



Gender Studies in Sport The Case of Tunisia

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Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- Since its genesis in the mid-nineteenth century in England, sport has been recognized as a bastion of masculinity (Terret, 2005).
- Sports games have been adopted as educational supports for the character formation of **the male, white, bourgeois and heterosexual** (Pocciello, 1999).

Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- This model of practice survived over time despite the many changes generated by the social movements and the dominant ideologies.
- It has even spread to the sport knowledge, first in the West, then in the colonized countries.

Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- The progressive access of women to sports space since the beginning of the 20th century corresponds to "the conquest of a male citadel" (Terret, 2005).
- The women athletes were sidelined by the founder of the modern Olympics games in 1896, Baron Pierre De Coubertin, considering that sport is a man's business.
- **Pierre De Coubertin, *Sports Pedagogy* : (1972: 114-115)**
“A female Olympiad would be un-practical, uninteresting, unsightly and incorrect. The true Olympic hero is in my eyes, the individual male adult. The Olympic Games must be reserved for men, the role of women should be above all to crown the victors”.



Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- The resistance of the advocate of the Games to the integration of women in the Olympics was very strong. Even so, the women participated in the animation of the Olympiads in the form of sporting demonstrations.



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Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- De Coubertin insists on the uselessness of these demonstrations:

"Technically, the soccer players and boxers who have already tried to exhibit here and there are of no interest; will always have imperfect linings. There is nothing to learn by looking at them... "



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Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- De Coubertin insists: "Maybe women will soon realize that this attempt does not turn to the benefit of their charm or even their health. On the other hand, it is not without interest that the wife can participate to a fairly large extent in the sporting pleasures of her husband and that the mother is able to intelligently direct the sport education of her son".
 - » A gendered distribution of tasks is put forward which limits men and women's spaces for action: Public and sports space is reserved for men, whereas private space - home and the education of children to the taste for sport - is reserved for women.
 - » Sport cannot be beneficial for woman, holding that it could negatively affect her femininity.

Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- The medical discourse of the end of the XIXth century contributed in the manufacturing of the of women athletes representations.
- According to the socio-historical analysis of medical discourse (Bohuon, 2007), sport could negatively affect women's health and femininity.
- Female physical practice is presented as a "potential hazard" for procreation.
- Women's physical and athletic activity should be limited, or even prohibited, in order to protect their reproductive function.





Alice Milliat (1884-1957), French athlete, swimmer and rower.

President of the French Federation of Sports Societies (1919).

President of the International Federation of Sportswomen (1921).

- The women's struggle led by Alice Milliat, considered a prominent figure in female sport in the first third of the twentieth century (Devron, 2005), has greatly contributed to women's access to sport.
- The Olympic Games organized in 1928 in Amsterdam testify to this success: out of 3015 competitors, 290 are athletes registered in athletic and gymnastics events.



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Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- Sport remains a space for the development of typical masculinity traits that makes a remarkable difference between men and women still observable in contemporary societies.
- The model of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995, 2005) appears as an analytical concept of sporting reality and accounts for the disparity between sportsmen and sportsmen (Lachheb, 2014).
- Why? The domination of the typical characteristics of the masculine ideal takes value of a standard and becomes considered as reference for sportsmen and sportswomen (Sablik, 2010).



Sport and Gender: a maintained history

- Being tough, disciplined and physically strong to dominate others, are the criteria to get involved in sport (Anderson, 2009, McCormack & Anderson, 2010).



In Tunisia

- The studies on sport and gender in Tunisia take multiple directions. They are interested in the different forms of manifestation of sport:
 - Sports when women are involved in men's sports.
 - The teaching of physical education and the expression of gender stereotypes.
 - Sport as a working space for men and women involved in the management of sport within sports organizations.



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- In socio-anthropological perspective, interest has focused on the experience of women's body who engage in combat sports such as judo (Lachheb, 2008) and in a collective sport like football (Lachheb, 2013).
- The sports women should be competent and successful in their sports practice while guarding the characteristics socially associated with the femininity.

Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- As such, they face a double constraint:
 - On the one hand, sporting competence is a bodily competence whose benchmark is the model of the sporting body which is characterized by the traits of masculinity.
 - On the other hand, the body constitutes the symbolic space of expression of femininity through its configuration, its forms and its proportions according to the model of the socially valued female body.



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- How Tunisian judokas negotiate this report between femininity and manliness in their body and by their body?
- W: “A judoka is very masculine. His shoulders, his way of walking, it bothers me enormously. Outside of practice, I try to have a normal woman's life. I dress, as far as possible, in a feminine way, I choose clothes that hide my shapes, I make up a little. As a woman, I am not happy with these forms, I do not like it at all”.



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- There is an acknowledgment of the masculine tendency of women judokas, which confirms the discrepancy between sports requirements and requirements of femininity socially valued.
- This male tendency creates discomfort for some judokas. To surpass them, they use "parades de genre" (Goffman, 2002) to look after their appearances (women's clothing and accessories).



