reduce the spread of the virus. Organisations were forced to substantially review the way they do business. Competitive sport around the world was

postponed, cancelled, staged in hubs, and/or staged in closed venues without fans. The world's largest single sporting mega event, the Summer Olympic Games, scheduled to be staged in Tokyo Japan over the northern summer, was eventually postponed to 2021 – and was eventually held with almost no spectators in attendance. The pandemic had a severe financial impact on businesses, including those involved in all levels of sport and active recreation. Revenue was reduced due to renegotiated broadcast contracts and limits on in-person attendance. Similarly, some competitions had to fund the mass relocation of teams, staff, and officials into hubs to maintain continuity amidst regional lockdowns. While government support was provided in some cases, many workers were made redundant as organisations struggled to adapt. The level of financial stress was such that it was suggested several high-profile sport organisations would not survive. Social distancing protocols and travel restrictions were widely adopted, limiting the ability for people to interact. These factors all had the potential to impact the ability to conduct this research. However, data collection in a virtual setting was considered sufficient for this study. Using internet-based applications for data collection requires additional ethical considerations as noted in Appendix Nine.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents this study's research findings on CEOs' social networks in the context of succession, the perceived importance of networks on leadership appointments, and the characteristics of networks considered to be advantageous. Pertinent biographical information of each participant is followed by social network and interview findings.

4.2 Biographical information

The biographical information of each study participant is displayed in Table 16. Each CEO has been categorised as either a professional sport organisation CEO ("Pro") or an Olympic sport organisation CEO ("Oly") and allocated a number (e.g., "Pro CEO 1"). Note that Oly CEO 5 is unique amongst the participants in that he was CEO of two NSOs between 2011 and 2020. Thus, the respondents comprise nine male CEOs and four female CEOs (n=13), representing four professional sport NSOs and seven Olympic sport NSOs.

Table 16: CEO Demographics

	Gender	Marital	Children	Age Appointed	Highest Education	Tenure (Years)
Pro 1	Male	Married	Yes	44	Masters	4
Pro 2	Female	De Facto	No	47	Bachelors	2.5
Pro 3	Female	Married	No	44	Masters	10
Pro 4	Male	De Facto	Yes	39	Bachelors	6
Oly 1	Male	Married	Yes	45	Masters	5
Oly 2	Male	Married	Yes	34	Bachelors	6
Oly 3	Male	Married	Yes	47	Masters	4
Oly 4	Male	Married	Yes	59	Masters	3
Oly 5	Male	Married	Yes	38 / 42	Bachelors	4 /4
Oly 6	Female	Single	No	46	Masters	5
Oly 7	Female	De Facto	No	54	Masters	2
Oly 8	Male	Married	Yes	54	Bachelors	3
Oly 9	Male	Married	Yes	48	Bach / Grad Dip	3

Table 17 shows descriptive statistics for the biographical information collected. This includes means and standard deviation for the categories of current age (as at the time of data collection), age appointed (when commenced role as CEO), education (percentage of CEOs with a post-graduate qualification), and length of tenure rounded to the nearest whole year. While there are some differences between NSO types (Pro/Oly) and between genders, it is recognised that this is only a small sample.

Table 17: CEO Demographic Descriptive Statistics

NSO	MEAN	SD	MALE	FEMALE	PRO	OLY
Current Age	**51**	**6**	53	57	55	54
Age Appointed	**45**	**7**	45	48	44	47
Post-Grad			56%	75%	50%	67%
Tenure (Years)	**5**	**2**	4	5	6	4

4.3 Social network results

Social network data was collected in accordance with the processes outlined in Section 3.9.1. During data collection, it became apparent that the size and dynamic nature of each network would make it difficult to obtain a detailed list of attributes for each alter connected to an ego. As such, network data is largely limited to the first zone of each network. Network data was collated in MS Excel spreadsheets and then entered into UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002) and NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002) for analysis. Each personal network was individually mapped and then collated into a whole network.

The sections that follow present a summary of the social network data, the individual network of each CEO, and then the whole network, which was formed by combining each of the personal networks.

4.3.1 Summary of social network data

Table 18 summarises the information about the personal network of each CEO in this study. It shows the number of contacts in each CEO's network and the number of

ties by function (that is, why the connection exists): task advice, buy-in, strategic information, mentor, social, professional advice, and others. Alters may fulfil several functions, which means ties can be multiplex. In these cases, they were counted as multiple ties (meaning the number of ties exceeds the number of alters). This allowed the average number of ties (or function) per alter to be calculated. It is therefore possible to compare the network of each CEO by size, tie function, and multiplexity.

Table 18: Summary of Social Network Tie Function Results

	ALTERS	Task advice	Buy-in	Strategic info	Mentor	Social	Pro advice	Other	TOTAL TIES	Av Ties per Alter
Pro 1	97	25	88	6	1	0	1	0	121	1.25
Pro 2	61	7	13	34	0	1	0	13	68	1.11
Pro 3	49	28	35	7	3	0	0	3	76	1.55
Pro 4	66	58	12	4	6	4	3	7	94	1.42
Oly 1	65	12	48	6	1	0	2	3	72	1.11
Oly 2	37	10	18	16	1	0	1	2	48	1.30
Oly 3	31	14	8	11	3	1	5	3	45	1.45
Oly 4	42	14	5	32	1	0	0	0	52	1.24
Oly 5	49	13	33	5	1	0	0	1	53	1.08
Oly 6	25	8	4	5	1	1	3	8	30	1.20
Oly 7	38	4	30	3	2	2	0	0	41	1.08
Oly 8	26	13	15	11	1	0	2	0	42	1.62
Oly 9	39	19	21	9	1	4	2	16	72	1.85

Table 19: Summary of Social Network Tie Function Based on Descriptive Statistics

	MEAN	SD	M	F	PRO	OLY	M %	F %	PRO	OLY
ALTERS	48	20.1	50	43	68	39				
Task advice	17	14.0	20	12	30	12	29%	21%	33%	24%
Buy-in	25	22.9	28	21	37	20	38%	38%	38%	38%
Strategic info	11	10.2	11	12	13	11	20%	21%	17%	22%
Mentor	2	1.5	2	2	3	1	3%	3%	3%	3%
Social	1	1.5	1	1	1	1	1%	2%	1%	2%
Pro advice	1	1.6	2	1	1	2	3%	1%	1%	4%
Other	4	5.2	4	6	6	4	5%	13%	3%	7%
TOTAL TIES	62.6	26.4	64	54	90	48				
Av Ties per Alter	1.3	0.2	1.37	1.24	1.33	1.32	1.37	1.24		

Table 19 displays descriptive statistics for the social network composition data collected for each CEO. Averages and standard deviations were calculated for the number of alters and the function of each tie across the networks. This was performed across the sample, by gender categories and NSO type. Percentages were used to highlight observed differences – female compared to male, and Olympic sport compared to professional sport, adjusted for network size to make comparisons more meaningful.

There is a large variance in the size of each network (by number of alters). Male CEOs have larger networks (av. 50 alters) than female CEOs (av. 43 alters). Professional sport CEOs have larger networks (av. 68 alters) than Olympic sport CEOs (av. 39 alters).

On average, 85% of ties within each network perform the functions of task advice, buy-in, and strategic information. Multiplex ties are most common where an alter is an important resource for buy-in and either task advice or strategic information. Alters with multiplex ties are usually identified via their position within a member organisation (like a state sport organisation) or are a director of the CEO's board. All three professional sport CEOs had multifactorial ties with their Chair and ties to all directors. This was not the case with Olympic sport CEOs, with only two of eight nominating ties with their entire board. Three CEOs did not name any directors in their network, although two of these three did have strong ties with former Chairs. This is likely at least partially attributable to the nature of Olympic NSOs, particularly those which are structured as federations.

Table 20: Summary of Social Network Data Tie Strength

	Strength 1	Strength 2	Strength 3	Av Strength	% 2/3	IQV
Pro 1	3	21	73	1.28	25%	0.5787
Pro 2	7	8	46	1.36	25%	0.6015
Pro 3	4	16	29	1.49	41%	0.8046
Pro 4	3	7	56	1.20	15%	0.4002
Oly 1	3	11	51	1.26	22%	0.5304
Oly 2	1	26	10	1.76	73%	0.6486
Oly 3	5	12	14	1.71	55%	0.9303
Oly 4	1	12	29	1.33	31%	0.6615
Oly 5	1	10	38	1.24	22%	0.5348
Oly 6	5	10	10	1.82	60%	0.9600
Oly 7	13	5	20	1.96	47%	0.8829
Oly 8	4	6	16	1.54	29%	0.8166
Oly 9	1	2	36	1.10	8%	0.2169

Table 20 displays data related to the strength of relationship each CEO has with the people in their network. Strength was measured on a scale from one to three, with three being the strongest. The score was calculated by considering factors supplied by the respondent such as closeness, frequency of contact, and length of relationship. Thus, the number of Strength 3, 2, or 1 contacts of each CEO together determined the average strength of relationships across a CEO's network. Next, the number of relationships scored as a 2 or 3 was listed as a percentage, and an Index of Qualitative Variation (IQV) score was calculated. This is a measure of dispersion, with a perfectly diverse variance scoring a 1.00 and no variance whatsoever scoring 0.00 (Knoke & Yang, 2019). In this study, a score of 0.00 would indicate all relationships within a network have the same tie strength. Conversely, a score of 1.00 would indicate an equal number of ties exist across each of the three potential ratings (3, 2, 1).

Table 21: Summary of Social Network Tie Strength Based on Descriptive Statistics

	MEAN	SD	M	F	PRO	OLY	FEM % OF M	O % OF P
Strength 3	3.92	3.3	2.44	7.25	4.25	3.78	297%	89%
Strength 2	11.23	6.6	11.89	9.75	13.00	10.44	82%	80%
Strength 1	33.08	19.7	36.11	26.25	51.50	24.89	73%	48%
Av Strength	1.47	0.3	1.38	1.66	1.33	1.52	120%	114%
% 2/3	35%	18%	29%	39%	25%	36%	138%	144%
IQV	0.70	0.2	0.67	0.81	0.60	0.75	121%	125%

Table 21 displays collated descriptive statistics for tie strength data. Female CEOs have a 20% higher proportion of ties valued as Strengths 2 and 3 compared to males. Female networks comprise almost three times the number of ties rated as Strength 3. Thus, while males have personal networks which are 14% larger, females have stronger and more enduring relationships within their networks. Professional sport CEOs have a higher number of ties valued as a 3 compared to Olympic sport CEOs; however, Olympic sport CEOs generally have stronger relationships when measured as a percentage.

Table 22: Summary of Social Network Data Tie Origin

	MEAN	M	F	PRO	OLY
Internal	20%	20%	19%	21%	18%
Members	37%	43%	21%	43%	32%
Stakeholders	27%	20%	45%	26%	27%
Other	17%	18%	14%	9%	23%

Each alter was categorised based on the context of their relationship to the CEO (see Table 22). The first category refers to people who work within the same NSO as the CEO (Internal). The second category refers to alters who work for a club or SSO within the purview of the NSO (Members). The third category is for alters who work in an organisation related to the NSO, such as government agencies (e.g., Sport Australia) or peak bodies (e.g., AOC) (Stakeholders). The fourth category represents personal work-related contacts who do not fit within the previous descriptions (Other). Male CEOs within the sample had formed more relationships among member organisations, whereas female CEOs had formed more relationships with contacts located within

stakeholder organisations. Professional sport CEOs have a higher percentage of contacts within member organisations than their Olympic sport colleagues.

Each individual network is presented in the following format:
- Personal network sociogram – directly elicited from the network survey interview (tie-based data)
- Network description – data gleamed from the network survey interview (accompanying explanations related to each tie and the overall network via the name interpreter and edge interpreter elements of data collection, and visual examination of the sociogram).

Sociograms are the visual representation of a network. The CEO is located in the centre, represented by a red node. The alters named by the CEO are identified by blue nodes. Each of these nodes has a brief written description of the person's job title or function. Numerical identifiers were used where multiples exist (e.g., Franchise CEO 01, Director 02, ELT 03).

Figure 19 contains all personal networks in a single display for purposes of visual comparison. Ties are colour coded by strength – black (3), blue (2), purple (1) – and the following abbreviations are used to enhance visibility:
- AIS: Australian Institute of Sport
- AOC: Australian Olympic Committee
- ASADA: Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority
- CGA: Commonwealth Games Australia
- COMPPS: Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports Association
- ED: Executive Director
- ELT: Executive Leadership Team
- FMR: Former
- HC: Head Coach
- INT: International
- PA: Paralympics Australia
- SISAS: State Institutes of Sport and Academies of Sport
- Sport_Aus: Sport Australia

- SSO: State Sport Organisation

Accompanying tables for each individual network display the data behind each network tie (function, strength, and origin) and are located in the Appendix.

4.3.2 Pro CEO 1

Figure 6: Pro CEO 1 Sociogram
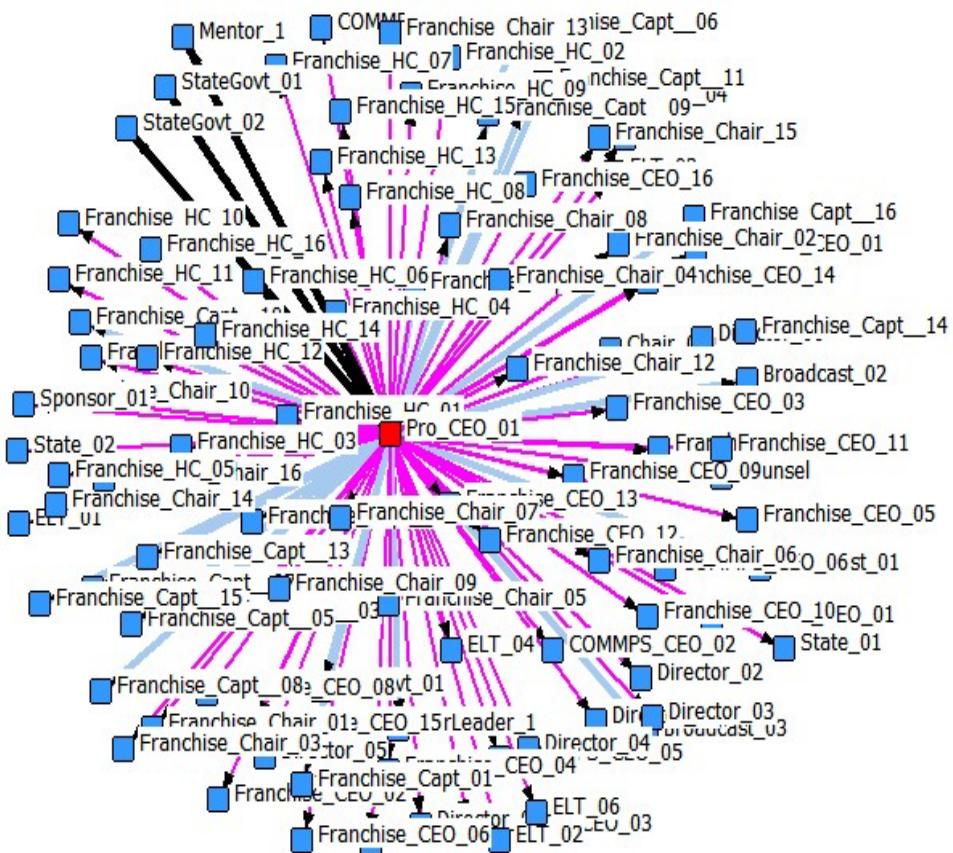
Figure 6 displays the largest network amongst the sample, with 97 alters and a total of 121 ties. The scale of the network can be explained by both the NSO and the leadership style of the CEO. The NSO is among the highest participation and most popular elite sports in Australia. Its professional league consists of many franchises and numerous stakeholders including government, sponsors, media, and major stadia. At grassroots level, there are state bodies and local clubs. In describing his network, the CEO commented that he saw himself as a consultative leader who took pride in having dialogues with all key stakeholders in the sport. As such, he viewed it as imperative to discuss important decisions with those who may be impacted as a result. This often

included the Chairs, CEOs, Captains, and Head Coaches of each franchise. Having been employed within the sport for close to a decade before ascending to the role of CEO at the NSO, a number of these necessary ties were pre-existing, either directly or via network bridges. Pro CEO 1's strongest ties were to his mentor and contacts within government, which assisted him in widening his network and finding new roles in different sports and roles after departing the NSO. Lastly, Pro CEO 1 noted the challenge of maintaining a large but dynamic network where many ties are formed in connection to a position, which naturally experiences turnover, necessitating continual forming of new relationships.

4.3.3 Pro CEO 2

Figure 7: Pro CEO 2 Sociogram
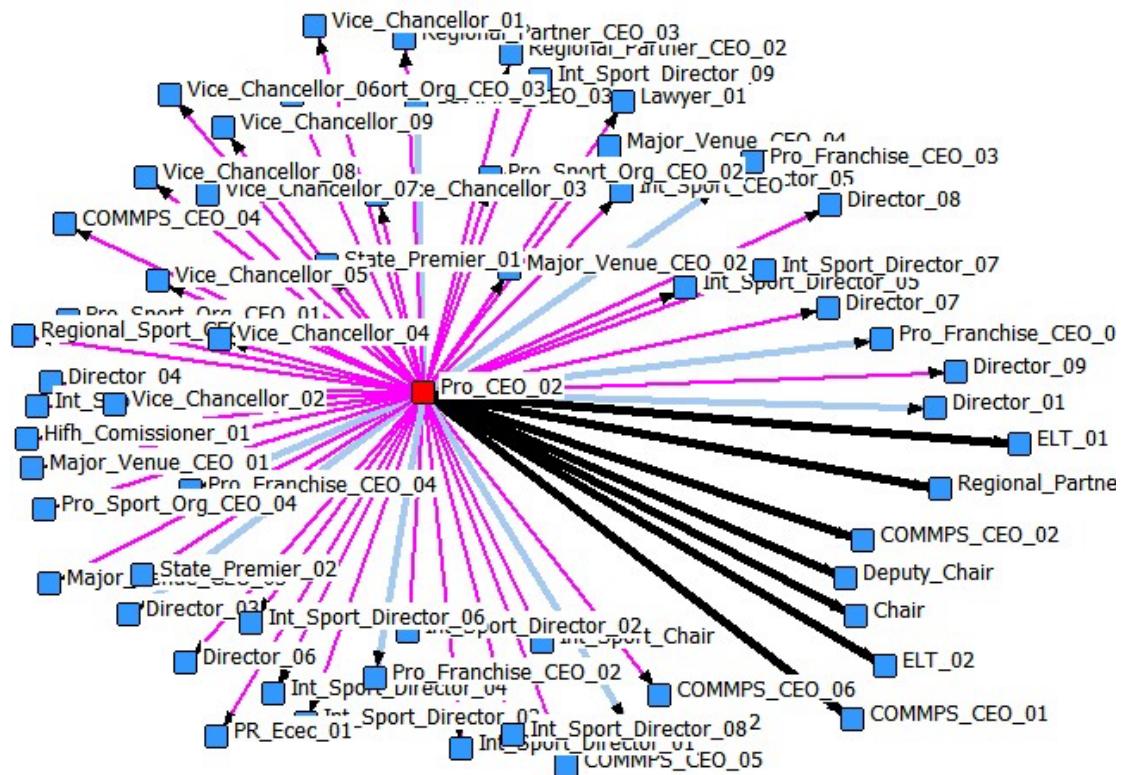
The intraorganisational network of CEO 2 is based on few but strong relationships with select members of the board (Chair and Deputy Chair) and trusted senior executives. The CEO noted that she had brought her personal network to the role and, as such, drove the recruitment of the aforementioned senior executives during her time at the NSO. These strong, trusting relationships were very important to her and her

ability to perform in the CEO role. As evidenced by the high number of ties attributed to the function of Strategic Information, she built a wide informational network across the sport upon commencing in the role (domestically, regionally, and internationally). This was of high importance given this particular sport is considered to stereotypically thrive on a strong and cohesive closed internal network. Uniquely this network also features ties to the university sector, which plays a role in athlete development within this sport. While noting she had to build an in-sport network, she was also firmly of the belief that the network you bring and build is what allows you to get things done as a CEO. Around one-quarter of her sport-specific ties had endured, despite a relatively short tenure (2.5 years) and having since commenced employment in a new role overseas.

4.3.4 Pro CEO 3

Figure 8: Pro CEO 3 Sociogram
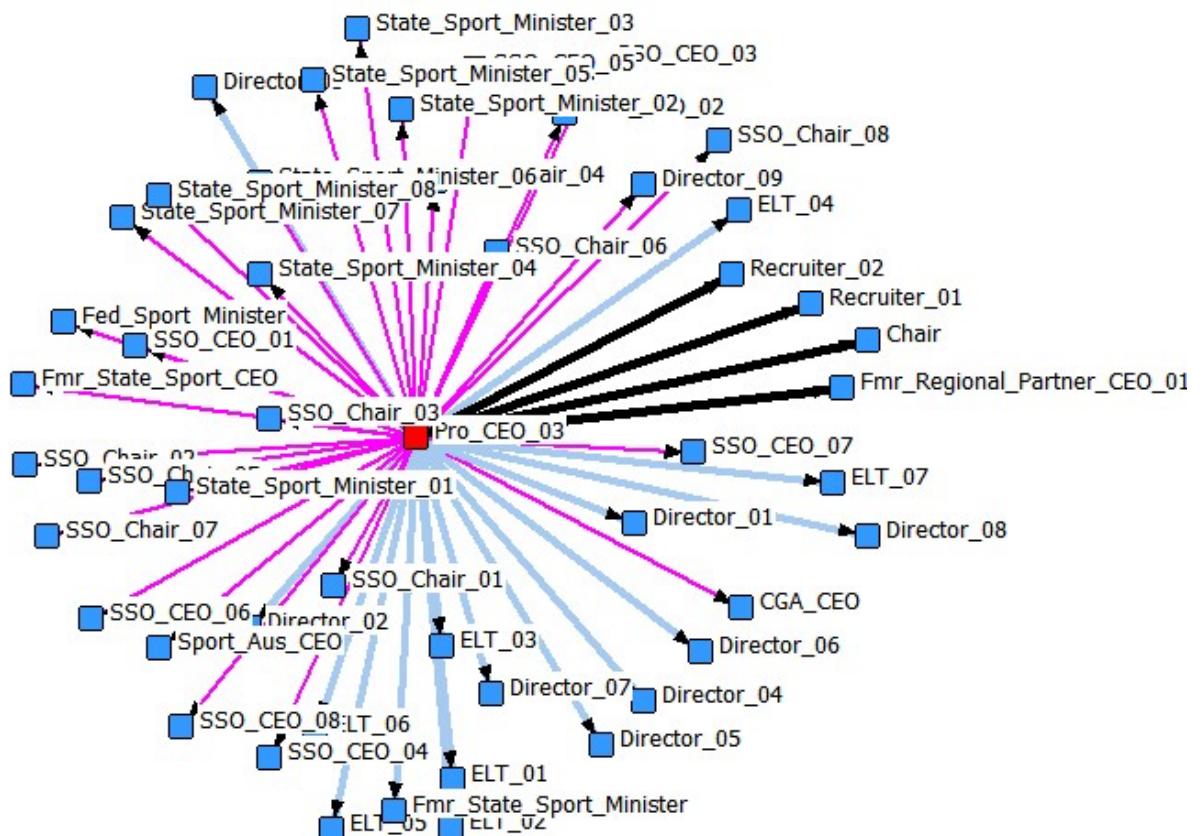
Pro CEO 3 differs from the other professional sport CEOs in this sample, as the sport operates largely on a federated model with strong state bodies forming the NSO's membership. Due to the politicking within the sport, the CEO noted that many of the

relationships with key people within the SSOs, while professional, were strained and thus had not endured after leaving her position. However, having been CEO of one of the SSOs immediately prior to being appointed CEO of the NSO, she had a number of pre-existing relationships across the sport at the time of succession. One such tie was with the Chair, which proved to be a critical relationship across her career. Interestingly, her strongest and most enduring network ties are to specialist sport industry recruiters. The highest level of professional competition in this particular sport involves international competition, which is also reflected in her network. There is a strong connection to government with ties to all states and territories as well as the Commonwealth government. Two powerful contacts made early in her career act as bridges to form ties to broader sport and government networks.

