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Playing in the Field of Gender

A Study on the Inclusion of
Boys in Sport Programs for
Gender Equity



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The interest for this research was first developed when I started my internship at Women Win, as part of my master's program. Women Win is a not-for-profit organization that uses sport as a strategy for the empowerment of young women and girls around the world¹. Having worked there for a few weeks and starting to get acquainted with Women Win's work, I have come to know the power that sport has as a tool for change and I have wanted to explore this further. Sport seems to offer a fertile ground for social change. Through the fun, satisfaction and development of life skills that it entails, sport opens the way for discussions and interventions that are of utmost importance in the process of questioning stereotypes and normative behaviors and promoting gender equitable ideas and practices.

Furthermore, my internship introduced me to the ongoing debate about the inclusion of boys and men in programs that aim to promote women's rights and gender equity². As will be further discussed in the following chapters, over the past few years there has been a growing understanding that issues related to gender inequity, such as gender-based violence, can only be addressed if the whole of the community, and not exclusively women, are involved. Gender inequity is a social phenomenon that takes place in interaction, and thus it is imperative to include both women and men in the process of transformation towards more gender equitable attitudes and perceptions of gender roles. In addition, what I have found extremely interesting is that including boys and men in gender equity programs is beneficial not only for women, but also for boys and men themselves. Girls and women are reasonably at the center of interest of sport programs promoting gender equity, since gender inequity is more often than not synonymous to the perception of women as inferior and victimized. However, engaging boys in those programs on the one hand is an investment in girls, as will be explored in the following chapters, and on the other hand it has the potential to transform the lives of the boys –and men– themselves, since they too have a lot to

¹ See womenwin.org

² In gender literature there is often confusion between the terms *gender equity* and *gender equality*, which are often used interchangeably. According to UNFPA (www.unfpa.org) however, there is a crucial difference between the two terms. *Gender equality* points to equal access to opportunities, social services and resources for both women and men in all aspects of human life. Nevertheless, equal access does not necessarily secure equal outcomes for women and men. Gender difference, as well as other aspects, which are the results of patriarchal gender norms, such as unequal participation in decision-making between women and men, interfere with the impact of such services and resources. In other words, *gender equity* refers to the way women and men are treated on equal terms and respecting their differences in order to be able to enjoy equally positive outcomes. In this study I use the term *gender equity* highlighting the crucial role of the acknowledgment of gender difference in the struggle for a gender equitable world.

gain from adopting more gender equitable attitudes and from living in societies where gender roles are not so rigidly prescribed according to patriarchal demands.

As will be presented in detail in Chapter 2, “gender” has falsely been perceived as equivalent to “female” (Barker et al. 10), in the same rationale that “race³” has been supposed to mean “black” etc. This is because of the fact that a distinction is made between the dominant gender, race, and so on, and the substandard one. Dominant gender (male) appears as gender zero, as a gender by default, and as the dominant one it does not get paid attention to. Nowadays there is a conviction among scholars and finally a growing understanding in society that, on the contrary, men have everything to do with it, and the reason is twofold: on the one hand, it is clear that, as is aforementioned, social change in general, and gender equity in particular, cannot be achieved by engaging only women. Even if women have been suffering from the results of stereotyping and gender norms prescribed by patriarchy to a much larger extent than men, it is still true that men are also restricted and oppressed because of expected behaviors and roles in regard to gender norms. Having established that, one can easily see how disturbing and breaking these norms can be beneficial for both genders. In this context, my aim in this study is to explore one of the facets of the inclusion of men and boys in programs –and particularly sport programs– designed to promote gender equity. In this way, I hope to contribute to this ongoing debate among scholars, governmental policy makers and NGOs about feminism and its relation to men⁴.

The central aim of my research is to investigate how the engagement of boys in sport programs for the empowerment of women and their interaction with girls and women within these programs contributes to gender equity. Breaking this question down, one can observe the different components that my study will attempt to provide more thorough knowledge of.

