

# Introduction

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Play is as old as humanity, but sport as a standardized system of competition between athletes is a modern phenomenon, originating in the West and diffusing to non-Western cultures by various routes and processes, including colonialism, cultural imperialism globalization and adaptation (Guttman 1994; Hargreaves 1994; Maguire 1999). As a product of modernity – fashioned through the grand narratives of continuous progress, hierarchies of subjectivities and division of spaces, attributes, labour, and power (Lyotard 1984; Giddens 1990) – sport is socio-historically associated with specific bodies, places and identities and not with others. In other words, socially constructed categories of difference and hierarchies have historically worked as organizing determinants in the production, reproduction, circulation and consumption of various sports in modern world. Over the years, considerable evidence has been accumulated showing that prevailing notions and certainties about social relations that shape economic and political processes in modern societies are reflected and reproduced in sport domains as well (Coakley & Dunning 2000). Even as sport appears to be global, men, women, different classes and cultures do not experience its norms and practices the same way; thus to regard sport as a neutral and socially inclusive cultural institution is a misapprehension. Traditionally, sport is regarded as the cultural space for performing masculinity and rationality as opposed to femininity and irrationality - qualities that are culturally associated with women (McKay, Messner & Sabo 2000). For example, the fact that sport has a large male following worldwide has been linked to the patriarchal ideology which divides the social world into dualistic gendered spaces, positions, traits and dispositions that are presumably clear and natural (Flintoff & Scraton 2002). This dominant ideology defines men in opposition to women and therefore declares certain domains such as the home as female and others such as sport and public spaces as male. It

goes without saying that this naturalization of sport as male territory for nurturing hegemonic masculine qualities tends to exclude from the sport arena other bodies that are marked, gendered, sexed or classed as female or feminine.

Despite its implicit androcentric ethos, however, there is a growing consensus that sport may have a significant role to play in social development, mobilizing creative energies and symbolic resources for re-imagining and transforming the social order. If sport has developmental implications, then it follows that it is a key site to deepen and broaden reflection about how sport structures enable and disable empowerment and emancipation in diverse locales. In this context, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) Symposium on Gender, Sport and Development held in Cairo in November 2009 provided a focal point for participants to:

...consider the various dimensions to the landscape of gender and the multifaceted sports arena ...with a view to reflecting on the possibilities that have emerged alongside the old obstacles that have persisted in the search for and processes towards a gender-inclusive African development project.

The chapters in this book were first presented as papers at that symposium. Although much work remains to be done to illuminate the gender, sport and development problematic in the context of Africa, this preliminary volume provides a fascinating contribution to the understanding of how the discursive and structural elements of sport are overlaid with gender inequities, while offering potential spaces for challenging unequal power relations.

This volume is divided into ten chapters. Chapters 1-4 show that despite the pressures created by feminists and other social movements to open up the sport arena to women and other previously excluded groups, the age-old patriarchal principles embedded in sport, reinforced at every turn by the mass media and gendered socialisation, remain a major obstacle to personal fulfillment and advancement in sport for many African women. These chapters variously illustrate how women, perceived as a threat to the male system of power relations in sport, become targets of toxic myths, stigmas, and harassment in sport spaces to perpetuate the domination of these spaces by heterosexual, masculine males. Specifically, Chapter One brings into sharp focus the opposition and hostility underlying both the relationship between rival soccer teams and their fans in Zimbabwe and between men and women in soccer situations – and the attendant oppression and subordination of the feminized others in football settings. Because the soccer matches inevitably produce winners and losers, the frustration of defeat and the distress of derision from rivals frequently lead to fracas. Even though hegemonic masculinity makes it acceptable for men to unleash their an-

ger, aggression and domination within and outside the stadium in the form of physical assault and vandalism, the prevailing notions of femininity expects women to shun loutishness. As such, women are often the more vulnerable targets of soccer violence. This chapter illustrates how Zimbabwean women spectators are subjected to sexual harassment, derogatory remarks and derision without public outrage so as to make the women feel that they 'ask for it' by going to the stadium. The use of *juju* in soccer, discriminatory sponsorship of Zimbabwean women soccer and under-representation of women in soccer leadership teams are also highlighted in the chapter, showing the relationship between *juju* economy, soccer sponsorship, soccer management and sexism. In the same vein, Chapter Two reveals how modern sport in Zimbabwe is premised on the ideology of exclusionary and andocentric mutuality and, therefore, has become a tool for women's repression. Although both men and women can be equally passionate about sport, the dominant notion of femininity as passive, submissive and domesticated reinforces the idea that women are vulnerable, need male protection and should keep out of public spheres, including soccer spaces, for their own safety. The chapter argues that the power structures and strategies of sport development in the country mis-identify women as the subordinated other and thus support myriad forms of gender-based discrimination and sexual molestation against girls and women in sport.

How do the images, metaphors, epithets, jargon and songs used to represent players, opponents, winning and losing reinforce gender oppression, discrimination and alienation in sporting sites? This is the question variously explored in Chapters 3 and 4. These chapters inter-discursively provide a detailed account of the ironies and dilemmas faced by women in Malawi and Nigeria who seek to partake of the growth of popular sports as players, sport managers, spectators and mass media consumers, yet are enclosed within oppressive textual practices and discourses that define women in terms of domesticity and feminine values, and the female sporting bodies as deviant sex objects. This chapter is an important reading if one is to understand how the social construction and representation of exemplary womanhood constrain women's participation in sport and its political, social and economic processes. Chapter 3 provides graphic narratives of sexualization of players, opposition, and sport performance in Malawi, whereby local terms for marking, tackling, kicking and scoring, for examples, are by-words for coupling, penetration, ejaculation, and brutalization of women and feminized males. The male-defined views of sport performance and the inequitable and capricious coverage of women sport in a Nigerian newspaper are explored in Chapter 4, alerting us to how distorted, biased and arbitrary representation of women athletes engender differential access to the material and symbolic benefits of sport - in short, short-changing women athletes.