4.3.5 Pro CEO 4

Figure 9: Pro CEO 4 Sociogram
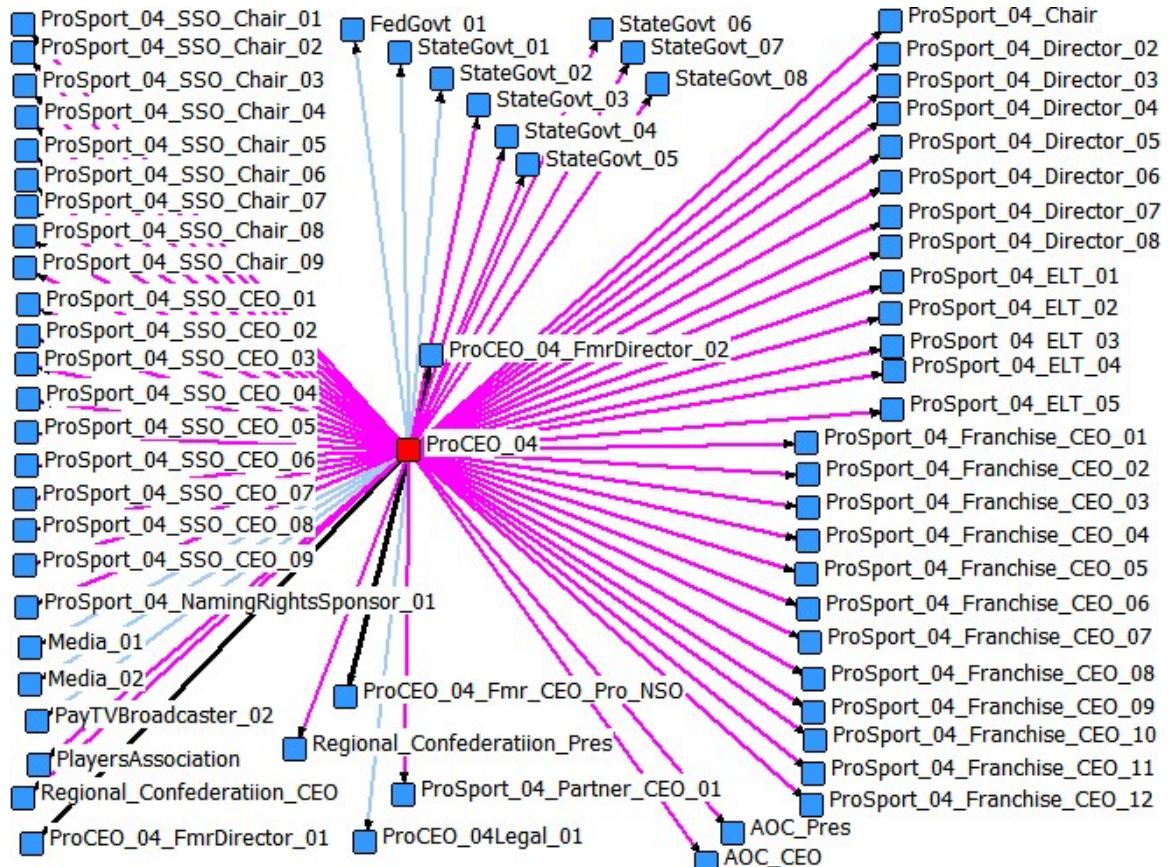
Pro CEO 4 has the second-largest network in the sample. This is partially explained by the way this sport is organised in Australia – a federated governance model with privately owned franchises competing in the professional league. As such and reminiscent of Pro CEO 1, Pro CEO 4 uses a wide network to consult with stakeholders and members prior to making important decisions. This is illustrated by the large number of ties to SSOs, franchises, and stakeholders who facilitate commercial outcomes. Given many of these are transactional ties in nature, the resulting network consists of a large number of lower-value ties. However, this CEO also mentioned having a smaller, trusted group of advisors who provide support through several different tie functions. Pro CEO 4 described this group as a "kitchen cabinet" which has remained in place throughout his career. With a background in (a different) professional sport as both an athlete and administrator, Pro CEO 4 had pre-existing contacts in government, media, and the commercial sector. Working in a global sport, Pro CEO 4

described the challenge of needing to connect with key figures among nations and regional and international federations.

4.3.6 Oly CEO 1

Figure 10: Oly CEO 1 Sociogram
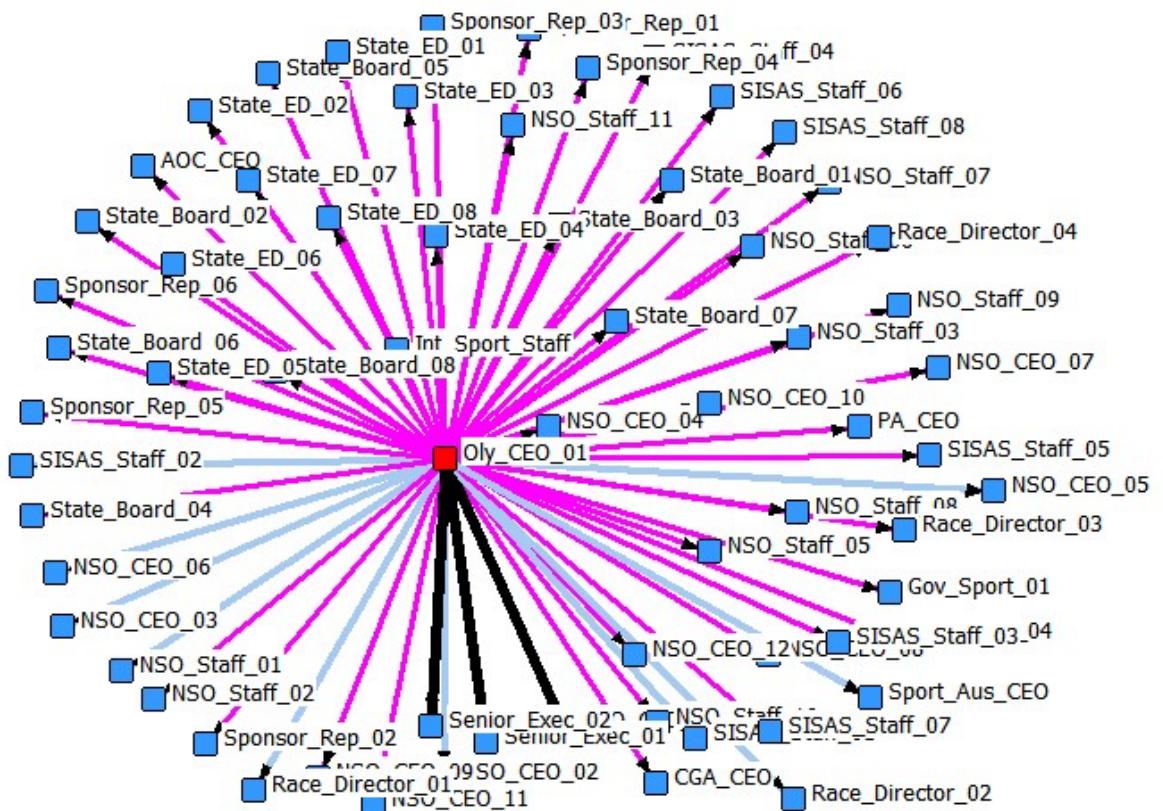
Oly CEO 1 has the largest network among the Olympic sport CEOs, and it is dominated by contacts from the various stakeholders within the federated structure of the sport. However, this CEO also noted the high turnover within key positions in the network as being challenging and frustrating (despite the NSO itself having a stable board with a mix of elected and independent directors), and likely a result of the federated system. This has also produced a large number of lower-strength ties. His strongest sport-specific relationships include two key staff members within the NSO and the executive director of an SSO within the federation. As a former athlete and director within the sport, Oly CEO 1 felt he commenced his tenure with a good existing network. Thus despite being an outsider when recruited, he had a good understanding of the eco-system within the sport. This CEO relied on his fellow Olympic sport CEOs for camaraderie and task advice relating to common challenges such as sport integrity. This

group was self-managed and would meet each fortnight. Two additional contacts from outside of the sport were among his most trusted advisors.

4.3.7 Oly CEO 2

Figure 11: Oly CEO 2 Sociogram
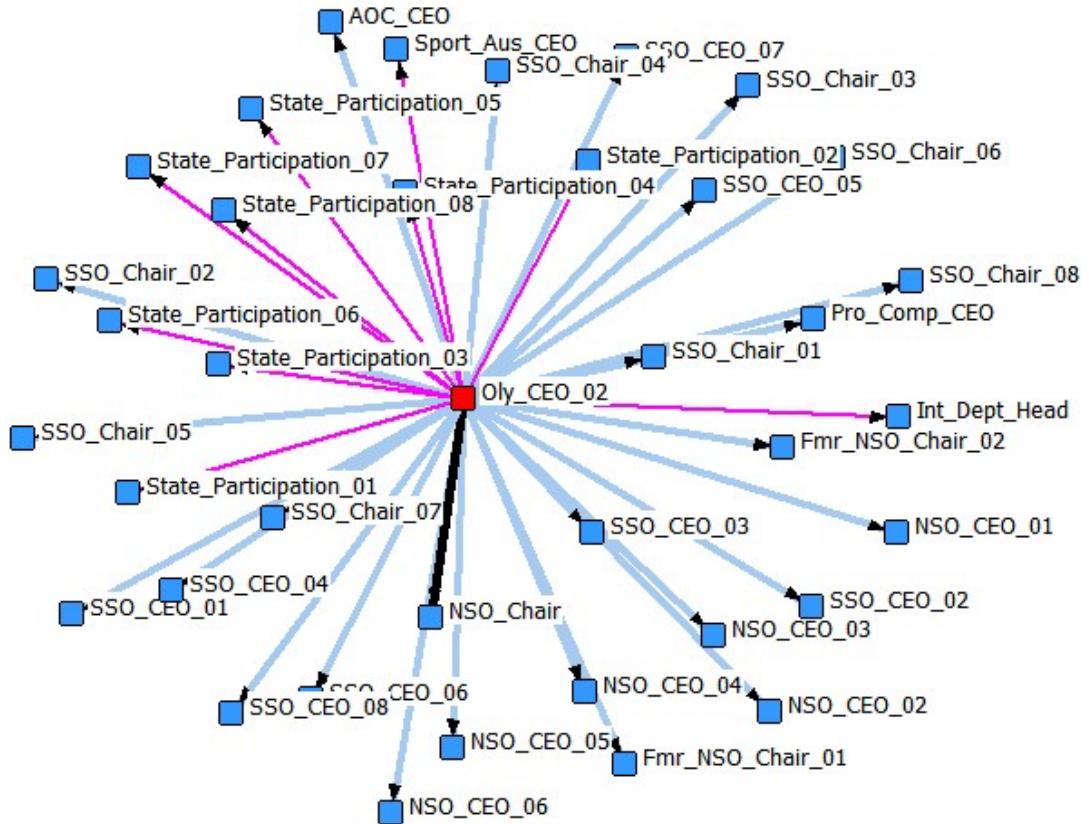
Oly CEO 2 was a relay succession event, having spent many years working within the NSO before being appointed CEO. This allowed him many years to cultivate his in-sport network and gave him the largest percentage of high-value ties in the sample. Yet, his sole Strength 3 connection was the Chair who fulfilled four functions: task advice, buy-in, professional advice, and mentor. The largest portion of his network was based on servicing the state organisations, which the CEO saw as crucial in building the participation base of the sport. This sport had a separate (with its own CEO) but related organisation running the high-performance component of the sport. Oly CEO 2 also maintained network ties to his CEO colleagues amongst other Olympic sports. Overall, this network reflects the CEO's time in the sport and the organisation,

resulting in a strong but efficient network which spans the entire sport but also has ties to external contacts.

4.3.8 Oly CEO 3

Figure 12: Oly CEO 3 Sociogram
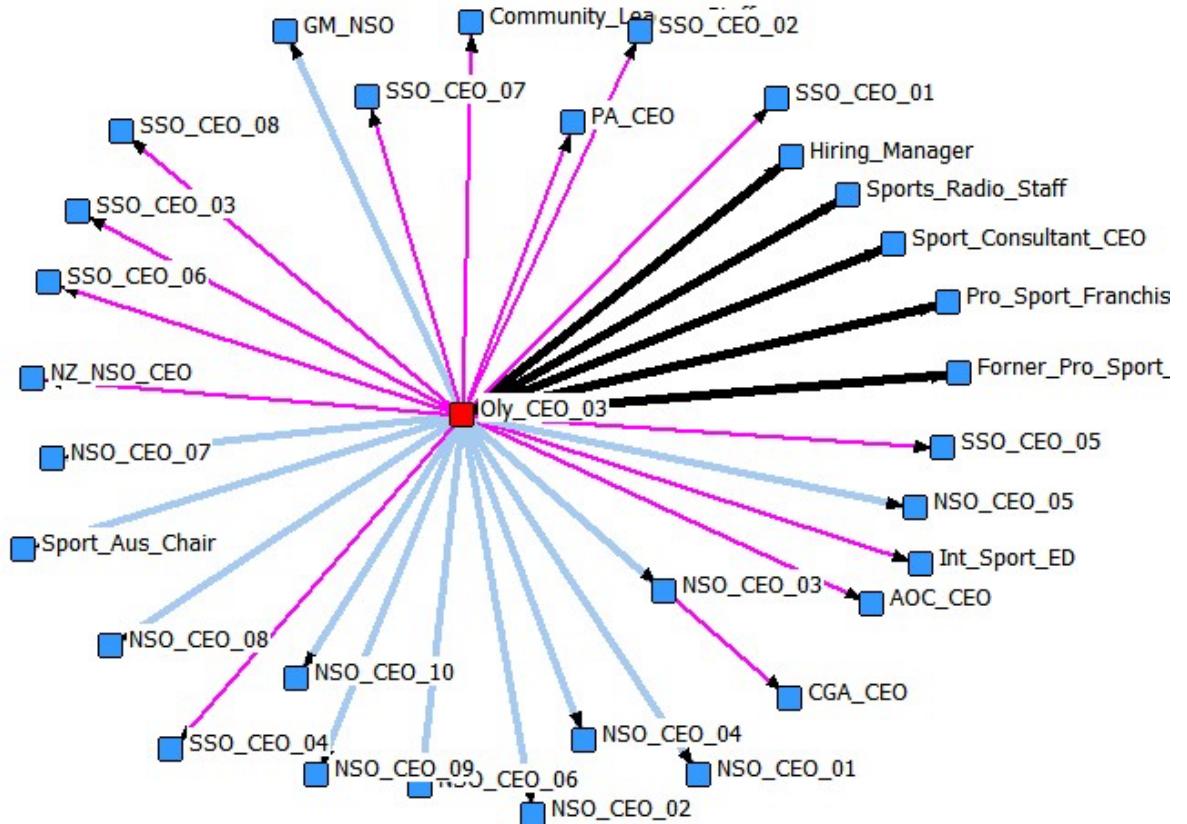
This CEO had extensive experience across the sport industry, particularly in commercial roles, prior to his appointment. The experience and connections gained through these roles led to a strong and effective pre-existing network with CEOs of other NSOs and within government agencies (which would be pivotal in his appointment to the CEO role). He found building ties with key people within SSOs challenging at times due to long-standing tensions between the states and the NSO, although he saw it as essential for connecting to the grassroots participation base of the sport. While in the role, three separate individuals held the position of Chairperson, which limited the opportunity to build a strong and united connection between the board (strategy) and the executive (operations). It is also noteworthy that his multiplex ties are

generally to people located outside of the NSO and thus form part of his ongoing personal network. Indeed, the personal network Oly CEO 3 built throughout the industry played a role in not only unlocking this specific succession opportunity but also gaining other employment and directorship opportunities. This includes ties to consultants and media professionals.

4.3.9 Oly CEO 4

Figure 13: Oly CEO 4 Sociogram
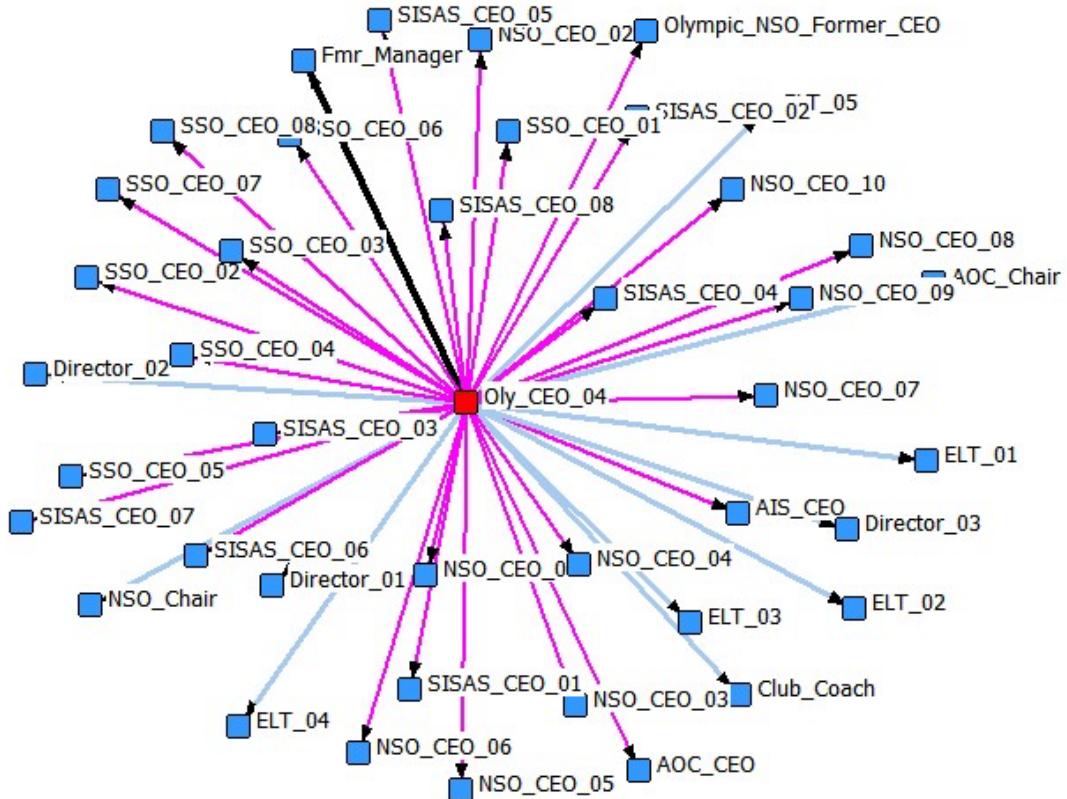
This CEO had a great deal of high-performance experience in a different Olympic sport. However, he had also worked for several government agencies and within the institute of the sport system, which facilitated the formation of an existing but weak network across a wide range of sports. Upon being appointed CEO, he was able to "re-activate" these ties to facilitate the building of his sport-specific network, aided by his contacts from the aforementioned national institute of sport network. Given his mandate was to improve the high-performance aspect of the sport and given his career history, Oly CEO 4's network was focussed in those areas and organisations.

However, he also had multiplex ties to his fellow CEOs of Olympic sport NSOs. Oly CEO 4 actively worked throughout his career to establish his personal network, which led to several high-level work opportunities where he was approached directly rather than going through a traditional formal employment process. Outside of his mentor, his strongest ties were mostly to his board members and executive leadership team, a number of which have turned out to be enduring relationships, including being able to act as a mentor of former staff.

4.3.10 Oly CEO 5

Figure 14: Oly CEO 5 Sociogram
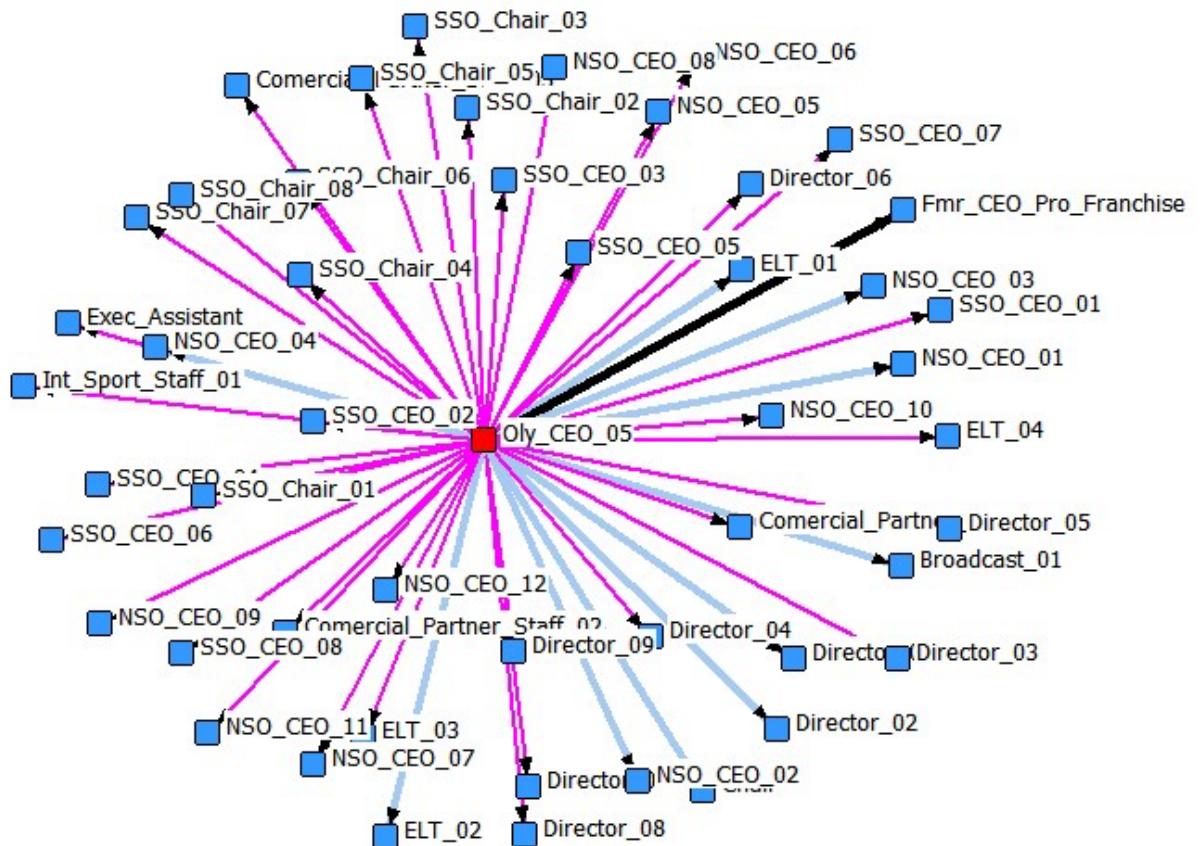
Oly CEO 5 has the unique distinction of being the only CEO within the sample who has held the position of CEO in two of the selected NSOs within the specified timeframe for this study. Despite this, he essentially described identical networks. As there is little to differentiate the two networks, only one is presented here. Prior to being appointed to his first CEO role, Oly CEO 5 served in COO and finance positions in franchises which compete in Australia's professional sport leagues. As such, he had to build sport-specific networks largely from scratch. His own observation was that his

personal network could facilitate access to the most notable individuals within the sport industry and decision-makers in government, media, and sponsorship. On a personal level, he expressed confidence that his network would be able to provide personal endorsements to help progress his career. Therefore, while he has a low percentage of higher strength value ties, this CEO believes that his network comprises enough bridging ties through which he could gain wide access to influential individuals in the industry. Lastly, Oly CEO 5 has the lowest average ties per alter score (1.08), which indicates most relationships in his network have only a single function.