In Chapter 2 I will explore the attributes of sport which make it a fertile ground for teaching in general and “teaching” gender equity in particular. This will be useful to establish why sport is an effective tool to work with for women’s rights. As mentioned above, sport programs for gender equity see the empowerment of women as their central objective because it is women that have been put in a vulnerable position because of non-equitable practices. It is precisely this empowerment of women, however, that also serves as a starting point for boys and men to be able to

³ In this essay I use ‘*race*’ in brackets, in an effort to clearly disconnect my use of the term from any essentialist interpretations and in agreement with Omi and Winant who perceive it as “an unstable and ‘de-centred’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (68).

⁴ Feminism here is used to refer to the ideological approaches as well as the efforts made in order to disturb gender norms and move towards gender equity.

question gender norms and alter their own attitudes, in a way that benefits both women and men.

In Chapter 3 I will focus on the inclusion of boys in the aforementioned programs, studying the ways in which their participation can contribute to making steady steps towards gender equity. In this framework I will investigate both how the boys' inclusion can be beneficial for women, and, at the same time, how it can be beneficial for the boys themselves. My research will include practices from several programs run by NGOs in different developing countries, which involve young boys and girls from low-income families living in poor neighborhoods with limited or no access to education.

This research will not focus on a specific demographic population, because, as will be explained in the Data collection section, the focus of this research is not to provide a thorough understanding of the personal experiences of a specific group with a coherent class, gender and ethnic identity. Rather, it aims to provide a collection or a sample of different practices and approaches which include men and boys in the promotion of gender equitable attitudes and relations, designed and implemented by NGOs in different developing countries. In parallel, I will study the reasons behind, as well as the results from the boys' inclusion in relation to the different approaches in the design and implementation of the sport programs.

Furthermore, in my effort to answer my primary research question I will start by answering several sub questions:

- What is there to gain by including boys in sport programs for gender equity?
- To what extent should boys be included, in what ways and with what kind of limitations?
- What kind of results can we observe so far?
- How can the knowledge gained from those NGOs and their practices be expanded and used by other NGOs that use sport as a strategy for promoting gender equity in other parts of the world?

In the *Data collection and analysis* section I will explain in depth how I plan to get answers to these questions.

1.1. Literature review and definitions

Over the past decade there has been a growing interest in the power of sport as an effective tool for development and peace. More and more practices, both initiated by NGOs and as parts of governmental policies, employ sport as a means of approaching

goals related to the development of communities and countries in general, recognizing and appreciating the qualities of sport such as its low cost, fun and immediacy, as valuable aids in this process (Sport for Peace and Development Working Group 3). As a consequence, more and more scholars are starting to pay attention to this phenomenon and discussing its multiple facets. Therefore, it seems that at this point it is of utmost importance to establish a common ground of what is meant by terms that are used when speaking about sport for development, sport for peace, and sport for women's rights, in order to avoid inconsistencies and restrictions regarding the terms involved in the practices and theory behind them. Gilbert and Bennett cite a series of definitions around sport, development and peace to conclude in what they believe to be the most accurate and detailed so far. In relation to the context of their research, they adjust the existing definition of sport posed by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace as:

[A] fundamental human right [which] involves all forms of physical activity that contribute to the development of physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games. (4)

In this way they emphasize the fact that sport, and play in its broader sense, has been established by article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as a fundamental human right (Beutler 38). At the same time, they insist on a perception of sport in its wider sense, including but not exclusive to organized sport, but also encompassing less organized forms such as play and game. Finally, they draw attention to the benefits of sport in physical and mental health, as well as in interpersonal relations and community building. In this thesis I will adopt this definition and this approach to sport in its wider sense, with an emphasis on its role in social development.

When it comes to development, Gilbert and Bennett explain that this is an even more complex term. Specifically, they adopt the UN term *sustainable* development, as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, Brundtland Report, qtd. in Gilbert and Bennet 4). Focusing on human development, which entails the empowerment and life skills that are of particular interest for this thesis, they believe that the most complete definition of human development comes from Burd-Sharps and Perez's (qtd. in Gilbert and Bennett 5):

Human development can be defined as a process of enlarging people's choices and building human capabilities (the range of things people can be and do), enabling them to: live a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge, have a decent standard of living and participate in the life of their community and the decisions that affect their lives.