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- The embarrassment of judokas women emanates from looks of the men(people) and from messages which they receive in the extra-sports space, the global social space.
- W: “Look at those shoulders, look at how she walks, do you do weight training? They are telling me that I am out of the ordinary. It makes me very uncomfortable”.
- W: “I feel really attractive. Yes, very attractive. Whereas, people look at me because my body is attractive, it is unusual for a woman. Not because I am seductive”.



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- Concerning women footballers, they also insist on their masculine tendency and particularly emphasize the look of others in the global social space.
- If the judokas speak only about the embarrassing look of men the soccer players evoke the look of men and women.

Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- S: Outside football, they look at me with a weird look. I often hear myself say, "Look how she walks!", "She is very masculine", "She's like a boy". They are telling me that I am out of the ordinary".
- S: "My look is very masculine, I know. In the street, I sometimes meet people who ask questions: is it male or female? Sometimes I turn to them to say: I am female".



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- Unlike judokas who use gender parries, the majority of soccer players adopt typically masculine self-presentation techniques, consistent with the spirit of their sporting practice.
 - A very short hair cut supplemented by the modeling of the hair with gel to give it a pungent shape (sharp hair).
 - Street-life wear, which is based on wearing loose jeans and falling on the buttocks, combined with trademark sneakers and shirts or unisex jackets.
- Makeup and different types of ornaments (jewelry, manicure) totally absent.



Sport as a practice

Women in the world of men

- One can detect the rejection of the agreed figure of the "feminine" and the assimilation by the women of the ways of being "man" that the soccer players want to display.



Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- A new research perspective that integrates the issue of gender in sport concerns the homosexual experience.
- Given that homosexuality is regarded as a sin from the religious point of view and as a crime from the legal point of view (Lachheb, 2016), the interest lies in the negotiations of young gays and lesbians in the Tunisian sports environment.

Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- Gays and lesbians attempt to neutralize their sexual orientations in sport and they conform to the heteronormative model.
- They argue that homosexuality is more easily assumed outside the sports space.
- In sports, their careers are at stake ...

Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- For gays, the difficulties are minimal as long as the traits of masculinity are exacerbated. This concerns the sporting environment or the global social space (Hamdi, Lachheb and Anderson, 2016).
- M: "I do a lot of weight training, my body is very masculine, so I don't attract attention."

Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- The situation of women is much more problematic. They arouse suspicion in relation to their sexual orientation, both in the sports space and in the global social space.
- W: "I awaken suspicions remarkably, my appearance and my masculine tendency betray me easily. This is a huge problem for me. "

Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- "Sport has helped me to hide my homosexuality. At first, my mother was embarrassed by my way of dressing. She said "why you dress like boys, you're supposed to be an example for your sisters." When I wear a tracksuit, she shouts: " you change, it's very masculine, always Adidas! ". I always say to her: "reassure you mamma, that's how the athletes get dressed, it's our uniform and I'm doing well."



Sport as a practice

The homosexual issue

- The lesbians tend to use a “sportswear” style to deconstruct the traditional differences of gender and escape the stigmatization connected to the homosexuality.

Gender tested at school

- The gender issue at schools was approached from a socio-historical and comparative perspective.
- It is based on an analytical reading of the text that institutionalizes the teaching of physical education in Tunisia: the Official Instructions of 1968 and the Official Instructions of 1990.

Gender tested at school

- **The Official Instructions of 1968 : Differentiated physical education**
 - - "Particular attention will be given to women's physical education. The role of the female element is indeed determining in the rate of evolution of a society".
 - - The content most suited to the condition of women: "gymnastics and rhythmic exercises that exert a powerful attraction on young girls, will constitute the fundamental disciplines of female physical education".
 - - "Care should be taken to ensure that work-rest alternation is maintained in the light of sexual differentiation orienting body expression and behavior subject to vegetative requirements".



Gender tested at school

- **The Official Instructions of 1968 : Differentiated physical education**
- If the difference between girls and boys is retained in the conception of physical education, it nevertheless relies on practices perceived as feminine: gymnastics and rhythm.
- In this sense, physical education remains stereotyped and reproduces gender norms.



Gender tested at school

- **The Official Instructions of 1990 : Standardized physical education**
 - Physical education is addressed to a mass of undifferentiated students. We speak about the "**neutral**" and "**abstract**" student and it is the characteristics of the male student that are set up as a standard of reference.
 - A denial of the difference between girls and boys which results in its reduction to a unique identity, the male sex, "**the masculine neutral**" (Mosconi, 1989).



Gender tested at school

- Genéviève Fraisse (2000):
“Neutral is a fiction, it belongs to the imaginary and not to reality”.
- If it underpins equality at school and the achievement of gender equality, it does not recognize their distinctive peculiarities.

Sport as a workspace: Women and men Leadership

- Space is socially divided into a public space and a private space (Lamoureux, 2004):
 - Public space refers to the different forms of governance and involves people characterized by independence, responsibility and reason.
 - On the other hand, the private space is reduced to the universe of intimate, family and domestic work.
 - This division of space is based on the principle of a sexual division of labor: to men reserves production and to women reproduction.