4.3.11 Oly CEO 6

Figure 15: Oly CEO 6 Sociogram
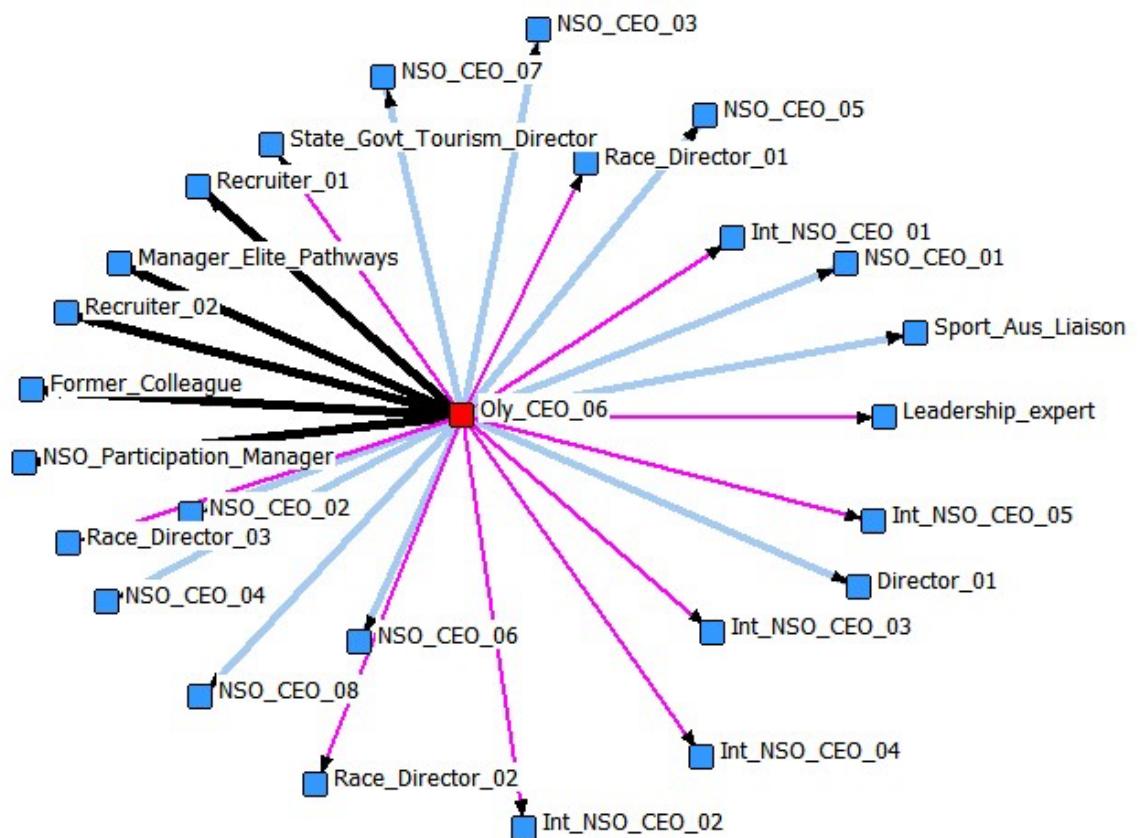
This network is unique. Oly CEO 6 has the smallest network amongst the sample but one of the most intimate networks, with a large percentage of high-value ties (possesses the largest percentage of higher-value ties in the study) – many of which have endured long after she departed the organisation. Prior to becoming CEO, Oly CEO 6 held a number of senior positions within government sport agencies and anti-

doping authorities, along with a directorship of a sport-related foundation. Oly CEO 6 had strong knowledge of governance and Australian sport and was, therefore, able to apply these principles and overlay them to this particular sport. Her strongest relationships included a trusted director on the board and a staff member whom she previously knew and recruited to the NSO, in addition to a former colleague and two sports recruiters specialising in executive roles. This CEO was appointed with a mandate to implement strong governance reforms, which were said to be lacking under her predecessor. As such, her status as an outsider was a strength as she was not constrained by pre-existing relationships or impressions. Lastly, she also joined an existing network among NSO CEO colleagues.

4.3.12 Oly CEO 7

Figure 16: Oly CEO 7 Sociogram
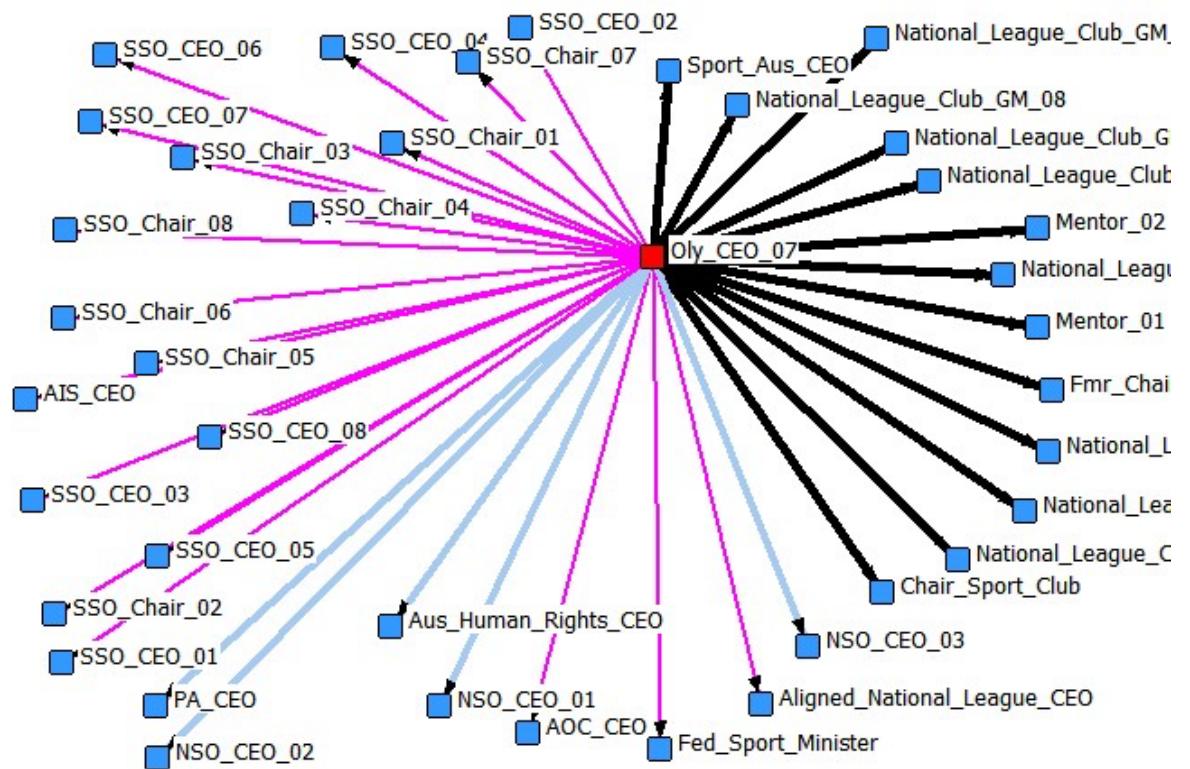
Oly CEO 7 was appointed as an outsider with a background in a range of different industries, including elite and grassroots sport. This experience positioned her as a successor with contacts across government and high-level sport organisations. Prior to joining the NSO, she had been appointed as a director of a professional sport

franchise. Nevertheless, she had to quickly work to build a sport-specific network based on advice from the Chair. The federated nature of the sport was challenging to manage, and as such, many ties to the SSOs were singular and lacked endurance. While recognising a larger network was inevitable in the CEO role, she otherwise relied on a small number of trusted confidantes for advice and support, whom she had known for many years. Indeed, Oly CEO 7 has the highest percentage of ties ranked in value as Strength Three (3). She formed lasting and meaningful relationships with other female NSO CEOs who faced similar challenges including from an organisational perspective and from a gender perspective.

4.3.13 Oly CEO 8

Figure 17: Oly CEO 8 Sociogram
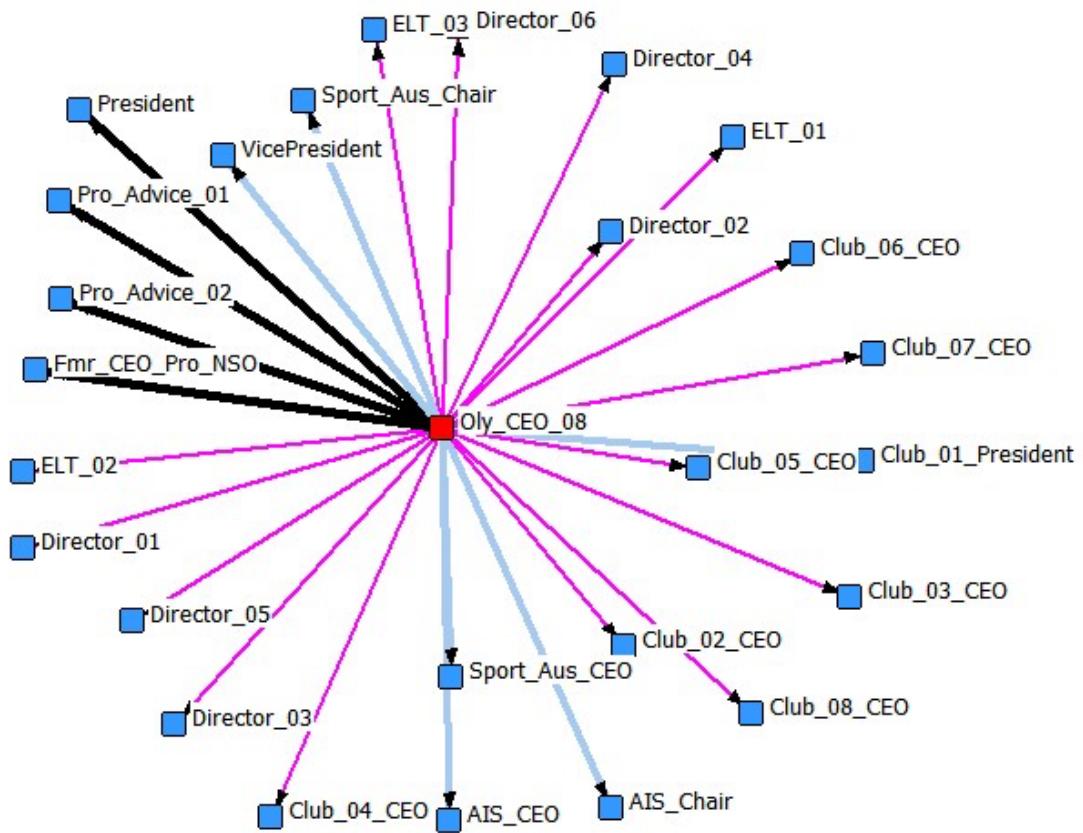
Oly CEO 8 had a long history in professional sport organisations prior to being appointed CEO of this Olympic sport NSO. His experience centred on major events, change management, and managing/operating leagues. Despite having only a limited connection to the sport, he had pre-existing relationships with the Chair and Deputy

Chair, who strongly encouraged him to take the CEO role when it became available. Having held high-profile positions domestically and internationally, Oly CEO 8 had built a personal network including contacts in government and high-performance sport. Despite having a small number of alters, Oly CEO 8 has the second-highest average of ties per alter, meaning many ties were multifactorial. He also opined that connecting with major players amongst the various stakeholders was key to exerting influence and effecting change.

4.3.14 Oly CEO 9

Figure 18: Oly CEO 9 Sociogram
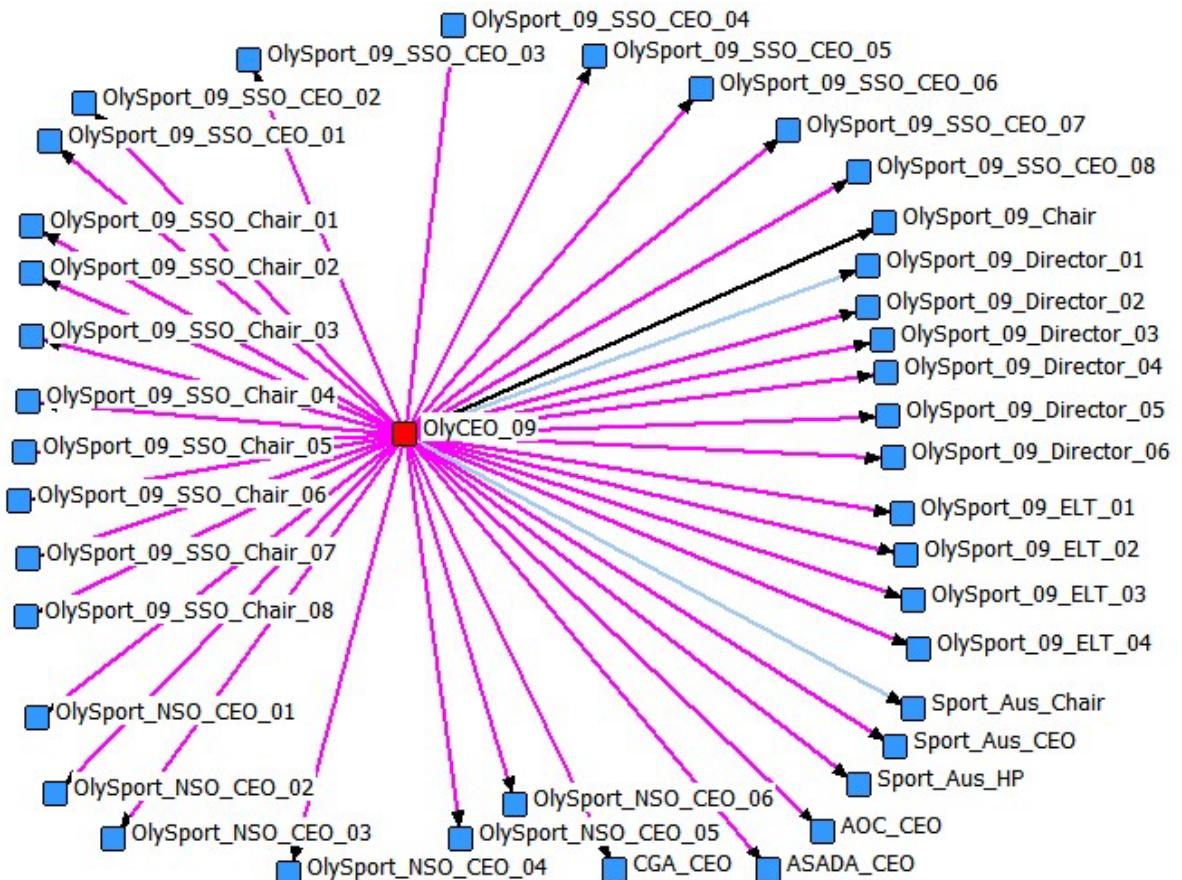
Oly CEO 9's personal network has several unique features. First, he has the lowest average tie strength across the sample, and second, he has the highest average of ties per alter. As such, he has a weak network despite many ties being multifactorial. This is likely due to his background. After a successful career as an athlete in the sport, Oly CEO 9 spent many years overseas pursuing a successful corporate career. He had

recently been co-opted to join the board of directors, before being asked by the Chair to take on CEO duties when the role became available. Oly CEO9's brief was to enact a change management program; his network focus was therefore on creating trustful relationships across the sport, yet with a specific professional focus to deliver in a short period of time what could be regarded as contentious outcomes for stakeholders.

Figure 19: Figure 19: Comparison of all Personal Networks
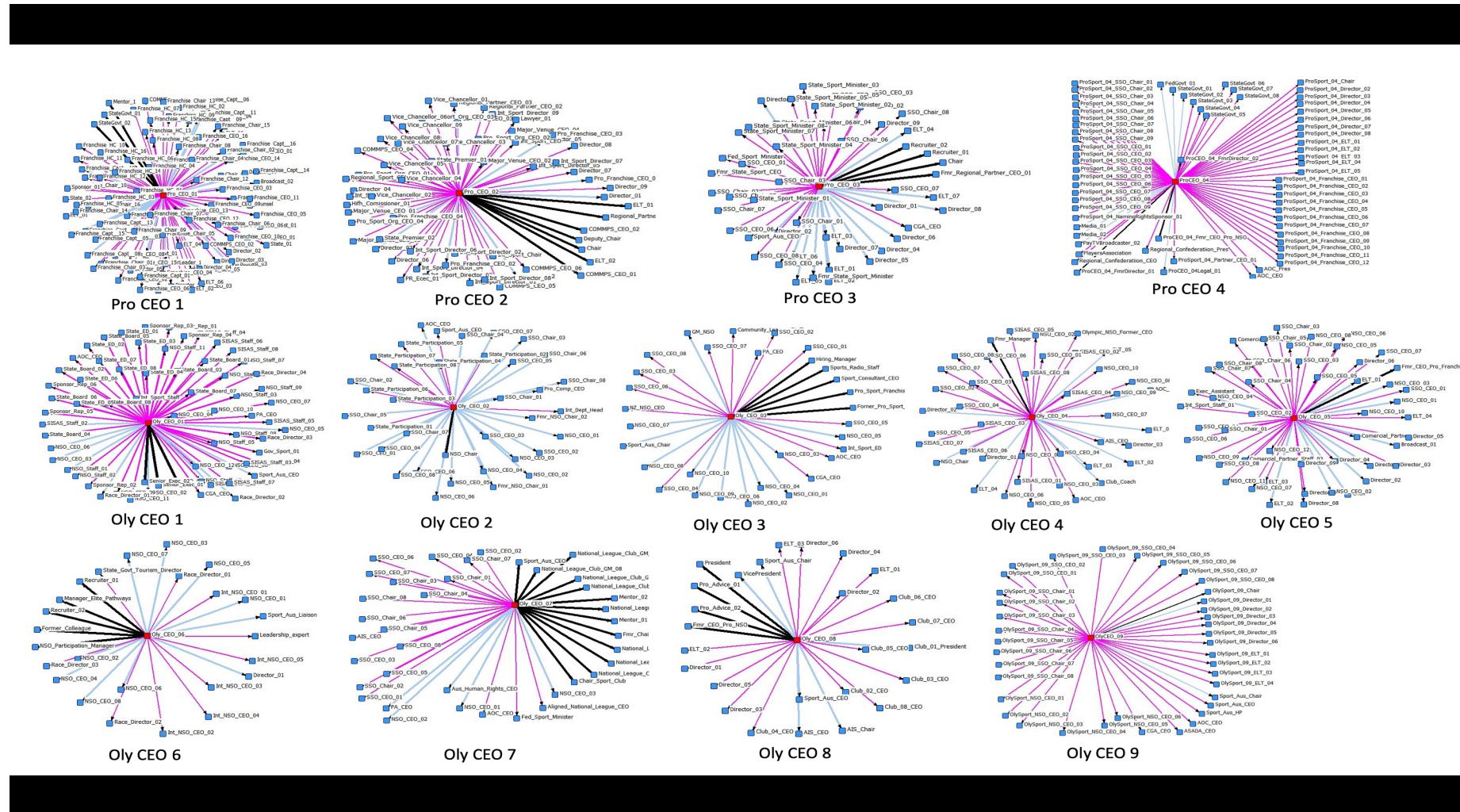
4.3.15 Whole network observations

Figure 20: Whole Network Sociogram
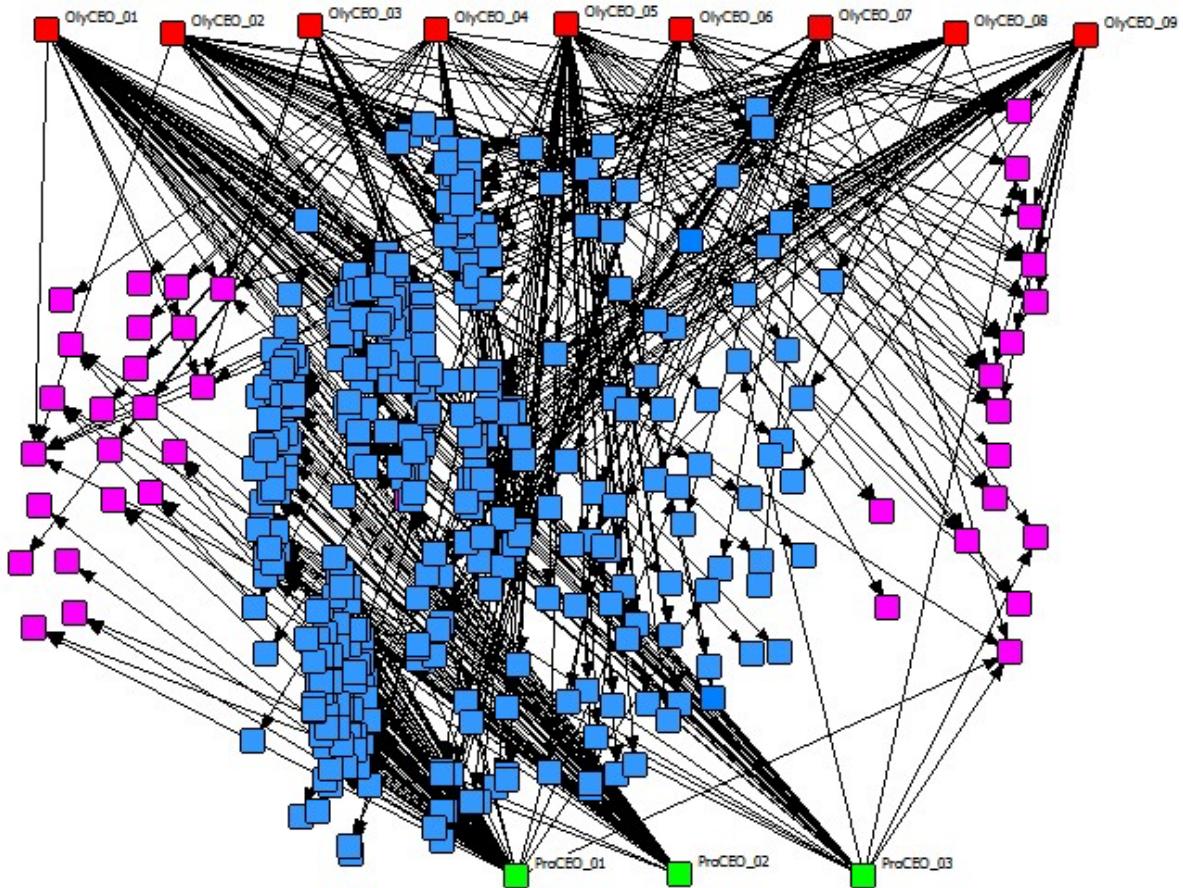
Through the combined network diagram shown in Figure 20 – that is, a diagram which combines all the individual CEO networks into a single diagram – it is possible to ascertain several bridges in the network. In this diagram, each professional sport CEO is represented by a green node and each Olympic sport CEO by a red node. The purple nodes are bridges; they are common to two or more CEOs. The remaining nodes, which are coloured blue, are connections specific only to each CEO's personal network. Bridges act to connect different sections of a network. In this case, common contacts can connect each CEO to the other actors in the network, including those who make key decisions during succession events and sport-specific contacts who are seen as important in being a successful CEO.

Yet, caution must be taken when considering this aspect. First, while the CEOs in this study were drawn from the years 2011 to 2020, they were not necessarily all in

their role concurrently. Second, this diagram only includes those CEOs who agreed to participate in this research, which excludes 36 CEOs who did not agree to be involved. It should be remembered that some CEOs would conceivably be located within an overall network, but they are not participants in this study. This is because this research is not a census of the entire population. Rather, as the first study of its kind, it is exploratory in nature. Third, many of the actors in each individual network are identified by virtue of their position. For example: chairperson, director, high-performance manager, etc. That being the case, there is also a turnover of these positions throughout a CEO's tenure. Pro CEO 1 specifically noted the challenge of maintaining an effective personal network when this occurs. This caveat is important to remember when drawing conclusions related to the whole network as opposed to each individual network in isolation.