This definition points to the connections between development and women's empowerment as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Acknowledging the fact that, as defined by the United Nations, sport for development goes hand in hand with sport for peace, Gilbert and Bennett find Czempiel's (qtd. in Gilbert and Bennett 6) definition of peace to be the most accurate and appropriate for the purposes of the discussion around the universal movement of sport for development and peace: "Peace can be defined as a 'process-orientated pattern of the international system, which is marked by decreasing violence and increasing distributive justice". An interesting remark that Gilbert and Bennett make is on the term of *sport for development and peace* per se. They explain that they have made a change in the order of the term, instead opting for *peace and development*, a preference which underlines the causal relationship between the two. As they observe, development cannot take place without peace, and can only start when at least some aspects of peace are established, after the ending of whatever cause had disrupted it, be it war, conflict or natural disasters (2). In this thesis I will use the term with their version in mind, since it emphasizes that peace is an indispensable precondition for development, a fact that I find to be of particular importance in the context of gender equity.

Within the process of peace and development, it is important to pay particular attention to what this development means for women. Women are often ignored in plans for development, as their special position in society is not recognized. Also policy makers often fail to acknowledge the fact that women are multiply marginalized, double victimized and affected by conflict and poverty in a larger degree than men. Patriarchal structures of society are oblivious to the hierarchical gender relations and the vulnerabilities that women suffer from precisely due to these structures. Therefore, when the negative repercussions of, for instance, conflict or poverty are discussed by governmental organizations and policy makers, they are discussed from a gender-blind perspective and the fact that women are affected by these factors in different ways than men is overlooked. The United Nations have been concerned with this issue, and have developed specific programs and projects in order to give the particularity of the predicament of women in developing regions the attention that it calls for. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)⁵ is designed with the aim of including the promotion of gender equity and women's empowerment in the agenda of programs fighting poverty. Their general goal is women's equal treatment in the private and public sector, that women's rights are respected and observed and that they can participate on equal terms in the planning

⁵ See UNDP website:

www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/overview.html

and decision-making that shapes their lives and the lives of their families and communities (www.undp.org).

It is encouraging that there is an increasing understanding about the ways in which the role of women is of particular importance in the development of a community or even a country as a whole. Women Win explains the connections between the empowerment of women and the vision of development and eradication of poverty. Women Win mentions that women are often forced to make decisions that become obstacles in the way of their personal and social development, decisions that more often than not concern their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Women and girls have to face a series of additional vulnerabilities which stem from their role in the society as it has been prescribed by gender norms and patriarchal demands. The Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women, carried out by WHO, observes that 70% of the female population has at least once in their lives experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. Additionally, women and girls are often victims of gender-based violence:

Gender-based violence is internationally accepted as any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. This includes, but is not limited to, acts of physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family, community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. These acts include: spousal battery; sexual abuse, including of female children; dowry-related violence; rape, including marital rape; female genital mutilation/cutting and other traditional practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; sexual violence related to exploitation; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in school and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution" (UN Commission on the Status of Women, 2/28/00 qtd in www.womenwin.org).

Gender-based violence is rooted in perceptions of women as inferior human beings who lack agency and are supposed to be (ab)used, manipulated and exploited by men according to the latter's appetite. Young girls are more vulnerable to gender based violence. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2003), half of the sexual assaults on a universal level are against girls younger than 16 years old.

Furthermore, it is observed that although women are active in the job market, they are still being paid less money, excluded from male-dominated sectors, experiencing sexual harassment in their work place and being denied their working rights (UNFPA qtd. in womenwin.org). Women are often excluded from the formal sector of the economy and are forced to stay indoors or work unofficially and often illegally in the domestic space, thus being underpaid and denied social care and security. This stands as a great obstacle in their economic empowerment and independence, not to mention that in some places women are still not allowed to have possessions or to inherit even from a deceased husband. At the same time it affects their state of health, as in this way it is an exclusively male privilege to decide and pay for a woman's visit at a

doctor's or hospital. UNAIDS' Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic mentions that slightly more than 50% of the HIV positive population are women. In sub-Saharan Africa, more women than men are living with HIV, and young women aged 15–24 years are as much as eight times more likely than men to be HIV-positive (ibid). UNFPA (2005, ibid) observes that despite the fact that HIV infection can be prevented, this is often undermined because of unequal participation in decision-making regarding a woman's health as aforementioned, as well as harmful practices and gender-based assaults.