Chapter 5 draws on the author's research and other work on the sporting bodies and identity management in sport to demonstrate how soccer players in South Africa are sorted not only along gender and racial lines, but also along sexual orientation. According to the hetero-normative soccer 'culture' in South Africa, players have to present personas that conform to traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. In this context, South African women soccer players always have to make sure they don't appear too masculine, unsexy, or openly lesbian in order to attract fans and sponsors and protect themselves against homophobic attack. The chapter underscores some of the changes taking place in South African sport landscape – the promotion of multi-racial female sport squads, the homophobic fears and prejudices that women's participation in sport inspires and the dilemma of women soccer players regarding how to secure access to sponsorship without repudiating their sexuality and embodiment. Chapter 6 aptly illustrates the link between hetero-normative masculinity and 'appropriate feminine norm' - tough, active men to complement and complete soft, sexy women. Both are manifestations of patriarchy – ideology that divide society into macho blokes and yielding, emotional babes. Far from encouraging women to take active part in sport, patriarchy encourages them to become supporting casts to male actors. It also entrenches restrictive, normative and oppressive representations of women in sport.

Drawing on the literature, interviews and anecdotal evidence, Chapter 6 expounds on the ways fandom is used in Nigeria to affirm ethnic identity, collective efficacy and civic pride. The chapter considers how the growth of football fandom in Nigeria has been facilitated by home videos, African Magic and especially the television. The christening of Thierry Henry as *Igwe* (Chief or Monarch) in Nigeria and *Atcheyya* (Chairman or leader) in Malawi shows that men football fandom is a social movement with potential to unite nationalities and subjectivities. At the same time, however, it can exacerbate gender inequalities and the internalization of the social view that men athletes are more entertaining and more important than women athletes.

Chapter 7 on the one hand explores the space that men and women occupy or do not occupy in the Mauritius sport landscape in order to highlight how gender intersects with physical activity and competitiveness. As depicted in the previous chapters, the old assumptions about gender role, socialization and occupation of separate spheres by men and women are also at play in Mauritius. The low participation of Mauritian women in sport and their under-representation in sport management not only short-changes society due to underutilization of available potentials, but also promotes social injustice by excluding a major segment of society from the public sport and recreational spaces. Chapter 8 on the other hand, provides examples of women who use their interests and involvement in

sport to contest their subordination to men. The narratives of three women soccer players show, however, the difficulty of pursuing a career as women in a male dominated sport in the absence of system-wide attention to sponsorship and employment equity issues. The chapter reiterates the need for systematic support of talented female athletes and the transformation of gender relations in the sport and recreational arenas.

Chapter 9 focuses on the issues of sponsorship – an area that calls for greater egalitarianism across Africa. The chapter historicizes the development of women soccer in South Africa, calling attention to both the repressive and transformative power of corporate sponsors in relation to sport development at grassroots and elite levels. Citing the example of Sasol and women football in South Africa as a *prima facie* example of transformative sponsorship, the chapter argues that micro, meso and macro levels of support over a long period is the life-blood of any sport programme or sector. The chapter suggests the need to transform sport sponsorship by infusing its processes with gender-equality and other feminist concerns.

Although the questions around the economic and symbolic impact of the 2010 FIFA World Cup have received considerable attention in media and academic circles, the issue of Football for Hope Centres to be built in 20 disadvantaged communities across Africa has not been adequately explored. This is the issue addressed in Chapter 10. Using a number of discursive lenses, the chapter scrutinizes the intentions, assumptions and regime of gender relations implicit in the ‘20 Centres for 2010’ project. The chapter demonstrates how the project’s discourses rest on romanticized notions of football as a tool for social development and control, and modernist ideologies concerning space, power, prowess and social difference that enable different sport and development economies. The ‘20 Centres for 2010’ reveals both the potential of sport event legacy to benefit the community and its capacity to exclude by institutionalizing inequality and privilege based on gender, age, class and location.

On the whole, this volume raises issues of importance that need to be investigated further to enable a deeper and nuanced understanding of the complexities of gender and sport in Africa’s development. The questions raised by this chapter for further research include:

1. How have women demonstrated agency, collective efficacy and resistance against their violation in African sport settings? What policy lessons may be learnt from the tactics or strategies of resistance employed by girls and women subjected to sexual harassment in sport?
2. How do women experience and contest violation and brutalisation in sport arenas?

3. What is the nexus between sport and spatial politics?
4. What are the implications of the *juju* economies for engendering inclusive sport development?
5. What are the ironic effects of hegemonic masculinity on male athletes in Africa?
6. What identity politics are played out on women on sport fields and stands? How do the language and songs of female sport fans embody and disembody sexuality, patriarchy, and agency?
7. What are the opportunities arising from mega sport events like the 2010 FIFA World Cup to contest gender subordination and democratize sport spaces and symbols in Africa?
8. What forms do subversive and repressive representations of women athletes take? Which forms of feminine sporting practices are accorded greater cultural and symbolic power? Which of the representations in the mass media can be or have been applied advantageously and innovatively by the women athletes?
9. What are intersections between gender, religion, ethnicity, race, age, sexuality, (dis)ability, socio-economic status and the political economy of sport-based development projects?

Greater attention to these and other issues by African scholars will strengthen the case for reducing inequalities in sport opportunities and thinking critically about the limits and potentials of modern sport in Africa's development.

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