Figure 21: Network Bridges Sociogram
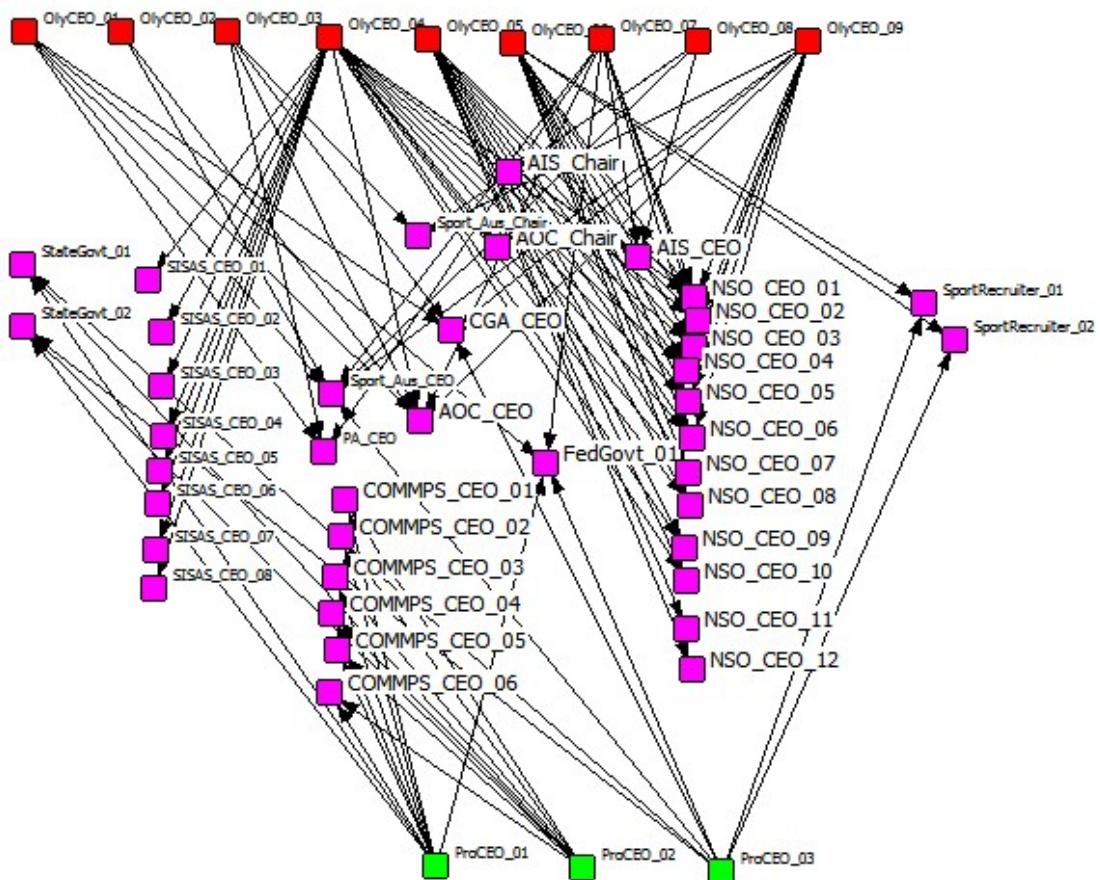
Figure 21 identifies, by position, the bridging ties in the whole network (other connections seen in Figure 20 have been removed to enhance visibility). Some are common only to Olympic sport CEOs and some only to professional sport CEOs. In several cases, bridges are leaders of peak body organisations, such as the AOC, PA, and CGA. Government is also represented through Sport Australia, the AIS, and federal and state ministers. One professional sport CEO and one Olympic sport CEO also identified recruiters who operate in the sport industry as being valuable sources of general information. Almost every CEO identified their fellow NSO CEOs as being an important component of their personal networks. The professional sport CEOs have a formal connection via the COMPPS alliance, whereas the Olympic sport CEO group network was more informal and often based on the geographical location of each NSO. For example, the Melbourne-based NSO CEOs maintained their own informal network and would meet over lunch or on Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. In most cases, the purpose of such contacts was identified in the network survey as being task advice (solving problems common to each organisation) or strategic information (the "goings-on" within sport).

In the context of succession, having contacts across sports and amongst related stakeholders, such as government, was viewed as advantageous for prospective CEOs. In some cases, these contacts also improved prospects for employment and helped facilitate access to a new CEO role; however, this is not universal across the sample. While CEOs viewed a tie to the Chair of a prospective organisation as an important factor in unlocking a potential successor, this is not necessarily directly a result of the bridges shown in this diagram. Rather, it is more often through other ties within their personal network.

As data was collected as a series of personal networks, overall social network measures, such as density, are relatively low. The whole (combined) network has a density of 0.002. This identifies the number of ties as a proportion of possible ties as being very low. As no data was collected for possible ties between non-CEO actors (alters), this is unsurprising. Similarly, the average degree within the network is 1.132. In network analysis, degree measures the number of ties emanating from each node. Given the vast majority of nodes within the overall network represent a single contact for one of the CEOs, this is also to be expected.

Degree centrality is useful for calculating the prevalence of each bridging node. This measure demonstrates the importance of a particular actor to the overall network. Simply put, higher centrality scores represent an actor who was named by many CEOs as being a component of their personal workplace network. In this case, outside of their fellow CEO colleagues, the highest scores relate to the AOC CEO (6) and Sport Australia CEO (6). The next highest scores are for the CGA CEO (4), Federal Minister for Sport (4), and PA CEO (3). As such, these represent the most valuable actors to connect with. This is because these contacts theoretically enable a CEO to connect with other actors to whom they may not be directly linked.

Yet this does not necessarily correspond with eigenvector centrality, which in essence measures how well-connected an individual actor's network partners are. Within this network, eigenvector centrality scores tend to be highest among those who are connected to the professional sport CEOs. This is partially because their networks are larger. The highest-scoring actors other than the CEOs themselves are the COMPPS alliance CEOs (i.e., their peers), the Federal Minister for Sport, and broadcasters. Pro Sport CEO 1 has the highest individual eigenvector centrality score (0.70), which represents a high level of potential influence and value within the network. Male CEOs have higher eigenvector scores than their female colleagues (0.09 compared to 0.05).

Figure 22: Whole Network Sub-Groups Sociogram
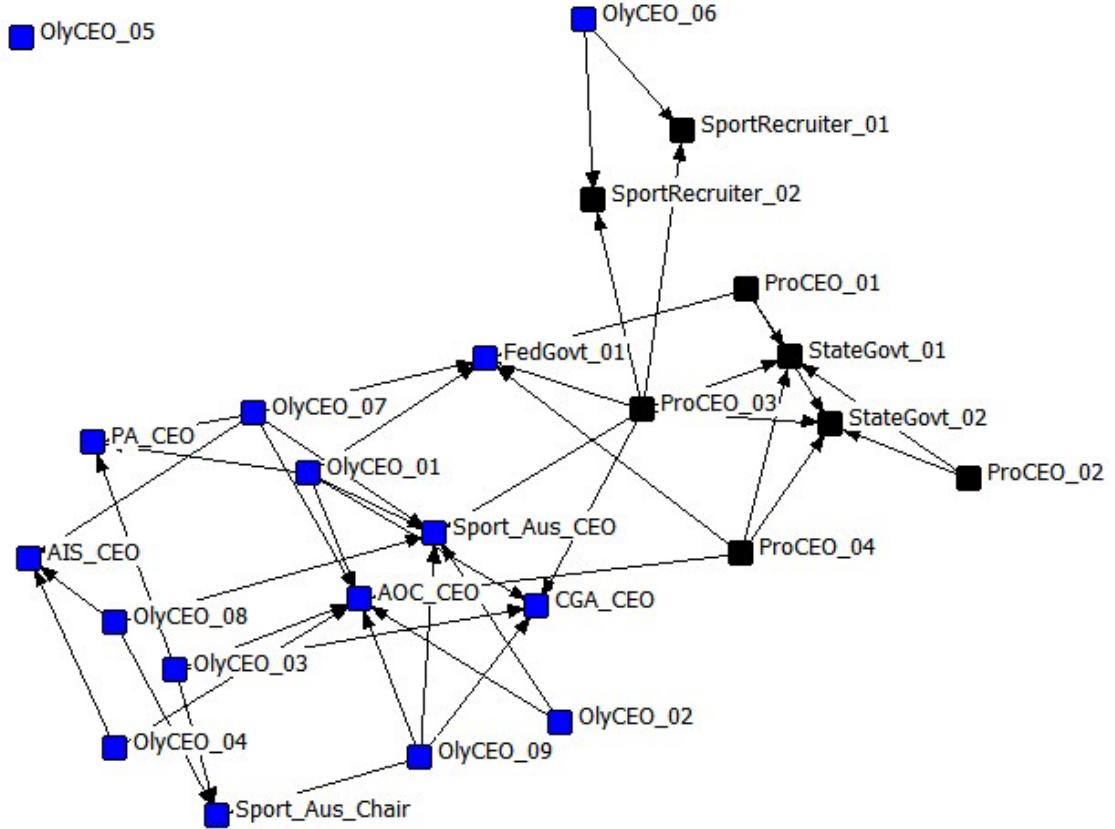
Lastly, the Girvan-Newman algorithm can be used to help identify clusters within a network (Borgatti et al., 2018). This process fragments the network to display these sub-groups. The Girvan-Newman procedure largely splits this network into professional and Olympic sport groups when a setting of two sub-groups is applied. This is illustrated in Figure 22 where the professional sport CEO nodes are black and the Olympic sport CEO nodes are blue. The bridging nodes, excluding those representing fellow but unspecified CEOs (e.g., COMPPS and Olympic sport NSO CEOs), are also included. As expected, peak bodies such as the AOC, CGA, and PA are grouped within the Olympic sport sub-group. Sport recruitment agents and state sport ministers are included within the professional sport sub-group – however, the Federal Sport Minister is included in the Olympic sport sub-group. Oly CEO 5 sits apart as most of his ties are sport-specific rather than connecting with the aforementioned bridging ties. Oly CEO 6 has strong ties to sport recruitment agents; as a result, she is placed closer to the professional sport CEOs.

4.4 Interview Findings

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve of the thirteen participants. Following initial social network analysis, an interview guide was developed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2020). An iterative process using an abductive approach further organised themes into three broad topics: 1. CEO succession process; 2. Leadership development, succession management, and the role of social networks; 3. Gender. A total of ten themes were identified and matched to the key concepts presented in the conceptual model earlier in this thesis. These are displayed in Table 23. Table 24 indicates which themes and sub-themes were identified in the participant interviews, and contains sample data for each theme. Each theme is discussed in turn.

Table 23: Final Themes and Relevance to Conceptual Model and Research Questions

Topic	Sub-topic	Themes	Related Concept	Research Question
1. CEO succession process	1. Recruitment	1. Use of recruiters and involvement of Chair	1. CEO succession 2. Social network analysis	PR, SR1
	2. Background and experience	2. Leveraging network for outcomes in context of succession	1. CEO succession 2. Social network theory 3. Network position	PR, SR1
	3. Insiders/outsiders	3. Network implications of being an insider or outsider	1. Social network theory 2. Insiders/outsiders	PR, SR1
	4. Existing networks	4. Need for effective networks as a CEO	1. Social network theory 2. CEO succession 3. Insider/outsider 4. Network position	PR, SR1
	5. Strategic priorities	5. Implementing strategic change	1. CEO succession	PR
	6. Challenges for CEO	6. Managing dynamic and large stakeholder networks and networks as social support	1. CEO succession 2. Social network theory	PR
2. Leadership development, succession management, and the role of social networks	7. Leadership development	7. Current LD in sport is poor	1. CEO succession 2. Insider/outsider 3. Mentor/sponsorship	PR, SR1, SR2
	8. Succession management	8. Current SM in sport is poor	1. CEO succession 2. Insider/outsider 3. Gender	PR, SR1, SR2
	9. Importance of networks	9. Role of networks and networking in career advancement	1. Social network theory 2. CEO succession 3. Insider/outsider 4. Gender 5. Mentor/sponsorship 6. Network position	PR, SR1, SR2
3. Gender	10. Gender	10. Old-boy networks and mixed progress towards gender equity	1. Social network theory 2. CEO succession 3. Insider/outsider 4. Gender 5. Mentor/sponsorship	SR1, SR2

Table 24: Qualitative Themes, Example Data, and Themes by Participant

Topic	Sub-topic	Themes	Sample Data	Participants
1. CEO succession process	1. Recruitment	1. Use of recruiters and involvement of Chair	"(This NSO) was a hybrid, a recruiting process but a mutual colleague/friend of me and the President connected us up" (Oly CEO 5)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	2. Background and experience	2. Leveraging network for outcomes in context of succession	"I knew people, I knew quite a lot of people in sport. So I think that was considered an important part of and also, I then had connections" (Oly CEO 6)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	3. Insiders/outsiders	3. Network implications of being an insider or outsider	"Yeah, look, it's an interesting question… being viewed as the natural successor, and having tenure in the sport, and having existing relationships can and did, I think, work favourably for me, but there's a very strong case to be suggested that having those existing relationships and the tenure can work against you." (Oly CEO 2)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7
	4. Existing networks	4. Need for effective networks as a CEO	"The fact I'd come straight from the Sports Commission didn't hurt because the principal funding partner, major governance, you know, changes required to the business, etc. So that certainly didn't hurt that I'd have the ability to access funds through government because of my network and understanding how that works." (Oly CEO 3)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	5. Strategic priorities	5. Implementing strategic change	"Major change was required – move to Melbourne, recruitment of a new team, secure funds to establish a new national league, commercial outcomes – broadcast, national membership system. A major focus on mending bridges with the Member Associations (following significant change already)." (Pro CEO 3)	Pro: 3 Oly: 3, 4, 7, 8, 9

| | 6. Challenges for CEO | 6. Managing dynamic and large stakeholder networks and networks as social support | "And also, I guess, sometimes, the relationship with the states, for example, that needed to prove a number of areas, but the success of the high-performance program was reliant upon the states buying into the new direction, because it required a change of role from them. (Oly CEO 4)

"But for me, their network is that opportunity to, you know, talk to your fellow colleagues as CEOs, particularly Olympic sports, which we did. Because in part how I'm looking at this issue is, are you facing that? You know, so that extra sounding board, but also the point that you're actually not alone" (Oly CEO 3) | Pro: 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Leadership development, succession management, and the role of social networks | 7. Leadership development | 7. Current LD in sport is poor | "No! Professional sport is very poor at developing leaders within the industry. More needs to be done in this area." (Pro CEO 1) | Pro: 1, 2 Oly 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 |
| | 8. Succession management | 8. Current SM in sport is poor | "I would say that there's no succession planning and growth of leaders within that organization as well. But in smaller NSOs, it's a lot more difficult because of just their size and their bandwidth. And the people in the senior leadership teams tend to be specialists, not generalists. And some of them don't like going out of their niche into broader leadership roles." (Oly CEO 4) | Pro: 1, 2 Oly 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 |
| | | | | |

	9. Importance of networks	9. Role of networks and networking in career advancement	"I would say, as a general rule, your network and your connections are absolutely vital, to your role, to your opportunity to progress, and then of course, your opportunity to flourish once you're in a certain role. So I would encourage anybody to network as hard and as fast as they can, and to build… relationships…" (Oly CEO 2)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
3. Gender	10. Gender	10. Old-boy networks and mixed progress towards gender equity	"Oh. I don't think it's improved in sport. I think it's improved in business… it's those very well-respected boys club network guys, that can make material change by actually putting forward some female names." (Pro CEO 3)	Pro: 1, 2, 3, 4 Oly 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

4.4.1 The use of recruiters and involvement of the Chair

It was common for a specialist recruiter to be involved in the CEO appointment process. The use of an external recruiter introduces an additional dynamic to the process and, in turn, the networks involved. Regardless of whether recruiters are part of the participant's personal network (defined as important to their work based on functions), they often act as a bridge to the organisational figures responsible for final recruitment decisions, such as the Chair of the hiring NSO. Even in instances where a potential successor was well positioned in terms of being appointed, a formal process spearheaded by an independent recruiter was usually implemented. Pro CEO 1 and Oly CEO 2, arguably both relay successors, still went through a robust and rigorous open selection process. While identified as a preferred candidate, Oly CEO 4 similarly said, "…in that one particular role where I was … sort of was a fait accompli. I had to go through an interview to satisfy the funders." Thus, while the Chair is clearly critical in the process, there is still a sense of probity in the appointment of new CEOs.

Many of the CEOs indicated that they were encouraged by others to apply. This was largely through social network connections, either direct ties or indirectly through an intermediary, as was the case for Oly CEO 5. In some cases, the Chair made contact,

but more often the recruiter, further highlighting their presence in networks during succession processes. It is not entirely clear whether this was to ensure a competitive process with a pool of highly qualified candidates, or whether the eventual CEO was singled out as a preferred candidate. In the case of Oly CEO 6, she was specifically approached by the independent recruiter at the insistence of the NSO, after the initial recruitment process was unable to deliver a candidate to the liking of the hiring decision-makers. While being well aware of her status as the preferred candidate, she too went through a formal interview process. Similarly, Oly CEO 8 did not apply for the position but was nevertheless approached by a recruiter at the insistence of the Chair, who then drove the process. However, there were also instances of a more truncated approach outside of this framework.

Initial access to and later support from the Chair via either a direct or indirect network tie was viewed as beneficial to unlocking a potential succession opportunity. Pro CEO 4 was appointed after being directly approached by the Chair and a series of interviews with various directors. Oly CEO 3 was pursued "…rather aggressively by the then President (Chair)…" of the NSO and subsequently appointed after a relatively informal process. He described the succession event via his existing professional ties to the Chair as "…we (the Chair and I) got to share some experiences on you know, this is what we've done in our careers and so forth. And out of that he obviously made the determination he was keen for me to take the job." Oly CEO 9 was a new director at the time of succession and was essentially cajoled by the Chair to pivot into the CEO role. Oly CEO 4 noted he had been headhunted for numerous executive positions throughout his career; he observed that if a candidate was contacted by the Chair, it was an indication that they were being seriously considered for the job in question.

4.4.2 Ability to leverage network for outcomes (in context of appointment)

CEOs were asked how they perceived the selection criteria during the recruitment process, specifically the attributes and experience they felt the hiring organisation were looking for, and whether pre-existing relationships within an organisation or sport (or lack thereof) were viewed as advantageous (or otherwise). The required experience depended on the situation of each succession event, but generally rested upon the ability of the incoming CEO to leverage their network for desired

strategic outcomes. Oly CEO 4, who had numerous contacts in his network directly related to the management of elite high-performance sport (specific high-performance operations, sports science, etc.), is a clear example of this. His demonstrated knowledge gained through experience in this area was important but would not have translated into positive outcomes without the skills to cultivate and influence results through the required network. Similarly, commercial outcomes are derived through existing networks or the ability to forge new contacts. CEOs who had previously held roles working for professional sports clubs felt this experience directly helped them grow their network prior to stepping up into a NSO CEO role.

There were several commonalities across the sample. Most CEOs suggested NSOs were looking for a CEO who could drive commercial and financial success and manage stakeholders, particularly where the NSO operated under a federated governance model. This speaks to the ongoing challenge of sport organisations, and Olympic sport NSOs in particular, which are generally underfunded commensurate to their lofty goals. Given the stated priority of stakeholder management, CEOs highlighted their existing relationships, where they existed, within their sport but also across the industry, government, broadcasters, and sponsors.

However, there were exceptions. Oly CEO 4 was specifically recruited with a brief to rebuild the high-performance arm of the NSO as the board were dissatisfied with recent results on the international stage. Having deep experience in managing high-performance programs both within the sport and as a part of the national institute network, Oly CEO 4 seemed to fit this criterion well. He described this as an instance of "right person, right time". In relation to his second CEO role, Oly CEO 5 noted the NSO was looking to expand into Asia, an type of experience he had gained via his first NSO CEO job. Oly CEO 8 and Oly CEO 9 were both appointed to lead a significant restructuring of their respective sports, requiring buy-in and approval from SSOs and other stakeholders. This speaks to a need for careful and meticulous network building with a specific outcome in mind.

CEOs who had experience working for professional sports clubs keenly submitted that this experience was viewed extremely favourably by other NSOs during the succession process. In particular, Oly CEO 3 and Oly CEO 5 noted that "(the

professional sport network) has far more business connections… than Olympic sports."
Oly CEO 3 further stated:

> I think that being in that pressured environment, it certainly hones your skills that I think makes, certainly makes for, and allows that transitioning to national federations, national Olympic sports…I think the candidacy of those coming out (professional sport) is quite attractive to Olympic sports, because you've worked in the biggest game in town. So you'd have tremendous insight on how the game's commercialised, you know, fan engagement and all those things that the shiny, amazing stuff that professional codes do is really attractive to Olympic sports.

4.4.3 Network implications of being an insider or outsider

This network perspective of succession suggests insiders have an advantage in already being embedded inside the hiring organisation and related sport. However, outsiders aim to overcome any inherent disadvantage by maximising positive outcomes via stakeholder networks. Similarly, these CEOs aim to quickly establish links upon assuming the CEO role to expand their influence and network. As such, this theme encompasses a network application of the insider–outsider distinction.

The two relay successors in this sample, Pro CEO 1 and Oly CEO 2, both reflected on the advantages of having an intimate knowledge of their respective sports and existing intraorganisational and interorganisational relationships related to their NSO. Pro CEO 1 saw this as an important factor, as it was generally assumed the previous CEO had struggled without sport industry and sport-specific experience. Interestingly, Oly CEO 2 mentioned being asked during the job interview whether there was an opportunity cost in appointing him, an insider, rather than an outsider who could commence with a 'clean slate'. The implication appears to have been that existing relationships, while a known factor, may not always be positive, and a fresh view may better invigorate the organisation.

Promoting insider successors can limit access to new ideas and innovation; however, this can be negated if a CEO seeks advice from external sources. In Oly CEO 2's case, he explicitly acknowledged his status as an insider and designated heir-apparent: "…being viewed as the natural successor, and having tenure in the sport, and

having existing relationships can and did, I think, work favourably for me…". Although the largest component of his network comprised contacts amongst the member states (65%), as with other CEOs in this study, he sought task advice from CEOs of other NSOs to expand his perspective.

Pro CEO 1 had also previously been CEO of one of the stakeholder franchises, which was simultaneously an advantage and disadvantage. His own view was that this background "…was an enormous asset for me coming into the role of CEO…". Others saw the benefit too but with a caveat: "…everyone saw that as a good thing, except when something happened about the club that I used to work at…so accuse you of some bias." Pro CEO 3 ascended to the NSO CEO position via an SSO. In her case, existing relationships were helpful, but more important was an ability to be apolitical in managing the member states. In this respect, she also suggested an outsider is desirable at times as they can provide "…new eyes" and have not been entrenched in the internal politics of the sport. As such, she arguably straddles the line between insider and outsider, drawing on the benefits of both.

Oly CEO 1 and Oly CEO 9 can also be described as members of an in-group to some degree. Oly CEO 1 was a former athlete and director of the NSO he would later lead. Oly CEO 9 was also a former international-level athlete in his sport and current director, albeit only recently appointed, when he was co-opted into the CEO role. While both therefore had some knowledge and experience within their respective sports and NSOs, it was minimal compared to Pro CEO 1 and Oly CEO 2 who more closely fit the textbook definition of an insider.