For all the above reasons, it becomes clear that the well-being of women and the fight against their subordination and victimization according to patriarchal gender norms is closely related to the development of the whole of the community. According to Women Win's mission statement:

International authorities, from the World Bank to the United Nations agree that the most effective way to fight poverty in the world is to help girls and women. Research has shown that if you invest in girls, you invest in society, because their education, increased earnings and human development impact their families directly -- the so-called "Girl Effect" (womenwin.org).

Women Win also explains that because of the role that women traditionally have in many societies as caretakers, they are in positions to affect to a very large degree the whole of their community, as every change and development concerning their mentality, the realization and exercise of their rights, their empowerment and their leadership is immediately reflected and benefiting their families and, by extension, their communities (ibid).

In conclusion, Women Win mentions that "[g]lobally it has been acknowledged that without gender equity none of the agreed Millennium Development Goals (2000)⁶ will be achieved in 2015" (ibid). This is because of the fact that to a great extent gender inequity and gender norms are the source of harmful practices that affect both women and men and which perpetuate traditions which constitute important obstacles in human development at large, as will be further explored in Chapter 2.

1.2. Accountability

My interest for this research is based on personal experiences and ideas and I shall make it clear that I am personally involved in it, although not in the sense that the topic really reflects my own experiences. Having grown up as a member of a middle class family in Greece, I have never lived in one of the countries and in the

⁶ See www.unaids.org/en/aboutunaids/unitednationsdeclarationsandgoals/2000millenniumdevelopmentgoals/

socioeconomic context that is under study here; however, the topic is of particular interest to me and affects me personally. On the one hand, my knowledge of the subject comes from my personal engagement during my internship. On the other hand, my interest in masculinities and the role of men within feminist studies grew larger after some personal experiences that took place after I enrolled in the Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics Master's Program. For example, after mentioning to men the title of my studies many of them have been asking me half in a joking, half in a serious way if this means that I hate all men. These "jokes" reflect a very serious phenomenon, since in society nowadays many people still believe that fighting for women's rights equals wishing to turn men into the inferior gender that women have been for a long time. However, being a feminist does not equate to hating men and feminist aspirations can in fact benefit men too.

Also, the discussion and the current request made by the students in our program to change its title to Comparative *Gender* Studies in Culture and Politics (instead of *Women's* Studies), reflects the increasing understanding that gender exists in interaction and is constructed as such for both women and men. Women and men are affected in different ways and to different extents by gender norms, and patriarchy has created a vast gap between female vulnerability and inferiority and male privilege. Still, the rigidity of gender norms puts both genders in a predicament and is restrictive to both women and men. What is more, fixed gender roles sustain each other, for example the more men are forced to behave in a certain way for fear of not appearing to be manly enough, the more they treat women in a demeaning way, according to the same demands that define what it means to "be a man". These observations underline the urgency to take masculinities into account within a feminist perspective, and to make visible the connections between men and women and the ways that both genders are socio-politically constructed and have been affected and suffered from prescribed gender roles and expectations related to gender norms as dictated by patriarchy.

1.3 Epistemology and research methods: Data collection, analysis and presentation

This research aims to explore the power relations between low-income women and men in developing countries. It studies programs that are culture specific and that take into account socioeconomic differences between different populations, as well as other important identity markers, such as race and ethnicity. In addition, the programs that I will study, as well as my approach to this research, attempt to disturb notions of fixed identity and emphasize the identity-construction, deconstruction and

reconstruction process, exploring it in relation to systems of knowledge production. Hesse-Biber and Sharlene Naggy argue that “postmodernism asks questions about the nature of knowledge and knowledge building” as well as that it is an epistemology that emphasizes the power relations which condition the shaping of the subjects (84). Hence, for all the above reasons, this study belongs to the Post Modern Epistemology.