Sport as a workspace: Women and men Leadership

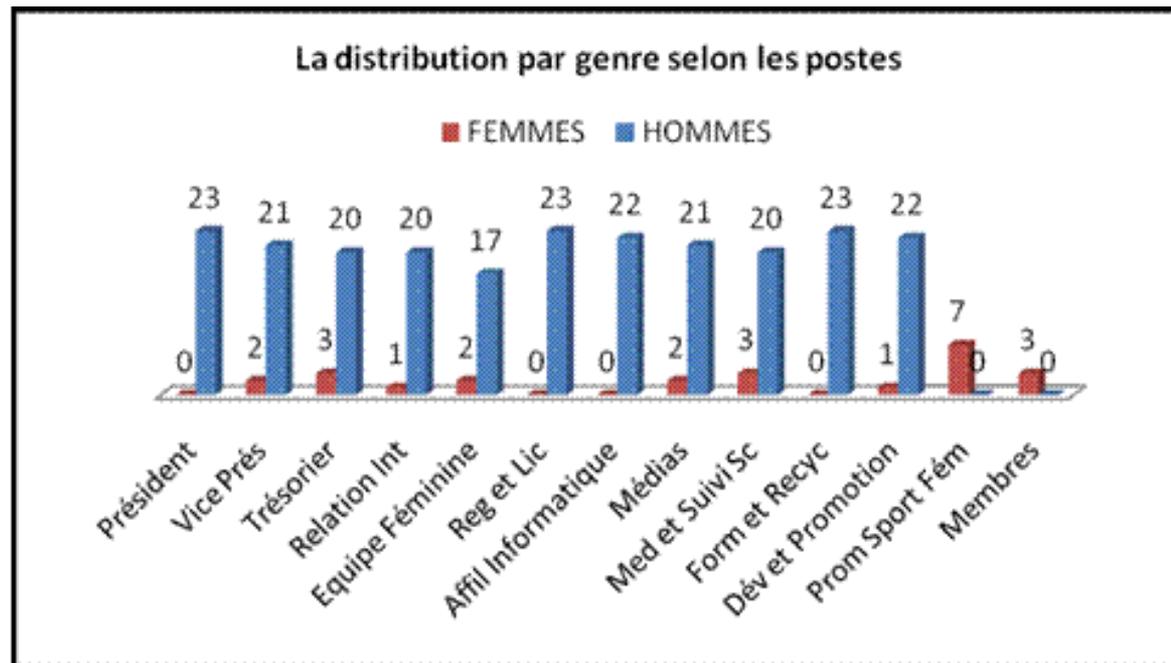
- According to Danièle Kergoat (2005), the interpretation of the sexual division of labor is based on two fundamental principles:
 - The principle of "separation" between the sexes, which refers to the division of activities between men and women and recognition of the tasks assigned to each of them.
 - The principle of "hierarchy" which attributes a strong social significance to the work of man in comparison with that of woman.



Sport as a workspace: Women and men Leadership

- According to a first study (Lachheb et al., 2010), the total number of managers in sports federations is 256, 232 men (91%) and 24 women (9%).
 - A remarkable inequality between men and women in sports federations.
 - Women constitute a minority who are involved in a predominantly masculine space.

Sport as a workspace: Women and men Leadership



Women are mainly responsible for the "women's sport" sector
We adopt a logic of separation in a practice which doesn't take into account differences of gender.

Sport as a workspace

Women and men Leadership

About Decision Making

- M: "The decision is prepared before the meeting of the Federal Office. When you want to pass a decision, it is prepared outside the framework of the federation. According to the affinities of some members, the interests of some others, the decisions are prepared before the meeting ".
- W: "In federations, unfortunately, the big decisions are taken outside, in spaces as tearooms or others. It is a general phenomenon, we cannot deny it. As woman, I am completely ruled out. If I am interested and I look for the information, I can find the answer, otherwise nobody tries to involve me. It is so and not otherwise".



Sport as a workspace: Women and men Leadership

About Decision Making

- Decisions are mostly "secret". Decisions are made outside the framework of the federation. The federal meeting is only an opportunity to disseminate the decision already taken.
- Women leaders enjoy a secondary status, present-absent, since they are excluded from the decision-making process.



Tunisia and beyond ...

- Sport belongs to a global culture and is now part of the logic of the process of globalization.
- The sporting model and the underlying ideology are imposed at the local level as well as at the global level with varying proportions.



Tunisia and beyond ...

- In her report on sport and gender in Europe, Gertrud Pfister (2012) mentions the diversity of sports cultures and underlines the general under-representation of women in physical and sports activities.
- for example
 - Netherlands: 41% men and 31% women
 - Austria: 34% men and 22% women
 - Germany: 34% men and 26% women

Tunisia and beyond ...

- According to data from the European Institute for Gender Equality (2015), women hold an average of 14% of the decision-making positions in the European Olympic sports confederations.
- Data range from 03% in Poland to 43% in Sweden.
- Out of 91 decision-making positions: 01 President and 08 Vice-Presidents.



Thank you for your attention



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