Two of the professional sport CEOs were outsiders, with experience working for other high-profile sport organisations. Pro CEO 4 opined that in his case, the NSO was specifically keen to recruit an outside successor. He argued that the NSO was looking to change the way the sport was run, saying "…the game was trying to create a new way of managing and operating the sport…" and "…they were looking to go outside rather than... inside…". In his view, the NSO was hoping he would be able to replicate the successes he had enjoyed managing leagues in his previous role. This implies an ability to leverage his network in areas such as government and media in addition to human capital to drive the organisation forward.

Despite being an outsider, Pro CEO 2 was welcomed for her experience and relationships in the sport as her predecessor was from the corporate world. She stated, "I already had connections with, you know, senior sport leaders across the country, other CEOs…". Nevertheless, she also reflected that "…probably 85% of the relationships you have to build and start and unlock are all new." Oly CEO 6 suggested that needing to form new contacts and build a sport-specific network should not be insurmountable for incoming outsider CEOs: "I quite enjoy building those networks. It's something I think, as a CEO, you just, well I do very naturally." This highlights network building and cultivation as an expectation for CEOs.

There appears to be a need for incoming outsider CEOs to comprehend the different nuances of each sport-specific network. For instance, when asked to compare the sport-specific network of her previous sport with that of the NSO, Pro CEO 2 responded that the grassroots of the sport have "…knock-about, lovely, genuine volunteer people that are passionate about the sport for whatever reason…," but "…its sphere of influence is really different." Oly CEO 5 perceived potential tension or "…scepticism…" in his first posting due to his geographical background aligning with that of the administrative centre (head office) of the sport rather than the high-performance program, which was located in a different city. This stoked anxiety that the incoming CEO would look to relocate the high-performance program, impacting the long-term culture of the upper echelons of the sport. However, he consciously refrained from recruiting staff from his previous posting to his new NSO and thus observed the benefits of being an outsider: "…I discovered really quickly, it also meant I had no baggage… ." This means he had no preconceived notions or relationships amongst staff in the sport which might constrain or compromise his thinking and actions.

Oly CEO 6 pointed out that one of the challenges of being an outsider is the impact it has on the sport-specific networks a new CEO is looking to infiltrate: "…three of the CEOs from the States and Territories went for my job and didn't get it. So just building relationships was just impossible, you know, just was never going to work." Oly CEO 5, who felt his outsider status had helped him be appointed CEO in his second NSO, also mentioned the need to be sensitive where insiders were likely to have been among the potential successors, whom he beat to the role. Despite this, being an

outsider meant he was less emotionally attached and therefore able to take a "clinical" approach when "…making changes that the sport almost finds hard to do." A similar sentiment was shared by Oly CEO 8, who also had to implement significant change during his tenure. In focussing on change management, Oly CEO 5 felt his time in the role would run its natural course over the Olympic quadrennium before an insider could succeed him as CEO. In his view, being an insider can be more difficult as there is already a preconceived opinion regarding your talent and worldview within the sport.

Oly CEO 5 emphasised a need for outsider CEOs to quickly establish connections with stakeholders as not doing so is to risk "…showing certain stakeholders, they're not that important." Where possible, he recommended using an intermediary to provide background and endorsement. Oly CEO 7 agreed, saying that "…you'll often take advice from the chair or the board about who you need to build relationships with." Oly CEO 6, who had networks across the sport industry and government but not specifically in her NSO sport, found it imperative to be strategic in identifying contacts who could best provide valuable intelligence. Her small but intimate network included key individuals who acted as the "…eyes and ears of the sport."

These contacts were often chosen based on their unique personality and attributes rather than their position on an organisational chart, highlighting the advantages of informal social networks over contacts based solely on position. For instance, she described one of her contacts by explaining both the nature of the relationship and the function of the tie: "He trusted me, and he would tell me all the stuff that was happening in the athlete cohort." She went on to explain in more detail that "… (he had a) connection with the older athletes who often were now coaches, so I kind of got that and also you know, what was happening with all the younger athletes as well." Oly CEO 8 shared this insight from one of his previous roles (in professional sport) regarding ties which fulfil a strategic information function: "…one of my team had been there for 20 or 30 years… he knew, as they often say, where all the bodies are buried…that's vital."

4.4.4 Need for effective networks as a CEO

Whether an insider or an outsider, each CEO deemed their existing networks as a favourable attribute of their candidacy. All CEOs identified specific aspects and functions of their network as advantageous, reinforcing the network's significance to employment outcomes. According to Pro CEO 2, there was an expectation that an incoming CEO would bring a strong network to the role, which is seen as necessary to be an impactful leader. She explained that your network is an asset as "…(you've) got a whole lot of phone numbers… and you can make phone calls and get stuff done." In her case, despite being an outsider, her network included connections within broadcasters and state governments. This was clearly of benefit in her case as she was tasked with striking a new whole-of-sport broadcast deal for the NSO. Similarly, Oly CEO 7 suggested that having a good network was part of being a well-rounded CEO candidate.

As mentioned above, both relay successors, being insiders, saw having an existing network within their sport as valuable for their candidacy. Pro 1 described this as being a "distinct advantage" while Oly CEO 2 said, "…having existing relationships can and did, I think, work favourably for me…". Despite this, Pro CEO 1 also recognised that his existing network would only get him so far. He noted that existing ties would need to be further developed and new connections built: "…so I went in with some good relationships, and then obviously have to strengthen some of those relations, particularly at the more senior level than where I was before." Having previously been a director, Oly CEO 1 was mindful that this gave him a head start on creating a network, which would not have been the case otherwise.

Outsider CEOs also perceived the networks they brought with them to be of value. Many described their network in terms of being important when it came to managing stakeholders and achieving commercial aims. Pro CEO 4 noted that many important relationships in his previous role, also involving broadcasters and large corporate sponsors, were relevant to his new CEO job. Similarly, as a former SSO CEO, Pro CEO 3 had contacts within the player association, which helped manage relationships when they negotiated a collective bargaining agreement.

Oly CEO 6, who had worked for various sport industry organisations both in Australia and globally, stated: "…I knew quite a lot of people in sport. So I think that was considered important… and also, I then had connections; I knew how international sport worked as well." General sport industry experience helped Oly CEO 4 to build or activate an effective sport-specific network when he commenced his new role. He said that "…through my sport industry networks, when I started thinking about it, (I could) list all the people who had been involved in (this sport), and it was quite extensive and quite influential." Similarly, Oly CEO 8, who came from a professional sport background, had existing ties to the Chairs and CEOs at the ASC and AIS, which could provide him with advice or information related to his NSO sport.

4.4.5 Implementing strategic change (or not)

The corporate CEO succession literature concludes that insiders are most often appointed to continue the current strategic direction of an organisation, while outsiders are usually agents of change. This view of insiders and outsiders with respect to strategic change appears to have only limited application in this study. Yet, where change through a restructure was the overarching goal, networks were key to successfully achieving this goal. Two CEOs in this sample were relay successors. However, Oly CEO 2 saw his tenure as continuing the strategy he enacted in combination with his predecessor. As such, he noted: "I don't think my desire nor my intent was to take the sport in a vastly different direction, because I had input into the strategic plan that was in place when I became the CEO." This was possible because "…the pillars of the business were strong…". However, this was not the case for the other relay successor, Pro CEO 1.

Despite being an insider, Pro CEO 1 took on the mandate to reengage with the heartland and grow the sport. While the NSO may not have been performing badly, the widespread view was that a number of weaknesses impacted the performance of the previous incumbent. Therefore, according to Pro CEO 1, his strategic aims were to "…narrow our focus and increase two areas: participation and revenue" by realigning the sport's values and vision. In contrast, Pro CEO 3, who ascended to the role via an SSO and was thus also somewhat of an insider, had the following brief: change. In her words, it "…was time for a major strategic shift." This encompassed relocating the

national office, rebuilding previously fractured relationships with the states, attracting new sources of finance, and establishing a new national league. Delivering in these areas would increase participation and achieve high-performance goals. Both of these instances required cultivating positive network partners internally and externally.

Even though he was an outsider, Pro CEO 4 largely saw his tenure as being a continuation of the direction embraced by the previous CEO. He remarked, "I don't think the overall strategic ambition was any different. In fact, he (my predecessor) had by and large successfully laid the foundations for that work to be carried on." His opinion reflects the many significant changes this particular sport had experienced in the years leading up to succession. The only change he sought to implement was "…maybe embracing more of the, the, you know, the older guard and, you know, the traditional parts of (the sport)." Regardless of a desire for continuity, this last statement required the cultivation of new networks.

The remainder of the sample largely commenced their tenure with instructions to implement some level of change. Two CEOs restructured the operating model of the sport involving both members and the national body. Oly CEO 8 received an unambiguous mandate for which his experience was specifically sought out: "…their agenda was this change, therefore someone who had gone through change, which I'd done in (previous sport 1), done in (previous sport 2), so yeah… a) experienced at running things and b) managing a change…". A similar project awaited Oly CEO 9, which the previous CEO had been unable to deliver on. That being the case, Oly CEO 9, as the new CEO, and a new Chair took the following approach: "…we're kind of ripping up the sheet and then starting again…". This level of change required timely and effective network building amongst the member organisations, which arguably previous CEOs had been unable to do.

In addition, perilous finances were also a challenge for Oly CEO 9, which while being a significant issue in and of itself had also been a handbrake on systems development and meant the organisation was not operating effectively or efficiently. This caused disquiet amongst the SSOs. These problems were not unique, with many of the other CEOs recounting similar experiences. Oly CEO 3 pointed out that sourcing increased revenue was a top priority for him as well as for his predecessor and successor

– following the narrative trumpeted by the NSO when announcing each appointment. Thus, for this NSO, there was "…a consistent theme about we want the leader to be a revenue generator." As such, Oly CEO 3 opined that the NSO was seeking to leverage their CEOs' backgrounds and experiences, which were therefore an important consideration during succession.

4.4.6 Challenges of managing stakeholder networks and networks as social support

During the course of the interviews, the CEOs pointed out several challenges or difficulties they faced in their roles related to key concepts such as succession and social networks. Each CEO was aware of the importance of networks and the effort required to build and maintain a network to perform their CEO functions. Hence, the work required to cultivate and utilise their network was, at times, considered time-consuming and cumbersome. However, ties with fellow CEOs were viewed positively, as a means of support and common problem-solving.

CEOs found the sheer size of networks overwhelming at times. This was especially the case for each of the four professional sport CEOs, whose networks were on average 40% larger than their Olympic sport counterparts'. Pro CEO 1 described needing a matrix and internal data unit to help manage the consultation and information sharing required when making important decisions. In her interview, Pro CEO 2 pondered that she could have spent her entire work week solely on network-related activities, which she identified as potentially being of great value as "…the list of people that you could unlock and engage with was huge…". Both Pro CEO 3 and Pro CEO 4 similarly commented on the challenges of maintaining relationships with a vast number of stakeholders. According to Pro CEO 4, being a CEO of an NSO is more complex and wide-ranging than the equivalent role in the corporate sector:

> And you've got to deal with a lot more stakeholders, a lot more public issues that most than most corporate leaders do who are very much focused on their business, their product, a small set of competitors that they compete hard against, but not managing an industry.

This wasn't unique to the professional sport CEOs. Oly CEO 5, whose network is among the largest of the Olympic sport CEOs, described the number of stakeholders

within the network of a federated sport as being "endless" and "overwhelming." Interestingly, despite his background in professional sport franchises, he felt an Olympic sport NSO was more challenging in this respect as, in his view, stakeholders in the professional sport environment commonly share similar views regarding the overall direction of the sport. In contrast, the SSOs in a federated model often have competing (self)interests, which, if pursued over and above all others, can derail initiatives to improve national outcomes – hence a diplomatic and influential style of leadership and network management is required. Pro CEO 3, a very experienced administrator, found the machinations of the federated system onerous to the extent that, culturally, "it's not a healthy industry." Oly CEO 7 articulated the difference in working with SSOs compared to other stakeholders:

> I think a federated model is really different to dealing with other partners, like sponsors or government. Because the level of professionalism, skill, ability to collaborate, the real desire to work in partnership is just not there at the federated level. It's just, it's all power and dynamics in that way.

NSO CEOs, by necessity, have position-based ties to the leaders of their member organisations, which are largely comprised of professional franchises and/or SSOs. These organisations are also subject to their own leader succession events. Such turnover requires the CEO to form ties with the incoming leaders to ensure a continual flow of resources through their network. As the CEO of a large professional sport, Pro CEO 1 had witnessed over 100 Chair and CEO succession events in the various franchises of the elite competition run by his NSO during his five-year tenure. He opined that this not only created a leadership vacuum but also required the CEO to expend time and energy to build relationships and sell the current strategy and vision. Oly CEO 1 described such a process as "you go through how we got to where we are, why we're where we are, why we do what we do, and it takes time. And then they leave. and then you go again."

Lastly, a number of CEOs in the sample commented that these challenges were of a magnitude sufficient to increase voluntary turnover amongst their cohort. Oly CEO 3's remarks in this respect were emblematic of this viewpoint:

…you just get into the cycle of churning CEOs, because that small Olympic sports because they're bloody hard work and you get, you know, the fractured relationships (sic) with the stakeholders wears you down. And it's really hard work. So it does turnover a lot.

In his opinion, a network of Olympic sport CEOs was a valuable source of social and professional support in this respect. Similarly, Oly CEO 7 pointed out that even the most well-regarded professional NSOs in Australia have a high turnover of high-level staff: "…even the AFL with all of their cachet, you know, people are just walking out the door there like the turnover of staff is just massive."

In discussing the challenges NSO CEOs face, Oly CEO 8 noted that the current mindset appears to be that "…if you want to be CEO, you've just got to cop it… ." However, he did reflect on the toll an increasing amount of responsibility that rests on the shoulders of an Olympic sport CEO due to a lack of resources can take: "I noticed we're burning them out, the CEOs. Because they're getting weighted down with a lot of regulatory requirements." Further, he gave the following example: "Well, the CEO of one of our sports, he's gone back to the industry he was in, which was in property. And he, he said I've just had enough because I want the weekends back."

4.4.7 CEOs view current leadership development practice as poor

There was almost universal agreement among the CEOs that the sport industry does not do leadership development well. However, this is not necessarily due to a lack of vision or will, rather it is mostly a product of NSO' being resource-poor, particularly within the Olympic sport sector. This view was also held by the majority of professional sport CEOs. In most cases, CEOs are in favour of an experiential approach to leadership development to produce a pipeline of future leaders who have applied skills in addition to more formal qualifications. This includes being able to build and maintain network ties in order to leverage positive outcomes.

When asked about leadership development within the sport, Pro CEO 1 emphatically replied: "No! Professional sport is very poor at developing leaders within the industry. More needs to be done in this area." While Oly CEO 9 recognised that Sport Australia has tried to implement leadership development programs, he was

sceptical as to how impactful they were. He was aware that he was perhaps being overly cynical, but in his experience, there were minimal tangible benefits to be gained: "Lots of round tables and sticky notes and shit like that. And I'm not sure how much you really achieved in the day…".

However, some CEOs in the sample were more positive regarding leadership development opportunities in the industry. One such participant was Oly CEO 6. She pointed out the progress made in the past decade saying:

> Yeah, that has improved incredibly in sport. So now, Sport Australia have a really great range of offers for leadership development. In fact, I was the beneficiary of one of those, which was a really transformational leadership program delivered by Melbourne Business School.

In his interview, Oly CEO 4 strongly advocated for experiential leadership development, which can expose potential leaders to different situations so they acquire a wider skill set. This is particularly valuable for employees who have risen through the ranks as specialists (i.e., marketing, high-performance); however, to lead an organisation, according to Oly CEO 4, a more generalist candidate is needed. In his view, this kind of development is rare in sport: "So I just don't see any of these applied experiences in leadership being provided. There's a lot of courses. But nothing beats the job experience." As a relay successor, Oly CEO 2 was able to provide the perspective of an heir apparent. In particular, he attributed his development to his predecessor providing him with an opportunity to learn by experience:

> I think the previous CEO had recognised that I was his likely successor, so he was, he had started to, I guess, assist me on that path in terms of exposure to the board, in terms of things that he made me solely responsible for, stuff like that in terms of any professional development that… you know that… was affordable and feasible that they could they could help me that they would be supportive in doing so. So I, you know, I feel specifically, yes, that there was a clear, at least in his mind, a clear pathway for me to assume the CEO role.

4.4.8 CEOs assess current succession management as poor

Similarly, the general consensus amongst the CEOs interviewed was that succession management is not done well within the sport industry. This means that organisations limit the potential benefits of well-planned succession, including network outcomes. The CEOs provided several reasons for their opinion regarding succession planning and management. As with leadership development, resources are scarce in sport organisations and thus succession management is not a priority compared to ongoing operational needs. Most NSOs are relatively small organisations with a small staff. Given the scope of the CEO role as discussed above, most other staff within the organisation are unlikely to possess the skills and capabilities to succeed the incumbent without first undertaking significant personal and professional development, which would likely be outside the capability of the NSO to provide. However, several participants expressed optimism around the potential to ascend to the CEO role, albeit with some caveats.

Pro CEO 3 was the only participant in the study who openly spoke of having implemented a succession management plan while she was in the role. In her opinion, it was her responsibility to develop future leaders within the organisation so that when the time came, there would be internal candidates capable of making the step up to CEO. This was a topic she openly discussed with the Chair of the board and also with staff she was preparing for the eventuality of succession. Indeed, other CEOs within the sample described this succession event (i.e., the departure of Pro CEO 3) as a model of succession management, with Oly CEO 3 saying:

> …she (heir-apparent) became CEO of the World Cup management, but still being part of the senior executive team at (Pro Sport NSO). So (former CEO) steps away and takes up the role at the (government sport agency). (New CEO) was, you know… the shoo-in for that, that role. So that succession plan was in place and managed really, really effectively. So that was... a seamless transition.

However, as with other CEOs, Pro CEO 3 admitted succession management is challenging in sport, and aspiring leaders are often better off gaining experience elsewhere before returning for a senior leadership position. The reason is many positions within NSOs are highly specialised in specific areas of the organisation (e.g.,

human resources, high performance, participation, etc.), which means potential leaders lack the necessary all-round knowledge required to make the step up.

Of the two relay successors, only Oly CEO 2 was positive about the potential for good succession management in sport. He described his NSO as being "…famous for willingness to support internal candidates." However, he also conceded that among the last six CEOs, only three had been internal successors, noting that the organisation had demonstrated they had "…the courage to go outside when they've needed to." The most optimistic of the sample was Oly CEO 6, who suggested NSOs were much more cognisant of providing genuine career pathways:

> So it is possible to join as a young graduate as a like a participation coordinator, and then move (up), certainly (within) the larger well-funded NSOs. You know, they're increasingly … there are some good examples of people who, you know, are moving through the sport and taking on increasingly increasing leadership roles.

Oly CEO 9 felt that while progress had been made, the above constraints made internal succession difficult to achieve. While he could point to an example of an SSO CEO furthering his career by moving to the NSO, he worried that good staff in Olympic sports were at risk of moving to professional sport organisations where they would likely have a more desirable job and be paid more. As above, Oly CEO 8 generally considered that staff needed to shift sports within the sector in order to gain the requisite experience to become CEO: "So it's very hard to have planned succession internally because your best people … I'll say, to my senior management team, if you've got to get more experience, you've got to leave. You can always come back."

As per the example given above, Oly CEO 3 hypothesised that succession management in sport is dependent upon an organisation having the resources and stability to execute an effective plan. He rued not having the same opportunity to manage succession during his tenure: "And so we were contemplating that for my four years of (NSO), we just, we just didn't have the funds to be able to do it." Pro CEO 2 and Pro CEO 3 both supported this theory. Pro CEO 2 considered the jump to a CEO position in sport too big for internal candidates, while also pointing out the lack of resources within sport organisations. In her opinion, sport organisations conceivably find it difficult to

reallocate resources from areas such as high-performance or participation and dedicate them instead to succession management plans. As such, she stated that "…you have to be a significantly commercial sport for that to be a viable reality."

Pro CEO 4 was keen to encourage sport organisations to do more in this area rather than look to outsiders from the corporate sector to fill the most prestigious leadership positions in sport. While he understood that in the past a case could be made for looking outside of sport, nowadays executives in sport are immensely talented and capable. He opined that the challenges facing CEOs of NSOs, particularly in the area of stakeholder management, are over and above what corporate CEOs experience. Thus, he argued strongly for the advancement of sport executives into CEO roles:

> I'm a big believer in building succession from within, from within the organisation, but also from within the industry. So, whether that's someone who's leaving a club to come in and manage the governing body, or you know, someone from the state federation coming in to lead a national organisation, I think those, if they've got the right talent, temperament, executive management skills, I think they're a long way, they're a long way advanced.

4.4.9 The role of networks and networking in career advancement

The CEOs interviewed unanimously agreed that networks play an important role for leaders who want to advance their careers. Many gave specific examples in terms of their personal careers and also relayed the benefit of having good networks once in a CEO role. Among the professional sport CEOs, all four shared anecdotes outlining the impact networks have had on their career progression. While Pro CEO 1 was adamant about the importance of an effective network amongst external stakeholders to conduct the business of a CEO more efficiently, he also noted that being connected to important decision-makers in government had helped him secure a position on a board following his departure from the NSO. As a CEO he found his network helped him bypass layers of bureaucracy to ensure access to decision-makers in a timely fashion.

Pro CEO 2 held two CEO roles in professional sport organisations prior to becoming CEO of one of the NSOs within the remit of this study. However, before entering the sport industry, she had a successful corporate career. When deciding to

apply for her first CEO job, she outlined the steps she took to make sure her application would be noticed by the hiring organisation. She described making several phone calls to people in her network who were either connected to the job opening or the sport more generally. She explained her reasons:

> Because ultimately, the aim of that is to get yourself onto that serious consideration list, your CV to the top of the pile, the conversation to the chair that says you need to be, I really think you should have a cup of coffee with (you).

Earlier in her career, while CEO of an SSO, Pro CEO 3 had been appointed as a director to a state government body by the then Minister for Sport, the benefit of which was "…an opportunity to meet some of the most experienced and influential individuals in (the state)," many of whom were from outside the sport industry. At the time she felt it may have been tokenistic; however, upon reflection, it was a defining moment of her career and gave her an insight into major projects, government, and business at a scale she had not previously experienced. Additionally, she felt that as a woman, such an appointment gave her credibility in a male-dominated industry.

Interestingly, Pro CEO 4 recounted that he had learned the value of networking while still an athlete. His time in sport coincided with a push towards greater commercialisation, which afforded athletes increasing opportunities for higher financial rewards. He thus saw value in cultivating positive relationships with board members and sponsors. However, when reflecting on the demands of cultivating and maintaining an extensive network over the course of an athletic and sports administration career, Pro CEO 4 stated, "You tend to build the networks and until you get older and grey and grisly and then you just go, I can't be bothered."

Oly CEO 9, also a former elite athlete, while recognising the value of networks, ensured people he had ties with could fulfil a specific function. Otherwise, building and maintaining a large network would become onerous and not worth expending the necessary time and effort. He explained that once a network grows beyond those ties necessary to achieve specific goals, "I… think there's probably a declining marginal return from the effort of maintaining those relationships." Despite this, he saw value in networking with his fellow Olympic sport CEOs.

In contrast, Oly CEO 2 unequivocally supported the notion of building an extensive network, encouraging those with leadership aspirations to "…network as hard and as fast as they can… ." In his opinion, "…the ability to know people in the right places…it just helps. And anybody that suggests to you that it doesn't is lying." In his experience, a network inside and outside of his particular sport helped him progress his career and perform strongly once succession had occurred because "…there are times when you need to leverage your connections and leverage your network that will work to your benefit." For Oly CEO 4, personal networks were a source of trusted information: "The unofficial sort of processes are sometimes more important than the official processes." This was corroborated by Oly CEO 8 who observed the potential benefits of indirect or weak ties: "You mightn't actually know the person directly, but they'll know somebody else whom you know, and there's a mutual connection through that."