The main source of my data will be articles, books and guides written from NGOs in the field, aimed at spreading the knowledge of successful examples of the inclusion of boys in gender equitable (sport) programs and encouraging a culture-specific adaptation and implementation by other programs in other parts of the world. The findings from these sources will be studied through content analysis, defined by Hesse-Biber & Leavy as “the systematic study of texts and other cultural products or nonliving data forms” (227). My reading of these sources will be mostly along the grain; the sources are used as a way of collecting information about their practices, but, as will be shown later on, the pieces studied are already employing a reading against the grain as far as traditional practices and dominant ideas are concerned.

Additionally, I will add to the knowledge gained from these sources with a limited set of interviews. It should be clear that the aim of these interviews is not to gain an insight into the lived experiences of people participating in the programs. Rather, my aim is to provide more specific pieces of information regarding the techniques employed in the engagement of boys in sport programs for gender equity, successful and less successful practices, and the reasons that led to the realization that the boys’ inclusion constitutes an imperative for gender equity. I have interviewed four people and have divided my interviews in two groups.

I interviewed Cecile Lavergne, Operations Manager, and Goal⁷ Facilitator, Futbol Con Corazón, Colombia and Beatriz Condori Project Coordinator and Goal Facilitator, Gregoria Apaza, Bolivia. Both organizations are program partners of Women Win, and I chose to interview these women in order to find out more about the ways in which they work with girls, because I had already been informed by Women Win staff who visited them during field trips, that they are engaging boys in interesting, worth-studying ways. Ideally, I would have preferred to carry out these interviews in person, by visiting them and getting the chance to actually observe their work. Due to restricted time and financial resources, however, this was not possible. Nor were Skype interviews possible because of the time difference and their very heavy schedule in combination with my own time restrictions. Therefore, I eventually

⁷ *Goal* is a development program created by Standard Chartered which combines sport and life skills education for girls aged 12-18. The curriculum is designed as a guideline to be adopted through culture-specific approaches. The Goal curriculum is available free of charge under a Creative Commons license through Women Win (For more information see goalprogramme.org)

sent them by email my questions in written form, and they also replied in writing, while I had the chance to ask them to elaborate more if needed with follow up questions.

I also interviewed face to face two members of the staff of Women Win, Learn Director Sarah Murray and Executive Director Maria Bobenrieth. The reason for this choice is that both of them have years of experience working with program partners, they have spent a lot of time visiting them and evaluating their work, and I expected that they would provide me with some useful insights on practices that are related with the boys' engagement in sport programs for gender equity on a comparative level, reciting anecdotes from different organizations, as well as sharing the knowledge that they have gained over the years on the matter.

Both live and written interviews were semi-structured, in the sense that I had specific questions in mind to cover, but I gave my respondents the chance to answer freely, sometimes covering a question before I had articulated it (in face-to-face interviews), while I could follow up with further questions if needed and was not preoccupied in paying much attention to the order of the questions, generally keeping in mind the areas that I wanted to cover but being flexible and open in every other way (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 115-116).

The different kinds of data will be presented in a parallel topic-based way. I will not divide my data and findings into categories according to the different types of collection, but rather, I will structure my essay moving from one aspect of the topic to another following a logical stream, and for each aspect I will bring in new knowledge combined from the different sources that relate to it.

1.4. Limitations

As I have already mentioned, this is not a research that focuses on personal experiences of people involved in the programs, living in the community, or working for the organizations that will be studied. By focusing on guides and interviewing with the aim of finding out more about the practices in use, I realize I am missing a very important part, which is exactly the reason why these programs exist in the first place and the target that they have: the living experiences of the people who benefit from those programs. However, in this research I wish to focus more on how these programs were seen as a necessity, how they have been working so far, how they can be adapted for use in different regions, and what designers should take into account when planning and implementing them, as well as how the boys' engagement has changed and can change in the future. The results of these projects will be discussed

but only to a certain degree in order to justify in which terms we can distinguish between more and less successful approaches.