Pro CEO 2 expressed similar sentiments, highlighting the need to be strategic when networking, noting that "people think that networking is tuning out to our networking function and having a glass of wine and wandering around with a piece of cheese on the stick." While she acknowledged networking can be hard, she implored aspiring leaders to recognise the importance of "…making the effort to build those relationships and connections and staying in touch with them."

Given the significance of networks to career advancement, the CEOs believed that including networking advice would be a welcome addition to leadership development programs.

4.4.10 Gender diversity and equality

Opinions were mixed as to the impact gender has on networks, networking, and CEO succession. While there was support among the sample for the idea that the situation has improved in recent years, several CEOs strongly argued that this had not been their experience. Even when CEOs observed improved gender representation, they agreed that progress had been slow and equality had not been reached yet. Respondents also highlighted the presence of 'old boys' clubs, the importance of well-placed mentors

or sponsors within influential networks, the prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes of leadership, and the impact of greater awareness around gender diversity on recruitment.

Representation and recruitment

Male CEOs were generally of the opinion that the number of females progressing into leadership positions is on the rise. Pro CEO 1 pointed out that he worked with female state premiers of NSW and QLD during his tenure and was keen to espouse the importance of diversity, but he suggested progress in the sport industry has been slow in this respect. Conversely, Pro CEO 4 felt that substantial progress had been made, particularly over the long term. In his opinion, this is reflective of society more broadly and is to be expected given sport is often at the forefront of social progressiveness. As there have been female CEOs at the SSO level, Oly CEO 2 opined that a female CEO in his NSO was "…only a matter of time." He was also told, unofficially, that the candidate ranked second to him during his recruitment process was a woman.

Oly CEO 8 reflected that women have been increasingly likely to be appointed to NSO boards and named several current or recent female NSO CEOs. Having observed how his successor was chosen, Oly CEO 9 remarked that any criticism directed at the incoming CEO was more likely related to her having a background in a different sport rather than being a woman: "…we were more, more worried about comments about effing (sic) (sport) rather than effing (sic) woman." However, when discussing progress regarding gender equity, he also thought that "you get a different answer from a female than a male."

Although Oly CEO 5 agreed that women find it harder to reach CEO level due to gender bias, he argued that appointing unqualified female candidates in the past had damaged the potential for current women at the senior management level to take the next step. In his opinion, recruiters and boards share the blame for this, and poor selection processes are an issue across the industry. He claimed that he "…could name six women I have had in management, all better than me and easily able to make CEO level but (have been) overlooked." Pro CEO 3 also questioned the role of recruiters in CEO selection practices: "…do they truly understand what it takes to be a CEO and the

type of people and there's been a couple of well, one in particular point more recently, that they must not have done a background check."

In the opinion of Oly CEO 3, NSOs have made a concerted effort to both short-list and appoint female candidates to CEO roles. He was cognisant that while prospective female CEOs were now "…actually getting a seat at the table to sell themselves…," women still have to work harder to prove their credentials and overcome traditional gendered leadership stereotypes: "…females going well, you know, I can be strong, and I can be tough, and I can do the hard, you know, heavy lifting of tough conversations."

Networks and old boys clubs

Two of the four female CEOs in the sample were cognisant of the existence of an 'old boys' club in sport but felt they were able to somewhat deal with or avoid any potential challenges arising from being an outsider in the industry. In fact, Oly CEO 6 thought it helped her situation. She suggested that she was divorced from the negativity around the previous regime, which was important given her mandate was to focus on outlining a new strategic plan with a focus on good governance. She acknowledged "…that I wasn't part of the blokey boys club that had dominated (the NSO) for the previous period…" which likely "…did have some impact in increasing that trust and credibility." Pro CEO 3 described a supportive atmosphere within her sport but accepted that her experience was outside the norm by saying that "not all women in the industry have had the same opportunity." She certainly was aware of an 'old boys' network in sport but optimistically stated that "…the next generation does see the world differently and the current generation of male leaders are making efforts to be more equal."

However, Pro CEO 2 and Oly CEO 7 unequivocally argued that little progress has been made in better supporting women who aspire to senior leadership roles in sport. Pro CEO 2 described a hypothetical scenario in which an 'old boys' club dominates the CEO succession process, which she positioned as the norm:

> So Bob will ring Harry who says, 'I'm really looking for a CEO, who do you know?', and Harry will go, 'Well, I know, you know three male names'. And that's the

fundamental succession of, you know, private schoolmates, that all look after each other that promote each other and jobs.

In contrast to Pro CEO 4, she disputed the argument that sport was socially progressive when it comes to gender equality and instead suggested that progress in the corporate world has not been replicated, let alone outpaced by sport. Oly CEO 7 was aware of governance initiatives encompassing gender balance requirements put in place by Sport Australia, but she pointed out that without such principles filtering down to state and community level, "…it just remains broken." Furthermore, despite years of effort by peak bodies, "…we're still just nowhere near women being represented at the CEO, executive management level." She also relayed a personal experience where she had expressed a desire to focus on gender equity but had been told by several women working in sport that "…it's a waste of time, nothing will change, don't do it." Furthermore, Oly CEO 7 shared the following regarding the overall prospects for women who wish to work in leadership positions in sport:

> I mean, if someone came to me and said, 'Should I go for that job?' If I'm a female? I'd say no, I wouldn't do it. You know, and that's probably the worst thing that you want to be saying to somebody, but you also want to protect them.

Overcoming network-based biases

Despite this disparity, two CEOs offered potential antidotes for dealing with male-dominated networks and the lack of gender equity in sport management. First, Oly CEO 7 described a female network she is a part of as comprising like-minded CEOs, academics, and government-appointed officials who work towards effecting change and providing each other with social support. According to her, they meet in person several times per year as well as connect via a messaging platform on an ongoing ad-hoc basis. Second, Pro CEO 2 espoused the need for powerful male sponsors: "…it's those very well-respected boys club network guys that can make material change by actually putting forward some female names."

A similar sentiment was shared by Oly CEO 4, who recounted the remarkable shift in gender composition within his personal network in recent years but felt more change could be achieved. However, in his view, aspiring women leaders "…certainly

need good mentors…" to provide advice and assist in their development. Lastly, Pro CEO 2 also observed that women often lack the confidence to put themselves forward as candidates if they do not meet all of the competencies for a particular role, whereas men will. In relation to a CEO succession opportunity, Pro CEO 2 encouraged women to put themselves forward regardless: "…back yourself to learn on the job, or that your leadership skills will be valuable enough to bring the group together."

4.4.11 Semi-structured interview data summary

This section summarises the key findings from the semi-structured interview data. These findings are presented in Table 24 (displayed in Section 4.4) as themes and illustrated with examples from the data. In summary, these findings illuminate the social networks of CEOs in the context of succession. As such, the data highlight a number of important findings. These include the role and presence of recruiters and the Chair of the hiring NSO in the appointment of a new chief executive. CEOs consider their networks to be an asset in the recruitment process. This is true of both insiders and outsiders and is further emphasised by the importance of an effective network for a CEO's ability to excel in their role. Indeed, such networks among stakeholders are vital but challenging due to their dynamic nature, competing interests and, in some cases, sheer size. Networks also offer a CEO an opportunity to benefit from shared experiences and social support from peers. While the CEOs in this research largely considered leadership development and succession management to be poorly done within the sport industry, networks were identified as being a source of career advancement through mentorship and gaining access to additional resources. However, networks can also reinforce inequality. Interviewees suggested an ongoing influence of the 'old boys' network in Australian sport and held mixed opinions about how much progress has been made to date in terms of gender equity.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the empirical findings of this study in response to the stated research questions. The social network portion of the research provided valuable data on the composition of CEO networks. This included tie function, tie value, and size. Based on careful analysis of this data, conclusions could be drawn based on the architecture of each individual network and a combined whole network. Further, notable

differences in the networks were identified based on both NSO type (Olympic or professional sport) and gender (male and female). A number of these findings were strengthened by interview data, for instance, the pivotal role of recruiters and NSO Chairs in the appointment process. Similarly, participants nominated mentors as an important part of their social network. This was made clear by the strength of ties indicating a long-lasting relationship. Interview data then confirmed that mentors positively impact career advancement, in addition to a specific network function – expansion and sponsorship.

A thematic analysis of the interview data also expanded our understanding of the appointment process, networks and networking, and related topics. In particular, network aspects of advantage in the CEO appointment process were identified and gender differences further probed. For example, insiders and outsiders both nominated their networks as a strength of their candidacy; while insiders benefit from an existing network within their NSO and sport, outsiders in this study brought to the role existing networks comprising stakeholders across related areas such as government, media, and sponsors. These partners enable CEOs to perform well in the job. However, the need to build new ties and gain the trust of 'member' organisations was also recognised, which in itself can be challenging.

The following chapter discusses the main findings in reference to the research questions.

Chapter Five: Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets and explains the findings of this study. The discussion presented here will address the aim of this research and the research questions as set out in the methodology chapter and restated below. The overarching argument is that social networks are important to both individuals and organisations in the context of succession. Networks are a framework for building and maintaining the relationships necessary to lead an NSO. This is explored further in the structure of CEO networks. Individuals also see social networks as a means for career progression through mentorship and accessing opportunities. Further, networks and networking look different for men and women, which potentially impacts employment-related outcomes. While early succession research often used competitive sport as a context for developing and testing theory, sport has its own unique features. Thus it can be argued that the management of sport, and the leadership of sports organisations, are different from other aspects of business and organisational research. This further differentiates this research as making a unique contribution to the literature.

Aim: To investigate the social networks of CEOs of Australian national sport organisations in the context of succession

Research Question One (RQ1): How do CEOs perceive the importance of social networks in executive leadership appointments?

Research Question Two (RQ2): What components of social networks do CEOs consider to be advantageous in their appointment?

Research Question Three (RQ3): How may social networks of male and female CEO differ in their characteristics?

To answer these questions, this chapter will be structured in sections. Section one will discuss the perceived importance of networks to leadership appointments. Section two discusses detailed findings concerning the composition of social networks perceived to be valuable by CEOs. Section three discusses the differences between the

social networks of male and female CEOs. Contributions to theory, practice, and methodology are then outlined. The chapter concludes with a summation of key findings and new knowledge, with recommendations for how individuals and organisations can best understand the implications of networks to executive leadership positions.

5.2 Social networks and executive leadership appointments

This study has gathered empirical data from CEOs of Australian NSOs regarding their work-related social networks in the context of succession. Previous research has argued conceptually that the personal network of a CEO should be an important consideration in succession events (Cao et al., 2006; Cao et al., 2015). Yet there has been little advancement to provide empirical evidence and context to the network perspective of CEO succession. This study confirms the perceived value of personal social networks to prospective CEOs in executive leadership appointments by showing the empirical data at an individual level. Previous research such as that by Liu (2010, 2014) has used only a limited means of obtaining network data which captures assumed ties between executives and board members who have worked together or shared other affiliations such as education. However, the networks in this study demonstrate a much wider range of actors are important in the context of CEO succession. The standout feature of the CEO networks presented here is the large number of actors within stakeholder organisations, which is not otherwise captured in the existing literature.

In the context of sport, this research study provides insights into a previously unexplored area of executive sport leadership, that being social networks. As an under-researched area in sport management, this study also contributes to knowledge by considering the perspective of the CEO in succession. Sport has unique features which differentiate it contextually from other areas of business (Shilbury, 2022; Smith & Stewart, 2010; Stewart & Smith, 1999), while CEOs of NSOs face challenges not necessarily paralleled by those in other settings (Dixon et al., 2023; Hoye et al., 2008; Hoye et al., 2018; Trosien & Ratz, 2019). However, within sport there are marked differences between the networks of professional sport CEOs compared to Olympic sport CEOs. The most notable is size, and to a lesser extent tie origin and tie strength.

This nuanced finding is attributed to the nature of the sport industry and NSOs, whereby professional sport NSOs are larger organisations with 'membership' often made up of franchises within a league rather than the federated model comprised of state associations. Even though there are bridging ties to connect all actors, a combined network demonstrates the two categories of NSO CEOs are largely split in two (See Figure 22). This notwithstanding, two of the three Olympic sport CEOs who had started their careers in the professional sport sector had networks with larger proportions of ties outside of their own organisation and member organisations than their peers. It is likely that this characteristic is related to their personal career journey but suggests a broader range of experiences may lead to a more diverse personal network with a higher proportion of multiplex ties. This research also responds to the call of Wells and Kerwin (2017) by demonstrating a link between social networks and career advancement in sport.

The findings of this research confirm that CEOs of NSOs perceive social networks to be important in the context of leadership appointments. This is borne out through analysis of both social network data and interview data. The underlying premise of this concept is the importance of relationships to effective leadership and career progression. Personal attributes, qualifications, experience, and characteristics are undoubtedly valuable; however, social interactions and relationships provide a sound platform to practise effective leadership and influence processes in an organisational context (Cross & Parker, 2004; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008).

The CEOs in this study affirmed that their networks, both formal and informal, played a role in advancing their careers up to and beyond appointment as CEO (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2011). This occurred in several different ways. A female CEO who was appointed to the board of a government agency early in her career described in detail the resources she was able to access as a result of her expanded network. This aligns with the research which connects networking to outcomes (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). While employed by a government agency, a male participant formed a positive working relationship with the Chair of an Olympic sport NSO who subsequently encouraged him to take on the CEO role when it became vacant. This example shows the value of strong network ties in high-level leadership appointments in the sport industry, as identified in Parnell et al. (2023).

However, weak ties (Granovetter, 1983) or structural holes (Burt, 1992), where otherwise unconnected actors are linked by a common contact, similarly and frequently benefited participants, including for obtaining intelligence and pursuing directorships. Networks are not the only factor in these examples, yet they have clearly influenced employment outcomes in this study.

CEOs also viewed their social networks as helping them to, in their own words, "flourish", and be an effective leader once they were appointed to their role. An understanding of the informal networks within an organisation itself is a powerful attribute for a leader (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008). Existing networks amongst relevant stakeholders are also advantageous as CEOs are expected to have contacts who they can call on to, as one CEO put it, "get things done." Another CEO stated the importance of having networks with high levels of trust to be able to discuss sensitive matters while being assured of confidentiality. Having a CEO who has fostered goodwill and trust by cultivating personal relationships with key stakeholders is critical for NSOs, particularly when they seek to implement 'whole of sport' initiatives (Pedras et al., 2019, p. 8). The quality of these relationships and networks influences the perception others have of their leadership as well as performance (Jokisaari, 2017). Being able to drive effective collaboration, such as amongst member organisations, is considered to be a key network function of leadership (Cross & Parker, 2004). Moreover, CEOs also valued the advice and social support of their fellow NSO executives, whether through formal networks through COMPPS (professional sports) or Sport Australia or through informal networks based on other commonalities such as geographic location (e.g., precincts such as Sydney Olympic Park or the Melbourne central business district). These networks were identified as fulfilling functions such as task advice and social support, which aligns with the findings of Hanlon and Taylor's (2022) work on state sport CEOs.

This initial section has broadly addressed the first research question. The following sections discuss in greater detail the specific aspects of networks considered advantageous and highlight the different ways networks have impacted CEOs based on their gender.

5.3 Advantageous components of CEOs' social networks

5.3.1 Insiders and outsiders

A network perspective of insider succession argues for relay successors based on existing networks in order to minimise disruption (Virany et al., 1992). The relay successors in this research maintained that being embedded in their particular sport at the time of their appointment was identified as a strength of their candidacy. One of the CEOs noted that this was in stark contrast to his predecessor. Using network analysis at a personal level in this study provides greater detail and context than previous research has uncovered. Both relay successors in this study had a lower-than-average number of network contacts within their own organisations but a higher-than-average number of ties to contacts within member organisations when compared to the remainder of the sample. This suggests that within the context of NSOs, network ties among member organisations are of key importance to insiders in terms of relationships with pre-existing contacts (Virany et al., 1992).

While they were not relay successors, a number of CEOs in this study had experience within their sport as athletes, directors, or leaders within member organisations. They too benefited from pre-existing relationships and enhanced social capital (Taylor & Wells, 2017). These CEOs are therefore distinguished from the traditional outsider definition (Kim et al., 2022). Shen and Canella (2002b) argue that the broad categories of insider and outsider do not adequately capture the context in which succession occurs. This is true of these successors, who were sport-specific insiders rather than outsiders. The advantages conferred by this status are social capital, obtained through pre-existing relationships, and first-hand knowledge of the landscape in which the NSO operates. Relationships across the sport have functional benefits but also enhance credibility. This provides a platform for a more trustworthy relationship, which is crucial in gaining accurate and timely information while also influencing behaviours such as acting with discretion, ensuring actions match what is promised or agreed to, and reaching a consensus on shared visions (Cross et al., 2021; Cross & Parker, 2004). Yet, managing important relationships can be challenging when ties are based on position and there is high turnover amongst stakeholders as the strength of the network and organisational performance can be negatively impacted (Brennecke et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2005). The present research suggests turnover within stakeholder

networks is perceived to be impactful for CEOs, and future research should consider tracking networks longitudinally, and whether organisational performance can be measured to test the impact of network disruption.

The extant network research argues a well-connected outsider is a better choice than a less well-connected insider (Berger et al. 2013), but it was not possible to confirm this conclusively in this research without having full access to the recruitment processes. As such, this is a limitation of this research and a potential topic for future studies. Outsiders recognised the need to quickly build relationships within the sport by expanding their network, taking advice from the board when doing so, to close the gap and counter disruption, which the literature suggests otherwise occurs with an outsider (Grusky, 1963; Keil et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2005). For some CEOs, this remained difficult, especially when trying to develop ties for the purpose of buy-in amongst member organisations. Being an outsider with a minimal existing network within their sport was advantageous for those CEOs who were appointed with a specific mandate to implement significant structural change across the sport. This was due to having what they considered to be limited 'baggage', the foundational advantage of an outsider (Kim et al., 2022; Vestal & Guidice, 2019). Consultation and trust were critical in being able to effectively make and implement sport-wide decisions (O'Boyle et al., 2019; Shilbury et al., 2016). However, the CEOs in these instances had personal experience and credentials compiled throughout their career, which gave them credibility and assisted in gaining trust amongst key people to quickly manage change (Taylor & Wells, 2017). This enabled them to re-set relationships and commence constructive communication from a more positive position.

5.3.2 Stakeholder networks

The CEOs in this study highlighted the value of their network for performing their job effectively. They described 'bringing their network with them' when they commenced in the role (Scott & Carrington, 2011). This is due to being able to access resources, obtain intelligence, take advantage of opportunities, and manage the complexities of an organisation (Kehoe et al., 2022), namely an NSO (O'Boyle, 2015). Incoming CEOs should work quickly to reinforce or extend their networks, regardless of whether they are an insider or outsider (Cross et al., 2021). For example, external

stakeholder organisations are also vital for NSOs, particularly when it comes to sponsorship, broadcasting revenue, other commercial activities (Morgan & Taylor, 2017), and government grants (Gowthorp et al., 2017).

The AFL's newest broadcast deal is worth $643m per year (Mark, 2022), while naming rights sponsorships in the AFL and NRL are valued at around $18m per year (Jones, 2022; Samadi, 2023), underscoring the high stakes involved in this aspect of their networks. Meanwhile state governments are lobbied by NSOs to invest in venues and bid for the rights to host marquee events, such as grand finals. Indeed Netball Australia sold the 2022 Super Netball grand final to Perth for a reported $300,000 fee paid by the Western Australian state government (Carter, 2022). Cricket Australia has previously expressed a willingness to test the market when it comes to the location of their iconic Boxing Day (Melbourne) and New Year (Sydney) test matches will in future years (Pierik & Conn, 2023). Given the intricate and complicated networks of stakeholders NSOs deal with, CEOs who have prior relationships in these areas regard these as being an asset in a succession process, most commonly when connected to driving positive financial outcomes (Hoye et al., 2020; Naraine et al., 2020; Parent et al., 2018).

5.3.3 Significance of the NSO Chair

This research has identified the Chair of the hiring organisation as a crucial individual when considering CEO succession through a network lens. All CEOs in this study identified a direct or indirect tie to the Chair as 'unlocking' the succession opportunity. As the primary day-to-day leader of an NSO, the CEO is clearly a critical appointment, and it stands to reason that the Chair has a strong interest in ensuring the appropriate candidate is selected. Further, a positive and constructive relationship between the Chair and CEO underpins a well-performing NSO (O'Boyle et al., 2020; O'Boyle et al., 2019). In some cases, the Chair sought out the potential CEO either through a direct tie or via a bridging intermediary, such as a specialist recruiter (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2014). As with Parnell et al. (2023), this appears to demonstrate temporal embeddedness as a function of recruitment as viewed by the CEO, affirming that networks are dynamic and can be adapted to suit the needs of actors within it. That is, links are activated when needed. Parnell et al. (2023) state that trust between actors is

the overriding function of network ties in their study. That is, highly specialised recruitment requires a high level of trust when identifying potential employees in the world of professional sport, whether through a direct tie between the hiring decision maker and prospective employee, or an indirect tie through a mutual contact. From the perspective of the CEO, contact with (direct tie) or through (indirect) the Chair appears to signal genuine interest in the candidate. As above, Chairs were not participants in this study and hence this finding is limited to the views of CEOs.

There are seemingly high levels of trust between both the CEOs and Chairs when it comes to the specialist sports recruiters in this sample. There appears to be no research investigating the role sports and executive recruitment agencies play in the industry. Australia has only a very small number of agencies and individuals working in this space. As such, the individuals and NSOs in this study have often been involved in numerous recruitment cycles led by the same recruiter, which suggests a broad but cohesive network of potential CEO candidates (Lawrence, 2021). It is therefore conceivable that this experience is the main driver of trust through which information brokerage can occur (2023).

5.3.4 Networks and career progression

CEOs in this research affirmed that social networks are indeed a factor in career progression within the sport industry (Wells & Kerwin, 2017). This is perhaps of increased importance given the lack of formal leadership development and succession planning in the Australian sport industry (Frawley et al., 2018; Taylor & McGraw, 2004; Taylor & Robinson, 2019). Despite this well-known shortcoming, which was confirmed by this study, calls for NSOs to address these areas (Sotiriadou et al., 2014) have so far not been heeded. While it is acknowledged that many NSOs, particularly Olympic sport NSOs, are resource poor, this should not preclude them from undertaking such programs as generalised programs or assignments can be implemented even when organisations are limited by size or budget (Taylor et al., 2015). Given the comparatively high turnover of executive positions, succession should be a priority for the sector (Kerin, 2015; Rothfield, 2020; Taylor & Robinson, 2019). As this study has demonstrated, NSO CEOs argue for such programs, and for the inclusion of networking advice in leadership development programs, recognising the role networks played in

their own career development (Parnell et al., 2023; Piggott et al., 2023; Whales et al., 2021). Doing so would provide participants with access to resources such as sponsorship, mentorship, and increased visibility, which could lead to improved career prospects and job satisfaction (Floyd et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2014). Effective personal networks afford opportunities for experiential leadership development, such as working on particular projects outside of an employee's usual remit (Bartol & Zhang, 2007).

This study therefore has confirmed that NSO CEOs value social networks in the context of succession and role performance. In doing so, this research extends current theory in the following ways. The personal social networks of CEOs have been examined in the context of succession, which was previously only done conceptually (Cao et al., 2006; Cao et al., 2015) or through the use of assumed networks using affiliation as the basis for ties (Liu, 2010, 2014). CEOs perceive these networks to be of value to NSOs (Kehoe et al., 2022). In the area of sport management, the extant literature has examined CEO succession through a governance and strategy lens (Schoenberg, 2012). This thesis makes a unique contribution in this area by taking a network perspective in studying succession. Further, the call to link social networks to career progression has been addressed (Wells & Kerwin, 2017). The findings here should be of particular note to aspiring leaders who should be mindful of the need to develop and maintain their personal networks.

The following section will discuss the composition of networks based on gender.

5.4 Characteristics of male and female CEO networks and gender differences

5.4.1 Introduction

This study has found notable differences between the networks of male CEOs and female CEOs, consistent with previous research findings in other settings (O'Neil et al., 2011). Female CEOs appear to have smaller but more intimate personal networks than their male counterparts. This contributes to the otherwise small body of literature empirically studying the personal networks of female leaders (Shen & Joseph, 2021). In the context of sport, this research extends the work of Katz et al. (2018) by using empirical data to identify gender-based differences in personal networks and make

whole network observations regarding influence. While there is a plausible explanation for the differences observed between professional and Olympic sport CEOs (being the structure of Australian sport), no such reason is apparent for differences based on gender. However, both male and female CEOs acknowledged the ongoing inequality regarding leadership positions in Australian sport, often described as being governed by an 'old boys' network (Hotham, 2023; Le Grand & Lutton, 2021; Marshall et al., 2022). Social networks reinforce social inequalities (Beaman et al., 2018) and perpetuate the dominance of men in positions of power in sport organisations (Esteban Salvador et al., 2023). Yet, networks and networking have the potential to circumvent such barriers by increasing visibility and providing legitimacy to female candidates (Cosentino et al., 2021; Mate et al., 2019).

5.4.2 Network architecture

Both network size and strength of ties are positively associated with career progression (Woehler et al., 2021), yet questions remain as to how these characteristics may impact leadership outcomes (Carter et al., 2015). Further, both weak and strong ties are beneficial, depending on the context. Stronger ties indicate greater levels of trust, intimacy, and endurance but are more likely to be formed with people who are similar to ego, thus reducing the diversity of experiences and opinions (Perry et al., 2018). Some suggest women are more likely to maintain connections to former work colleagues and bond on a more personal level than men, which leads to stronger, more durable ties (Carboni et al., 2019). There were participants in this study for whom this appeared to hold true, such as Oly CEO 6. That is, strong ties formed based on durability and longevity, allowing a good working relationship to morph into a longer-term friendship (Jokisaari, 2017). Another possible explanation for male networks comprising a greater prevalence of weaker ties is that the time and energy needed to maintain a large personal social network comes at the cost of more intimate network ties (Roberts & Dunbar, 2011). While there is some correlation between network size and strength of tie in this study, the relationship is not perfectly linear. Others have previously argued that men have more strategic ties, which although often weak, are with high-value individuals (Bushell et al., 2020). Weak ties are more likely to offer a fresh perspective, and thus tie dispersion may in fact be desired (Perry et al., 2018). In this study, the IQV scores based on tie strength indicated a small difference between male and female

CEOs. All CEO networks contained a mix of ties, valued as Strength 3, 2, or 1. However, the female CEOs had a more even dispersion across each possible value than the male CEOs. The impact of this is not explored here as it is outside the scope of this research.

There are also differences in network composition based on source and function between genders. That is, men had a higher proportion of ties to people within their own NSO and its member organisations, whereas women had more ties to people located in external stakeholder groups. Ties to stakeholder groups are more often based on trust and reciprocity, possibly in anticipation of future opportunities (Carboni et al., 2019; Ibarra, 1997). While CEOs can be equally effective with a network dominated by intraorganisational ties or with a network in which interorganisational ties are more prevalent (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008), linking networks with performance has not been tested in this study. Network differences based on gender of those in leadership positions is not unexpected, but there is a lack of empirical studies examining the individual personal social networks of high-level female managers (Shen & Joseph, 2021). As such, the detail found in the network architecture of this study is a novel finding, and a unique insight in the context of sport. General differences along gender lines are most often ascribed to structural constraints (access) or preferences (disposition) (Brands et al., 2022; Brashears et al., 2016). The study respondents were not asked about ties they did not have – that is, name generators were deliberately open-ended and not pre-populated to avoid any limiting boundaries and bias (Perry et al., 2018; Robins, 2015). Accordingly, there is no specific data related to network constraints. Yet, studies examining the characteristics of networks and their resulting returns based on gender largely return inconsistent findings (Woehler et al., 2021).

5.4.3 Gender disparity

In addition to finding personal network differences among the sample of CEOs based on gender, this research also found ongoing disparities continue to exist in the leadership ranks of Australian NSOs. The presence of a so-called 'old boys' club or network describes an insular, closed, and exclusionary network characterised by strong ties, high levels of homophily, and cohesion (Ibarra, 1997; Katz et al., 2018; McPherson et al., 2001). Further, analysis by compiling each personal network to create a whole

network also provides valuable insights regarding gender disparity and concerns regarding whether networks perpetuate exclusion. While there are limitations in using ego-centric networks to calculate structural features of a wider network (Krackhardt, 2014), the observations being made here are based on work-related networks predominantly consisting of position-based ties. As such, the common features of each network are being highlighted, rather than making detailed network calculations with a high level of variability based on participant network perceptions. Further, the absence of alter-alter ties minimises the potential for inaccurate survey responses. Additional analysis of eigenvector scores indicates female CEOs occupy less influential network positions than their male counterparts, extending the work of Katz et al. (2018) by using empirical personal network data rather than ties based on common affiliations.

Interview narratives from this study suggest social networks create an assumption (the aforementioned 'old boys' network) whereby when CEO positions become available, potential male candidates are likely to be among the first suggested (Piggott & Pike, 2020). This implies progress in gender equity remains slow at best. Participants who were more positive considered NSOs less likely to be beholden to the closed network mindset of previous generations, which was predicated on old gender stereotypes and leadership constructs (Swanson et al., 2020). Nevertheless, it was noted that potential women successors are still required to challenge gendered leadership stereotypes to prove their suitability (Byrne et al., 2019). Based on these stereotypes, leadership is traditionally viewed as a masculine construct and is shown to be present through leadership research (Gipson et al., 2017), corporate settings (Byrne et al., 2021), and numerous studies in a sports context (Grappendorf & Burton, 2017; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003). As such, in many respects, women have to work harder than men to secure leadership positions in NSOs (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

5.4.4 Strategies to improve network outcomes

All but one CEO in this study nominated at least one network partner who performed a mentoring function. Mentors provide career advice, impart professional knowledge, improve the visibility of the mentee, and act as a well-respected personal advocate (Spencer et al., 2019). CEOs commonly acquired mentors early in their sport management career as they encountered influential leaders; however, several CEOs

subsequently added new high-value contacts from the corporate world and politics, which aided career development (Mate et al., 2019). Having a mentor typically expands and enhances the social network of the mentee, which in itself can lead to new opportunities (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Unsurprisingly mentor–mentee relationships in this study were typically multiplex in nature and comprised the highest value ties in each personal network as there is greater motivation to maintain such ties (Perry et al., 2018). This gives specific insight and detail into the aspect of social networks which links to career progression in sport management, as called for by Wells and Kerwin (2017), uniquely using personal network data to do so.

Mentors and/or sponsors are of particular importance for women who often experience more pronounced benefits both in and outside of the sport industry (Cosentino et al., 2021; Joo & Cruz, 2023; Picariello et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2018). However, networking is a learned skill, and networking behaviours tend to differ between genders (Brands et al., 2022). Female CEOs in this study claimed that men are naturally better than women at networking. Men reportedly network more strategically than women (Gremmen et al., 2013) and are more likely to see their networks and networking skills as an influential factor in obtaining their role (Piggott et al., 2023). Men are also more likely to engage in networking behaviour, such as attending corporate and social events, than women (Bushell et al., 2020). This is sometimes linked to women being less likely to have the means to attend out-of-hours networking opportunities (Greguletz et al., 2019).

Conversely, female CEOs in this study affirmed previous research as they identified that women are less confident in their own abilities and regarding their value to a network (Greguletz et al., 2019). One CEO in particular argued that when opportunities arise, men insist that they are capable of performing tasks for which they have limited or no experience, whereas women will assume that they are not (Sotiriadou et al., 2017). Her advice was for women to be more positive and concentrate on what skills they have as opposed to what they do not have – which is the way a male equivalent would think (Spencer et al., 2019). Women who have ascended to leadership positions should in turn become mentors and sponsors for those who have similar career aspirations (Cosentino et al., 2021).

One participant enthusiastically described her membership of a women-only social network comprising a cross-industry group of female leaders, the primary purpose of which was to provide peer support. Yet, such networks are not usually effective in matching or supplanting a dominant male network and instead should form part of an overall strategy and system to improve gender diversity within leadership roles (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Zhu & Shen, 2016). However, these networks can be a good source of leadership development and mentorship (Mate et al., 2019). Further, this is a means to finding positive role models and learning to be better at self-promoting, a skill women may lack in comparison to their male counterparts (Cosentino et al., 2021). Female networks are a typical policy response to address inequality, yet they can be problematic as they reinforce a need for women to 'play the game' according to rules that have been set and are maintained by men. In addition to general social support, all female networks can be beneficial in acquiring non-redundant information (Yang et al., 2019) and in sharing information on how a potential employer treats minorities; that is, they scout organisations to assess the likelihood of systematic discrimination (Obukhova & Kleinbaum, 2022). Such organisations employ more women under better conditions but otherwise give less credence to personal networks than other organisations (Lalanne & Seabright, 2022).

5.5 Summary

In summary, CEOs of Australian NSOs involved in succession perceive their social networks as valuable in executive appointments. In general, CEOs benefit from their social networks in a number of ways throughout their tenure. These include career progression, the executive selection process, performance once in the CEO role, and subsequent new opportunities. Networks create career opportunities by enhancing access to resources and increasing visibility. According to CEOs social networks, which they consider an asset, also play a role in their appointment, in addition to human capital elements such as experience and formal qualifications. Further, an effective network is essential once a CEO commences in their role. NSOs need to work closely with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for their sport. As such, the CEO needs to have productive working relationships with the leaders of these organisations. Finally, as senior leaders work with decision-makers in sport and related industries such as the

media and government, such network ties can prove valuable if and when a CEO is seeking new opportunities when they depart their NSO role.

There are several components within a social network which CEOs view as being of value. Direct or indirect ties to the Chair of the hiring NSO were present in all cases in this study. While this is arguably a necessary part of the recruitment process anyway, CEOs found this to be a means of 'unlocking' a prospective succession opportunity. Indeed, in numerous cases, this occurred outside of and in addition to the formal process. This appears to build trust between the two key (prospective) leaders in what is a vital decision for an NSO to make. A CEO's network is an asset to their candidacy, whether they are an insider or an outsider. Networks within the NSO, member organisations, media, government, and major venues are all considered desirable. These ties enable a CEO to thrive and 'get things done' once appointed. In some instances, the absence of certain ties can be a positive for an incoming outsider CEO if strategic and wholesale change is desired but previous efforts have failed.

This study found CEO networks differed based on gender. Female CEOs had smaller but more intimate networks than their male counterparts. Female CEOs were also more likely to have a greater percentage of network ties to individuals located in external stakeholder organisations, whereas male CEOs had more ties to network partners within their NSO and member organisation. Despite these differences, both have the potential to be equally effective networks in an organisational context; however, their implication is not fully explored here. Yet, when each CEO's personal network was combined into a single network, the female CEOs appeared to occupy less influential positions. Male and female CEOs observed gender disparity in the sport industry whereby women are disadvantaged. All CEOs recognised the usefulness of mentors and sponsors in improving network-based outcomes, specifically helping women overcome barriers. However, men and women viewed networking differently, which can reinforce inequality.

The following sections address the implications of this research for theory, practice, and research methodology.

5.6 Theoretical contribution

This study makes an important contribution to knowledge in several ways. The findings presented in this thesis confirm that CEOs perceive social networks to be important in executive appointments. This extends the limited body of work by others who have connected CEO networks with succession, turnover, and candidate selection, and in doing so, argued such networks are an organisational asset (Cao et al., 2006; Cao et al., 2015; Geletkanycz et al., 2001; Liu, 2010, 2014). This study uniquely argues this point from the perspective of CEOs, an aspect which has previously not been adequately explored. As such, this research makes a novel contribution by analysing personal networks in thorough detail using empirical data gathered from the CEOs themselves rather than assumed affiliation networks. CEO succession research posits insiders occupy a privileged position because of existing relationships in an organisation. Using the context of the sport industry, from which the foundational succession theories were developed, the findings presented here show that outsiders may also have networks of value. In these instances, prospective CEOs see their ties among stakeholder groups and external organisations as a beneficial aspect of their candidature.

Yet, the unique nature of sport and sport leadership also results in a significant contribution to theory in the distinctive field of sport management (Chalip, 2006; Shilbury, 2022; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Schoenberg's (2012) research identified a lack of strategic integration and forward planning by SSOs when managing CEO succession. The present research extends his findings by studying succession at the NSO level. While his work identified a lack of strategy and formal process on the part of the organisation, the results of this study suggest strategic planning for succession should encompass a consideration of social networks. Given the complex nature of stakeholder management and its significance to NSOs (Hoye et al., 2020; Naraine et al., 2020; Parent et al., 2018), and the impact stakeholder sentiment can have on post-succession performance (Keil et al., 2022), the network perspective would appear to have much to offer in this context.

The research presented here also adds to the growing body of sport management literature linking social networks to employment outcomes. This work builds on the

findings of Parnell et al. (2023), who used a network approach to explain off-field recruitment in professional football clubs. In using empirical network data and social network analysis, this study makes a novel contribution by providing a more nuanced and detailed understanding of networks in the context of executive appointments in sport. The findings of this research link social networks to career progression in sport management settings, addressing the call of Wells and Kerwin (2017). Those who ascend to CEO roles recognise the value of networks in each stage of their career, including through the use of mentors but also as part of the recruitment process to executive leadership positions.

Finally, this research contributes to theory by identifying differences in the networks of male CEOs and female CEOs. As such, it adds to the work of Katz et al. (2018), who used affiliation networks to examine gender in a sport management settings by using empirical personal network data to highlight the unique features of male and female networks. The findings presented here complement those in the broader management literature, which have previously revealed differences in the networks of male and female leaders (Shen & Joseph, 2021). Further, this study adds to research showing networking behaviours and outlooks differ based on gender in sport (Zdroik & Babiak, 2017).

5.7 Practical contribution

The findings in this thesis also have practical implications for individuals and organisations, particularly in the sport industry. These are outlined in turn.

5.7.1 Individuals

The central focus of this research is social networks and their impact on executive appointments. Importantly, networks can provide access to potential job opportunities for leaders in the sport industry (Piggott et al., 2023). It is clear that individuals need to consciously and strategically build and maintain a social network to aid in career progression (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006). Thus, those with leadership ambitions should be networking to gain access to the potential resulting benefits (Bensaou et al., 2014). Gibson (2014, p. 150) defines networking as "…a form of goal-directed behaviour, both inside and outside of an organisation, focused on creating,

cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships" (p. 150). Interaction can come in various different forms, including maintaining contacts, socialising, engaging in professional activities, participating in the community, and increasing internal visibility (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Each of these interactions is geared towards instigating, maintaining, or leveraging contacts for a desired outcome (Porter & Woo, 2015). Networking behaviours which have a learning or performance goal are most effective in achieving positive employment outcomes (Huang, 2016). The act of networking will vary the characteristics and structure/content of a network (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). This study, like others, suggests networks distinguished by size or strong ties can be beneficial for prospective leaders (Woehler et al., 2021). However, a diverse network comprising both strong and weak ties is more likely to provide access to nonredundant information and resources (Perry et al., 2018).

Mentors were a consistent presence in CEO networks in this research. Having a mentor typically helps individuals cultivate a network that values their experience and expertise (Spencer et al., 2019). Mentors also provide useful career advice, impart professional knowledge, improve the visibility of the mentee, and act as a well-respected advocate (Spencer et al., 2019). Given the ongoing lack of gender diversity among leadership positions in sport, having powerful mentors and sponsors can help women progress their careers (Cosentino et al., 2021; Norman et al., 2018; Picariello et al., 2021). While both male and female participants in this research benefited from having mentors, they are seen as crucial for women (Taylor et al., 2018), for whom positive outcomes are often more pronounced (Joo & Cruz, 2023). Having a mentor expands and enhances the social network of the mentee, which in itself can lead to new opportunities (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Functional networks providing support and mentorship can facilitate leadership development and help women overcome gender barriers (Mate et al., 2019).

CEOs also consider networks to be an essential leadership tool in managing their organisation (Jokisaari, 2017). In the context of an NSO, this begins with being appointed whereby a new CEO who already has a strong network can help minimise disruption and therefore organisational performance (Cao et al., 2006). The findings of this thesis suggest that cultivating a network of both intraorganisational and interorganisational ties can be useful (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008) and further

maximised through a variety of weak and strong ties (Perry et al., 2018). The CEOs perceived networks with touch points in associated industries, such as government, media, and sponsorship, to be a valuable attribute. Given the shared challenges CEOs face in their positions, the study participants commonly relied on their CEO colleagues for task-based advice through shared learning and social support (Hanlon & Taylor, 2022). Several participants in this study described juggling the many different aspects of the CEO role in resource-challenged NSOs as very challenging. Parker et al. (2023) propose that people who face high emotional demands at work adapt their social networks to include others who experience similar challenges. There is merit in considering homophilous network ties to fulfil this function.

5.7.2 Organisations

The theoretical contributions of this research also have practical implications for organisations. To begin with, this study has highlighted the need to consider networks when experiencing leadership succession. That is, when a CEO departs, their social network ties leave with them. Appointing a new CEO with an already-strong network can help minimise such disruption and, therefore, organisational performance (Cao et al., 2006). The CEOs in this study considered both their intraorganisational and interorganisational network ties to be of importance to their role. The appointment and induction period of a new CEO are crucial (Rothwell, 2010). As such, boards should be mindful of the impact a former CEO's departure can have on networks, and the role directors can play in helping integrate their new CEO into key networks (Keil et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2005).

Participants in this study bemoaned the general lack of leadership development and succession planning in Australian sport (Frawley et al., 2018; Taylor & McGraw, 2004; Taylor & Robinson, 2019). There is a recognition that NSOs, particularly Olympic sport NSOs, are resource-poor and often small organisations, which makes planned succession difficult. Nevertheless, experts recommend a more strategic approach to succession, as organisations that fail to manage this issue adequately can inadvertently negatively impact sporting outcomes (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Also, turnover of CEOs in NSOs appears to be relatively high when compared to other contexts (Kerin, 2015), adding further credence to calls for greater planning in this area

(Taylor & Robinson, 2019). A best-practice approach to training and retaining talent combines leadership development and succession planning into a holistic strategy known as succession management (Groves, 2007; Rothwell, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor & McGraw, 2004).

Moreover, CEOs echoed the call of scholars in the areas of leadership (Clarke, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; McCauley & Palus, 2021) and sport management (Parnell et al., 2023; Whales et al., 2021) to include network advice in such programs. This would provide individuals with access to mentorship, sponsorship, and visibility (Floyd et al., 2022; Gibson et al., 2014), while also benefiting organisations (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017; Piggott et al., 2023). Building effective personal networks affords opportunities for experiential leadership development, such as working on particular projects outside of an employee's usual remit (Bartol & Zhang, 2007). Organisations can also benefit by encouraging networking within their organisation, as doing so is linked with improvements in performance (Collins & Clark, 2003).

This research found gender equity remains an issue in Australian sport. While younger generations have a different outlook towards diversity, which is changing the outlook for women and other minorities, progress remains slow (Swanson et al., 2020). The findings of this study illuminate the ways social networks can influence diversity. Organisations should be aware that female CEOs largely believe there has been little improvement in this area. There is a perception that the 'boys club' mentality persists, with this study finding that women appear to occupy less influential positions in the broader sport network (Katz et al., 2018). Others have similarly noted the danger of closed networks for diversity in sport (Parnell et al., 2023), with men likely to nominate their networks and networking skills as being an influential factor in obtaining their leadership role (Piggott et al., 2023). Yet, linking networking to leadership development and succession management as part of an overall strategy towards addressing diversity can help address biases and inequality in the leadership pipeline (Day et al., 2021). This approach is likely to produce a more open and competitive pool of talent to hire from and thus improve organisational performance (Greer & Virick, 2008). Leadership development should therefore recognise the role that gender plays in networks, and strategically enhance strengths and address weaknesses. Networks and networking have the potential to circumvent such barriers by increasing visibility and providing

legitimacy (Cosentino et al., 2021; Mate et al., 2019). Leadership development programs for women should encompass a holistic and thorough approach to building and maintaining an effective network (Ely et al., 2011) As women are traditionally reluctant to partake in networking activities (Greguletz et al., 2019), networking should be linked to organisational goals rather than simply focussing on the potential for personal gain (Ely et al., 2011). Formalised mentoring programs could connect women with high status males, which could help build social capital and help women chart a desired career path involving leadership roles (Zdroik & Babiak, 2017).

5.8 Methodological contribution

Methodologically, this thesis makes several contributions. Previous CEO succession studies using network methods or theory have largely been conceptual (Cao et al., 2006) or have used large publicly available data sets to create affiliation networks (Liu, 2010, 2014; Renneboog & Zhao, 2020), in which ties between various actors are based on assumptions of shared backgrounds and experiences rather than empirical data. Such research has been useful in prosecuting the case for network perspectives to be considered in succession events. This study extends previous research by gathering empirical data directly from those involved in succession. Therefore, this thesis demonstrates the usefulness of a network perspective in examining CEO and leader succession at the personal ego-centric level. It does so by collecting data through an appropriate name generator questionnaire and then utilising UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002) and NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002) for analysis and network visualisation.

The body of sport management literature using network approaches and methods is currently small. This study heeds the call for greater use of network approaches in examining leadership in sport management (Mueller et al., 2021), As such, this research builds on the work of Katz et al. (2018) and Parnell et al. (2023), who have used network approaches to examine women holding leadership positions in American college sport and recruitment of senior leadership roles in European professional soccer, respectively. This study is unique in that it uses a mixed method approach encompassing both ego-centric network data and qualitative interview data rather than solely affiliation networks, as in the case of Katz et al. (2018), and interviews, as in Parnell et al. (2023). Further, the empirical data in this study also highlight the

importance of considering informal social networks rather than only formal networks which exist as a result of organisational charts.

5.9 Limitations

There are two main categories of limitations in research: design and generalisability (Price & Murnan, 2004). Reliability and validity are of key importance when designing research to produce a robust and trustworthy study (Neuman, 2007). This study adopts a pragmatic approach acknowledging the human element of social research. Accordingly, results are relative to the subjects of the study during the specified time period (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). In using personal social networks, the researcher relied on the recall ability of the respondents. However, additional prompts and opportunities to clarify or adjust responses were built into the name generator survey. Administering the social network survey in an interview format also allowed the researcher to obtain additional information and ask follow-up questions. The use of semi-structured interviews further aided this process.

The researcher aimed to recruit a representative and broad sample of participants, cognisant of gender ratios and potential differences between professional and Olympic sport NSOs. The final sample comprised thirteen (13) individuals of which nine (9) were male (69%) and four (4) female (31%). The respondents were drawn from eleven (11) NSOs, of which four (4) were professional sport NSOs and seven (7) Olympic sport NSOs. As such, the findings are a convenient sample of the Australian sport industry rather than a comprehensive census. The research presented in this thesis explored differences based on gender in social networks and in the context of succession; however, no other aspects of diversity were identified or examined (such as disability, sexual identity, cultural background, etc.), and thus no consideration of intersectionality is included here. Adopting pragmatism as the paradigm for this research meant that the findings are neither assumed to be generalisable nor presumed to be solely context dependent.