Focusing exclusively on the results and impact of such programs would certainly be a very interesting and insightful endeavor for future research and would require an expanded time span, in order to be in a position to evaluate impact on social change which of course does not happen overnight. Additionally it would be hard or impossible to conduct such a research without any field observations, which would require living in or at least visiting the field over a prolonged period of time, which was not an option for me at this point.

1.5. Relevance and added value

As discussed in the Literature Review section, over the past decade there has been an increasing interest regarding the relation of sport with peace and development. In addition, there has been some considerable emphasis put on the role that women can play in this process, given their position and double-sided vulnerabilities in poor communities, but also their assets in terms of the multiple ways in which they can influence their communities, as previously mentioned. Within this framework I wish to explore what is the role of sport programs in the process of the empowerment of women. In addition, I wish to discuss how sport programs designed for women's rights can positively affect the lives of boys and men as well. The core objectives of such programs such as the empowerment of women and the promotion of more gender equitable practices are interrelated with gender equity in general, and, hence, as was previously mentioned and will be further explained in Chapter 3, men can benefit from it as well. According to Kimmel:

Over the past three generations, women's lives have been utterly and completely transformed – in politics, the military, the workplace, professions and education. But during that time, the ideology of masculinity has remained relatively intact [...] The single greatest obstacle to women's equality today remains the behaviour and attitudes of men. (n.p.)

With this quote Kimmel highlights the urgency to redefine dominant ideas about masculinity, for the sake of both men and women. In this thesis I will study how this can be accomplished through the boys' participation in the aforementioned sport programs.

In this effort I will divide my thesis into two parts. In Chapter 2 I will explore the power of sport as a tool for change, and as a fertile ground for "teaching". I will present the findings of my interviews on that matter, as well as what I have learned from my bibliographical research and I will also attempt to show how sport can be perceived as "situatedness", and I will draw some connections between sport and

situated knowledges as defined by Donna Haraway. In Chapter 3 I will focus on the role of men, investigating how they have been included so far in programs for gender equity. Theorizing on gender difference I will draw attention to the limitations of the appropriateness of their inclusion using examples. Finally I will discuss how women can benefit from men and boys' inclusion, and, discussing aspects of masculinities I will emphasize on what there is for men to gain from their engagement with gender equity programs.

Chapter 2: The power of sport

Breaking down the principle research question of this project, I first want to explore the qualities that sport has, which make it an effective tool to work with in the field of peace and development, and, by extension, in the field of gender equity, since gender equity has been acknowledged as an integral part in the process for peace and development. In this chapter I will explore the reasons why I believe that sport, thanks to its immediacy and its close relation to the body, can be used as an effective vehicle for knowledge production. In addition, I will study the way in which this knowledge, produced through and in sport, can lead to a kind of education that questions existing gender norms and promotes gender equity.

2.1. The bright and dark sides of sport

The positive aspects of sport have been mentioned and analyzed in various publications and policy makers are more and more appreciating, investigating and trying to make use of them. However, it is important to keep in mind that as Gilbert & Bennett argue, “sport is not a panacea and does not exist purely in some utopian society” (Gilbert & Bennett 2). As will be further explored in this chapter, sport has a dark side as well: it is part of the society and reflects both its vices and its virtues.

Sport helps young girls and boys develop a sense of respect for the body; their own body as well as others’ (Talbot qtd. in Bailey 80). However, in sport the body is at the same time often pushed to its extremes. Many athletes, especially in the professional domain, are urged to make unhealthy choices, like using steroids or abiding by the principles of the “military model” which entails “playing through pain”, (Birrell and Richter; Nelson; Theberge qtd. in Dworkin and Messner, 25) ignoring and suppressing pain, instead of acknowledging its role as a natural alarm for threatening situations. According to Messner, adolescents are often encouraged by coaches “to hide and repress their emotional and physical pain and not to show their vulnerabilities” (163). Especially boys, as well as girls who want to survive in a male-dominated environment, are from a very young age taught to hide their pain under bursts of anger: “the hardening of boys teaches them to transform any feelings of hurt, pain or sorrow into the more ‘appropriately masculine’ expressions of contained anger or stoic silence” (ibid). At the same time, girls who are doing ice-skating or gymnastics for example, are from a very early age coached usually by men who can be abusive, demanding that they perform through pain as well as stay “small, thin and prepubescent” (Ryan qtd. in Dworkin and Messner 20). In this way these girls are lead

to suffer from severe injuries and develop formidable eating disorders (Dworkin and Messner 20).