When collecting social network data, the researcher asked participants to accurately report their contacts, the purpose of the connection, and describe the relationship so the researcher could assign a numerical value to each tie. There was no

upper limit placed on the number of contacts each respondent was allowed to name. This ensured there was no censorship of large networks, although it made eliciting alter–alter ties unrealistic due to the time constraints of a doctoral study. As such, data analysis of each personal network was limited to the participants' relationships with each of their contacts. Whole network calculations and observations were based only on the network data collected in this study. Hence, not all NSO CEOs during the specified time frame (2011–2020) were included. Further, as the data in this study was collected from successful CEO candidates only, the perspectives of the hiring organisation or the unsuccessful candidates were not included.

It is accepted that networks constantly evolve and change. Several CEOs commented on the high turnover of key positions within the NSO and member organisations. This contributed to respondents providing a mix of position-based contacts (for example, "The Chairperson") and specifically named individuals (who were often the strongest relationships within a network). The dynamic nature of these networks, and the aforementioned time demand on participants, therefore made it impractical to collect demographic data on each individual contact.

5.10 Future research directions

During the course of this study, five future research directions were identified. First, future studies should aim to obtain network data comprising alter–alter ties. This would enable additional analysis of each network and provide deeper insights into the networks surrounding CEOs or other sport leaders. Second, further attention should be given to constructing a whole network analysis of CEOs and leaders in the sport industry. In particular, this approach could offer additional insights regarding gender and diversity. Third, given the findings of this research include the significance of a tie from a potential successor to the Chair of the NSO, future studies could examine how the board screens and appoints candidates with regard to social networks. Fourth, further investigation is warranted as to the onboarding process and how social network access is enhanced or improved for an incoming CEO, as this will potentially impact performance and effectiveness, particularly when an outsider is appointed. Finally, this research has demonstrated the need for social network analysis to be more widely

deployed in the study of leadership and leadership development in sport management contexts, including from a diversity and inclusion perspective.

Due to the nature of a doctoral study, the present research is limited to ego-centric network analysis. Further, the decision was made during data collection to focus only on the ties from the subject to each of their contacts. Future research should endeavour to elicit alter–alter ties when constructing CEO or leader networks. Additional data in this area would allow further analysis regarding density, embeddedness, and cohesion within wider networks. This data could also help identify structural holes and thus help to demonstrate the depth of resources available to the CEO throughout their network. Further data could also enable homophily measures to be calculated, offering greater insight into the differences and similarities of male and female CEO networks – including the differences in size and intimacy observed in this study.

Participants in this study were recruited based on their CEO positions in the targeted NSOs during the ten-year period from 2011 to 2020. That being the case, there were limitations in constructing a combined whole network of CEOs to identify common network partners and bridges between different components of the network. However, a whole network survey would provide a broader picture of the industry and allow to identify key individuals (and organisations) within the eco-system. For example, several CEOs in this study had ties to the AFL by virtue of their work history. Does this give these individuals a network advantage? Additionally, this further indicate what impact gender and other aspects of diversity have on overall network significance. That is, how does gender relate to position and influence within the whole network?

Social networks appear to influence the appointment of a new CEO. As part of this research, a tie to the Chair of the recruiting organisation was shown to be advantageous for the potential successor. However, this study has focussed on CEO succession and social networks from the perspective of the successor (CEO). Thus, there is scope to study this aspect of the research from the perspective of the Chair and board of the NSO. That is, how do the key decision-makers view this network tie in terms of selecting a new CEO? Additionally, what implications do the network between the directors and each individual director's network have on the succession process?

Indeed, further study could include how social networks impact the election or appointment of directors to the boards of NSOs.

This thesis has identified the importance of a strong network with connections to decisionmakers within the various stakeholders for incoming CEOs. Where successors are appointed from outside of the NSO, or its member organisations, they need to build a network quickly and strategically within the sport, as this is crucial to performing effectively in the role. Further investigation is therefore desirable to examine the onboarding and induction process, and how social network access is enhanced or improved.

At present, research exploring the relationship between leadership and social networks in the context of sport management is lacking. Networks influence team performance, with effective leadership relying on the ability to utilise network ties to access resources. One of the recommendations of this thesis is for advice on networking behaviours and on building a personal network to be included in leadership development programs and succession management plans. As such, networks could be studied longitudinally to track their structure, composition, and density, and aspiring leaders' progress through their careers.

5.11 Conclusion

The overarching argument of this thesis is that in the context of CEO succession, networks and networking fundamentally matter. An effective network enables access to valuable resources, which might not otherwise be available. The act of networking itself can positively impact an individual's network. Networking impacts career progression through mentorship, sponsorship, and the provision of wise counsel when needed. In the context of succession, networks also provide access to succession opportunities and facilitate contact (and later trust) between potential successors and key decision-makers. Within the sport context, Australian NSOs work with several important stakeholders to fulfil their missions. This includes member organisations, peak bodies, government agencies, media, and sponsors. As such, CEOs are required to build and maintain a broad network to leverage positive outcomes for their NSO and the sport more generally. Thus, whether a prospective CEO is an insider or outsider, having network

partners across these stakeholders is considered advantageous within this context. However, gender disparity is both impacted by and evident through social networks – yet networks also offer an opportunity to achieve much-needed advances in this area.

Appendices

Appendix One: Abbreviations

The social network analysis sociograms in this thesis used the following abbreviations:

- AIS: Australian Institute of Sport
- AOC: Australian Olympic Committee
- ASADA: Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority
- CGA: Commonwealth Games Australia
- COMPPS: Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports Association
- ED: Executive Director
- ELT: Executive Leadership Team
- FMR: Former
- HC: Head Coach
- INT: International
- PA: Paralympics Australia
- SISAS: State Institutes of Sport and Academies of Sport
- Sport_Aus: Sport Australia
- SSO: State Sport Organisation

National sport organisations (NSO):

- Athletics Australia (AA)
- Australian Football League (AFL)
- Australian Sailing (AS)
- Baseball Australia (ABF)
- Basketball Australia (BA)
- Cricket Australia (CA)
- Cycling Australia (CAL)
- Football Federation Australia (FFA)
- Golf Australia (GA)
- Gymnastics Australia (GYM)
- Hockey Australia (HA)

- National Rugby League (NRL)

- Netball Australia (NA)

- Paddle Australia (PAD)

- Rowing Australia (RAL)

- Rugby Australia (RA)

- Swimming Australia (SAL)

- Tennis Australia (TA)

- Triathlon Australia

Chief executive officer (CEO) typology:

- Oly: Olympic sport organisation

- Pro: Professional sport organisation

Appendix Two: Selected organisations

Professional Sport NSOs	Olympic Sport NSOs
Australian Football League (AFL)	Athletics Australia (AA)
Cricket Australia (CA)	Australian Sailing
Football Federation Australia (FFA)	Baseball Australia (ABF)
National Rugby League (NRL)	Basketball Australia (BA)
Netball Australia (NA)	Cycling Australia (CYC)
Rugby Australia (RA)	Golf Australia (GA)
Tennis Australia (TA)	Gymnastics Australia (GYM)
	Hockey Australia (HA)
	Paddle Australia (PAD)
	Swimming Australia (SAL)
	Triathlon Australia (TRI)

SPORT	ORGANISATION	BOARD	APPROX ANNUAL EXPENDITURE
Australian Rules Football	Australian Football League (AFL)	9	$430,300,000
Cricket	Cricket Australia (CA)	8	$305,800,000
Football	Football Federation Australia (FFA)	10	$112,800,000
Rugby League	National Rugby League (NRL)	7	$526,900,000
Netball	Netball Australia (NA)	8	$29,800,000
Rugby Union	Rugby Australia (RA)	9	$121,120,000
Tennis	Tennis Australia (TA)	9	$383,600,000
TOTAL		60	$1,910,320,000

[2]

[2] It is recognised that the information used in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 are snapshots taken at a certain point in time, and thus are not accurate for all ten years from 2010-2020. During this time organisations have naturally evolved and developed. For example, Yachting Australia became a company limited by guarantee in 2015, and then rebranded to Australian Sailing in 2016. Rugby Australia moved from a representative or federated model of governance to an independent director model in 2014, which reduced the size of their board from eleven (11) to nine (9).

Appendix Four: Olympic Sport NSOs as of 2020

SPORT	ORGANISATION	BOARD	APPROX ANNUAL EXPENDITURE
Athletics	Athletics Australia (AA)	9	$14,700,000
Sailing	Australian Sailing (AS)	9	$17,000,000
Baseball	Baseball Australia (ABF)	11	$9,700,000
Basketball	Basketball Australia (BA)	7	$21,000,000
Cycling	Cycling Australia (CYC)	6	$16,000,000
Golf	Golf Australia (GA)	8	$27,000,000
Gymnastics	Gymnastics Australia (GYM)	8	$12,600,000
Hockey	Hockey Australia (HA)	9	$14,600,000
Canoe & Kayak	Paddle Australia (PA)	6	$7,900,000
Rowing	Rowing Australia (ROW)	9	$16,000,000
Swimming	Swimming Australia (SA)	9	$26,000,000
Triathlon	Triathlon Australia (TRI)	7	$6,500,000
TOTAL		**98**	**$189,000,000**

Appendix Five: NSO succession events from 2011 to 2020

SPORT	ORGANISATION	LOCATION	CEO SUCCESSION EVENTS
Athletics	Athletics Australia (AA)	Melbourne, VIC	2
AFL	Australian Football League (AFL)	Melbourne, VIC	1
Sailing	Australian Sailing (AS)	Sydney, NSW	3
Baseball	Baseball Australia (ABF)	Melbourne, VIC	1
Basketball	Basketball Australia (BA)	Melbourne, VIC	4
Cricket	Cricket Australia (CA)	Melbourne, VIC	2
Cycling	Cycling Australia (CYC)	Melbourne, VIC	2
Football	Football Federation Australia (FFA)	Sydney, NSW	2
Golf	Golf Australia (GA)	Melbourne, VIC	1
Gymnastics	Gymnastics Australia (GYM)	Melbourne, VIC	2
Hockey	Hockey Australia (HA)	Melbourne, VIC	2
Rugby League	National Rugby League (NRL)	Sydney, NSW	3
Netball	Netball Australia (NA)	Melbourne, VIC	1
Canoe & Kayak	Paddle Australia (PA)	Sydney, NSW	1
Rowing	Rowing Australia (ROW)	Canberra, ACT	2
Rugby Union	Rugby Australia (RA)	Sydney, NSW	3
Swimming	Swimming Australia (SA)	Melbourne, VIC	2
Tennis	Tennis Australia (TA)	Melbourne, VIC	1
Triathlon	Triathlon Australia (TRI)	Sydney, NSW	1
TOTAL			**36**

Introduction / background questions

- What is your nationality/racial background?

  Born in Australia/Australian citizen/Permanent Australian resident/ATSI/Other

- What is your gender?

  Male/Female/Other/Prefer not to state

- Marital status/children

  Single/engaged/married/prefer not to state

- What is your current age?

- What was your age when you were appointed as CEO in NSO?

- What is the highest level of education you have completed?

  High school/vocational training/Bachelor degree/Grad Cert/Grad Dip/Master

  degree/Doctorate

- Please briefly describe your career history – prior to CEO at NSO and post CEO

  at NSO

- How long were you employed as CEO at NSO?

Name generator

Six-name generator questionnaire:

Task advice

In your time as CEO at NSO, were there any work-related contacts from whom you regularly sought information and advice to enhance your effectiveness on the job? (Internal/external)

Buy-in

Suppose you were moving to a new job and wanted to leave behind the best network advice that you could for the person moving into the CEO position at NSO. Are there any individuals whom you would name to your replacement whose "buy-in" is essential for initiatives coming out of your organisation?

Strategic information

In your time as CEO at NSO, were there any individuals on whom you have relied as sources for general information on the "goings-on" at NSO/industry/stakeholders – people who have given you special insight into the goals and strategies of important individuals, divisions, or perhaps even the organisation as a whole? (Internal/external)

Mentor

Are there any individuals whom you regard as a mentor-that is, someone who has taken a strong interest in your professional development by providing you with opportunities and/or access to facilitate your career advancement? (Internal/external)

Social support

Is there anyone in your work environment whom you regard as a source of social support-that is, someone with whom you are comfortable discussing sensitive matters? (Internal/external)

Professional advice

If / when you were thinking of leaving NSO, who are the people you would most likely speak with to discuss and evaluate your job options?

Other

Please list anyone is especially close to you who you have not listed in one of the previous questions.

Name interpreter

For each alter demographic composition (age, gender, education, career history), role relationships (position of alter in relation to ego), ego–alter characteristics (closeness scale 1–5), network activity (frequency scale 1–5), and network properties (size and density)

Edge interpreter

For each alter–ego–alter characteristics (closeness scale 1–5), network activity (frequency scale 1–5), network properties (alter to alter ties), tie durability (duration of connection),

Semi-structured interview guide

Question: Can you tell me more about your career path?

Sub-topics: Experiences outside of sport, entry into sport management, and tertiary education and training

Question: What was the recruitment process for the CEO role at NSO?

Sub-topics: How did you find out about the job, contact with directors and / or recruitment specialist, selection criteria?

Question: What attributes and experiences did you feel the organisation was looking for when you were hired?

Sub-topics: Sport-specific knowledge, corporate engagement, marketing, mass participation, change of strategic direction, previous CEO

Question: What were your primary strategic aims at the time you became CEO at NSO?

Sub-topics: Direction from board, information from internal NSO network and/or previous CEO

Question: What experiences shaped your interest in becoming a CEO at NSO?

Sub-topics: leadership development, network building

Question: What can you tell me about succession management within the sport industry?

Sub-topics: leadership development

Question: Follow-up question based on SNA data

Sub-topics: Which ties are more valuable for a CEO?

Question: In what respects have these connections and networks helped you in your career? How important are these contacts to achieving success as a CEO?

Sub-topics: Mentorship, leadership development, value of networks

Question: How and why did you leave your position as CEO at NSO? What was your role in the hiring / handover process for the CEO who succeeded you?

Sub-topics: Typology of succession

Question: How has your gender helped or hindered you as a CEO at NSO? Hod different would your experiences have been if your gender was different?

Sub-topics: Gendered experiences

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
CEO Succession in Sporting Organisations: A network perspective
UTS HREC REF NO. ETH21-6331

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Lloyd Rothwell, and I am a PhD researcher at UTS. My supervisor is Professor Simon Darcy who can be contacted at simon@darcy@uts.edu.au or (02) 9514 5100.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of this research is to investigate if Australian National Sports Organisations are influenced by social networks when appointing a CEO.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been identified as a current or former CEO of a National Sports Organisation.

Your contact details were obtained by/from *[provide details].*

FUNDING

Funding for this project has been received from the Australian Government's Research Training Program.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to take part in an interview which will be in the form of a questionnaire. You may also be invited to a further semi-structured interview.

The initial interview is likely to last for between 45 – 120 minutes and will be scheduled at your convenience. If you are invited to participate in a second interview, this will likely last for between 45 – 90 minutes. These interviews can be held in person or via video conference. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be provided an opportunity to review the transcript.

In the initial interview you will be asked about your employment as a CEO at an NSO. This will include questions about the nature of the relationships you have / had with people within the organisation, and other people relevant to your career. The second interview will cover similar topics in greater detail. This will also include questions about leadership development and your career path.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

Yes, there are some possible risks/inconvenience. At times you may:

- Feel embarrassed or stressed about being interviewed.
- Feel distressed at perceived "lost time" while participating.
- Become bored or mentally fatigued while being interviewed or otherwise participating.
- Become hungry and/or dehydrated while participating in the interviews.
- Perceive a violation of your privacy.
- Perceive a violation of your private working space (such as your office).
- Feel uncomfortable with being recorded.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part.
If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or your *organisation.*

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Lloyd Rothwell on ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or lloydbrian.rothwell@student.uts.edu.au

If you decide to leave the research project, we will not collect additional personal information from you (e.g., name, address, date of birth etc.), although personal information already collected will be retained to ensure that the results of the research project can be measured properly and to comply with law. You should be aware that data collected up to the time you withdraw will form part of the research project results. If you do not want me to do this, you must tell me before you join the research project.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially. All data collected during the research project – including your personal information – will be stored securely in line with UTS research standards. Only the research team will have access to this data.

Your information will only be used for the purpose of this research project and it will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information

will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission.

WHAT IF I HAVE ANY QUERIES OR CONCERNS?

If you have queries or concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me on ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ or lloydbrian.rothwell@student.uts.edu.au, or Professor Simon Darcy on (02) 9514 5100 or simon@darcy@uts.edu.au.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:
This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC] guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research that you wish to raise independently of the research team, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au], and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM
CEO Succession in Sporting Organisations: A network perspective
UTS HREC REF NO. ETH21-6331

I _____ agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Lloyd Rothwell from the University of Technology Sydney. I understand that funding for this research has been provided by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or my *organisation.*

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be:

__ Interviewed
__ Audio recorded

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that:

__ Identifies me
__ Does not identify me in any way
__ May be used for future research purposes

I am aware that I can contact Lloyd Rothwell or Professor Simon Darcy if I have any concerns about the research.

_____   ____/____/____
Name and Signature [participant]   Date

_____   ____/____/____
Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]   Date

Issue	Response
• Informed consent form	• Print and sign hard copy, return via scanned email or post • Insert electronic signature
• Privacy within online teleconference	• Use password protected and / or waiting room features to prevent unauthorised access
• Participant personal privacy if at home	• Inform participant and consider adding a virtual background or use a neutral background if possible
• Unauthorised access via additional recording of interview	• Consider adding to instructions and consent form
• Data storage	• Note recording and storage function available via application and consider in data management plan

Adapted from Lobe et al. (2020)

Pro CEO 1

NUMBER OF ALTERS	97	
Task advice	25	21%
Buy-in	88	73%
Strategic information	6	5%
Mentor	1	1%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	1	1%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL TIES	121	
Average Ties per Alter	1.25	

Strength 3	3	3%
Strength 2	21	22%
Strength 1	75	77%
Av Strength	1.28	
% 2/3	25%	
IQV	0.5787	

Internal	16	16%
Members	66	68%
Stakeholders	7	7%
Other	8	8%
TOTAL	97	

Pro CEO 2

NUMBER OF ALTERS	61	
Task advice	7	10%
Buy-in	13	19%
Strategic information	34	50%
Mentor	0	0%
Social	1	1%
Professional advice	0	0%
Other	13	19%
TOTAL TIES	68	
Average Ties per Alter	1.11	

Strength 3	7	11%
Strength 2	8	13%
Strength 1	46	75%
Av Strength	1.36	
% 2/3	25%	
IQV	0.6015	

Internal	13	21%
Members	4	7%
Stakeholders	35	57%
Other	9	15%
TOTAL	61	

Pro CEO 3

NUMBER OF ALTERS	49	
Task advice	28	37%
Buy-in	35	46%
Strategic information	7	9%
Mentor	3	4%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	0	0%
Other	3	4%
TOTAL TIES	76	
Average Ties per Alter	1.55	

Strength 3	4	8%
Strength 2	16	33%
Strength 1	29	59%
Av Strength	1.49	
% 2/3	41%	
IQV	0.8046	

Internal	17	35%
Members	16	33%
Stakeholders	11	22%
Other	5	10%
TOTAL	49	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	66	
Task advice	58	62%
Buy-in	12	13%
Strategic information	4	4%
Mentor	6	6%
Social	4	4%
Professional advice	3	3%
Other	7	7%
TOTAL TIES	94	
Average Ties per Alter	1.42	

Strength 3	3	5%
Strength 2	7	11%
Strength 1	56	85%
Av Strength	1.2	
% 2/3	15%	
IQV	0.4002	

Internal	13	20%
Members	30	45%
Stakeholders	20	30%
Other	3	5%
TOTAL	66	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	65	
Task advice	12	17%
Buy-in	48	67%
Strategic information	6	8%
Mentor	1	1%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	2	3%
Other	3	4%
TOTAL TIES	72	
Average Ties per Alter	1.11	
Strength 3	3	5%
Strength 2	11	17%
Strength 1	51	78%
Av Strength	1.26	
% 2/3	22%	
IQV	0.5304	

Internal	11	17%
Members	16	25%
Stakeholders	24	37%
Other	14	22%
TOTAL	65	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	37	
Task advice	10	21%
Buy-in	18	38%
Strategic information	16	33%
Mentor	1	2%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	1	2%
Other	2	4%
TOTAL TIES	48	
Average Ties per Alter	1.30	

Strength 3	1	3%
Strength 2	26	70%
Strength 1	10	27%
Av Strength	1.76	
% 2/3	73%	
IQV	0.6486	

Internal	1	3%
Members	24	65%
Stakeholders	4	11%
Other	8	22%
TOTAL	37	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	31	
Task advice	14	31%
Buy-in	8	18%
Strategic information	11	24%
Mentor	3	7%
Social	1	2%
Professional advice	5	11%
Other	3	7%
TOTAL TIES	45	
Average Ties per Alter	1.45	

Strength 3	5	16%
Strength 2	12	39%
Strength 1	14	45%
Av Strength	1.71	
% 2/3	55%	
IQV	0.9303	

Internal	1	3%
Members	8	26%
Stakeholders	7	23%
Other	15	48%
TOTAL	31	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	42	
Task advice	14	27%
Buy-in	5	10%
Strategic information	32	62%
Mentor	1	2%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	0	0%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL TIES	30	
Average Ties per Alter	1.24	

Strength 3	1	2%
Strength 2	12	29%
Strength 1	29	69%
Av Strength	1.33	
% 2/3	31%	
IQV	0.6615	

Internal	10	24%
Members	8	19%
Stakeholders	12	29%
Other	12	29%
TOTAL	42	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	49	
Task advice	13	25%
Buy-in	33	62%
Strategic information	5	9%
Mentor	1	2%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	0	0%
Other	1	2%
TOTAL TIES	53	
Average Ties per Alter	1.08	

Strength 3	1	2%
Strength 2	10	20%
Strength 1	38	78%
Av Strength	1.24	
% 2/3	22%	
IQV	0.5348	

Internal	15	31%
Members	16	33%
Stakeholders	5	10%
Other	13	27%
TOTAL	49	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	25	
Task advice	8	27%
Buy-in	4	13%
Strategic information	5	17%
Mentor	1	3%
Social	1	3%
Professional advice	3	10%
Other	8	27%
TOTAL TIES	30	
Average Ties per Alter	1.20	

Strength 3	5	20%
Strength 2	10	40%
Strength 1	10	40%
Av Strength	1.82	
% 2/3	60%	
IQV	0.96	

Internal	3	12%
Members	0	0%
Stakeholders	18	72%
Other	4	16%
TOTAL	25	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	38	
Task advice	4	10%
Buy-in	30	73%
Strategic information	3	7%
Mentor	2	5%
Social	2	5%
Professional advice	0	0%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL TIES	41	
Average Ties per Alter	1.08	

Strength 3	13	34%
Strength 2	5	13%
Strength 1	20	53%
Av Strength	1.96	
% 2/3	47%	
IQV	0.8829	

Internal	0	0%
Members	16	42%
Stakeholders	15	39%
Other	7	18%
TOTAL	38	

NUMBER OF ALTERS	26	
Task advice	13	31%
Buy-in	15	36%
Strategic information	11	26%
Mentor	1	2%
Social	0	0%
Professional advice	2	5%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL TIES	42	
Average Ties per Alter	1.62	

Strength 3	4	15%
Strength 2	6	23%
Strength 1	16	62%
Av Strength	1.54	
% 2/3	38%	
IQV	0.8166	

Internal	11	42%
Members	8	31%
Stakeholders	4	15%
Other	3	12%

NUMBER OF ALTERS	39	
Task advice	19	26%
Buy-in	21	29%
Strategic information	9	13%
Mentor	1	1%
Social	4	6%
Professional advice	2	3%
Other	16	22%
TOTAL TIES	72	
Average Ties per Alter	1.85	

Strength 3	1	3%
Strength 2	2	5%
Strength 1	36	92%
Av Strength	1.1	
% 2/3	8%	

Internal	11	28%
Members	16	41%
Stakeholders	6	15%
Other	6	15%
TOTAL	39	

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