Physical education is also known to contribute to the building of self-confidence and self-esteem (Talbot qtd. in Bailey 80). On the other hand, as Maria Bobenrieth, Executive Director Women Win, (personal interview) stated, there are many cases of youngsters being bullied by coaches aiming for high performances, hurting in this way and lowering their self-esteem, which often results in a traumatized adolescence and more often than not in the adolescents abandoning sport altogether.

Coaches play a very significant part in adolescent athletes' lives and their powerful influence can have either very positive or very negative consequences. Sarah Murray, Learn Director Women Win, (personal interview) argues that an inspiring coach is the most likely person to positively influence a young boy or girl not only in terms of the sport that s/he is training them in, but more importantly in their general attitude, character formation and social behavior. As she explains, there is a built-in hierarchical structure in the design of sport, which makes children look up to their coaches and crave for their approval, attention and care. Coaches are probably the most influential figures in adolescents' lives, and this is because of the power of sport. Adolescents are given a very tangible reason to admire their coaches: the coach's own performance in the sport that they find pleasure in and are trying to become good at. Coaches are both the objects of athletes' admiration for their own accomplishments and the subjects of training and facilitating them to become better athletes. Because of the coaches' latter position, adolescents directly associate them with the extremely positive feeling of accomplishment and pride when they actually manage to become better, acknowledging that their guidance is an integral part of their success. It is exactly this combination of the coaches as highly-skilled athletes and inspiring facilitators that puts the trainers in such a high position in the athletes' eyes. This advantageous position of the coaches allows for an incredibly positive or negative impact on children's lives, as they can as well serve as influential positive role models, or traumatize children for life, in ways that range from bullying to physical or sexual abuse (MenEngage and UNFPA 2).

However, sport also has the potential of providing safe spaces where participants can share experiences, thoughts and feelings, establish stable and healthy relationships among children or between children and adults, and can claim their voice and become agents of change by transferring those positive experiences to their homes and the rest of the community. Bailey argues that sport can have very positive effects in relation to the "social capital", defined as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person" (Coleman qtd. in Bailey 75). Bailey argues

that for Putnam⁸, social capital is directly linked to social networks, and it is participation in shared activities which most effectively creates and strengthens such networks (Bailey 75). As Bailey goes on to explain, Putnam's work observes that high levels of social capital are proportionate to indicators of social well-being, such as "lower crime rates, higher level of economic prosperity, improved health and improved educational attainment" (Putnam qtd. in Bailey 76). By extension then, since sport constitutes one type of such social networks, involvement in sport activities can have very positive results in relation to the welfare, prosperity and security of a given society.

On the other side of the coin, and because of the fact that most coaching positions globally are still occupied by men, organized physical activities are reflecting traditionally male-valued qualities such as "hierarchy, competitiveness and aggression" (Hall qtd. in Dworkin and Messner 20). Once taught through sport, these negative, patriarchal male qualities are transferred outside the field. According to MenEngage and UNFPA exercise/play and violence are not essentially linked; however, violence is socially related with sport (7). Many sports promote negative masculine stereotypes, characterized by over-competitiveness and aggression (Promundo et al. 23). In football games, for example, hooligans are given a motive for violent behavior, after a quarrel between players. Additionally, hooligans, for example, often "take the symbolic territorial battles of the playing field and recreate them in violent and destructive conflicts on the sidelines" (ibid), which practically means that sport is very often perceived as a field where men's aggressiveness is traditionally tolerated, expected, defused and stoked. Women are often the victims of such aggressive behaviors associated with sport in one way or the other. For instance, a recent study observes that incidents of domestic violence in the UK increase to a third after football matches with England playing, irrespectively to whether the team wins or loses the game (Evans qtd. in ibid).

In addition to the fact that sport has the potential to promote violence, it is also likely to reflect and emphasize power relations between groups of people of different gender or 'race' etc. According to Dworkin and Messner, "organized sport, as we know it was created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by and for white middle class men to bolster a sagging ideology of "natural superiority" over women and over race -and class- subordinated groups of men" (Crosset, Kimmel, McKay, Messner, Whitson qtd. in Dworkin and Messner 17). Therefore, although sport has the

⁸ Robert D. Putnam is a political scientist and professor of public policy at Harvard University. His most famous work is his pioneering and controversial study *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Schuster, 2000) where, as the title suggests, he argues that the USA have experienced a collapse of social capital with serious consequences.

potential to convey messages of cooperation, team spirit and solidarity, which could pave the way for antiracist and antisexist behaviors, this is not always the case. For example, as Dworkin and Messner observe, African American athletes' impressive performances in certain sports, such as running, as well as their struggle to escape from racist and underprivileged environments through their recognition as successful athletes, "reproduce rather than [...] challenge current race, class and gender relations of power" (Dworkin and Messner 19). This due to the fact that on the one hand it is precisely these athletes' subordinate position that makes it an imperative to desperately seek a way out of the hard conditions of living which they have had to endure so far: therefore their performances are to a certain degree immediately linked to their social subordination. On the other hand, African American athletes' extraordinary performances and the way these performances are covered by media which portray the black body as hyper-active, reinforce notions of racial difference and the western discourse around the hyper-sexualized and by extension, less human and more animal-like black body characterized by extraordinary strength, speed etc, but also by limited cognitive capabilities (Carrington 94).

For all the above reasons the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation asserts: "[a]s great as its potential may be, sport [...] [a]s a cultural phenomenon, reflects society in all its complexities and contradictions" (Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation qtd. in Gilbert and Bennett 2). However, when certain values and principles are observed, sport has the potential to function as an extremely effective tool in terms of personal development as well as social behavior. This is precisely on account of the fact that sport is part of society, and a mirror to both society's positive aspects, which can be emphasized through it, and the negative ones, for which sport can provide the ground to be addressed and more easily bringing to surface sensitive issues and behaviors that need to be changed.

2.2. Eyes on the ball: Sport as *situated knowledge*

As has been explained in the previous section, sport very actively affects people's attitudes by creating powerful role models and by promoting certain types of behaviors which are encouraged within the framework of interaction among the members of a team, as well as between the team and the spectators of the game. Having elaborated on that, in the following sections I will argue that sport constitutes a form of education in the sense of education as a practice of embodied knowledge production and distribution as an ideological state apparatus in Althusserian terms, as well as the interrelation of these two facets of education.

Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), according to Althusser, differ from the Repressive State Apparatus as defined by Carl Marx, in the sense that the former function primarily by ideology and only secondarily by violence and (concealed or symbolic) repression (Althusser 1488-1491). In this way, ISAs such as school, church and family, promote, sustain and are sustained by the dominant ideology of the ruling class. ISAs use “punishment, expulsion, selection etc to discipline not only the shepherds but also the flocks” (ibid: 1491). Sport is a form of education; as such it functions as an ISA, making use of all of the aforementioned practices of disciplining the subjects, and encouraging certain behaviors, promoting certain values and disseminating specific ideas that stem from the aspirations and interests of the ruling class. Thus, as far as this research is concerned, sport as an ISA reflects and reproduces traditional patriarchal values, such as traditional rigid gender roles and responsibilities. I will explore this further in a later section.

For now I wish to claim that the power of sport also stems from the immediate, active, entertaining, embodied experiences that it offers, and gives it the potential not only to reproduce social and gender norms, but also to question and resist them just as effectively. In the following section I will explain how sport can be perceived as a form of *situated knowledge*, as the term was used by feminist theorist Donna Haraway. I will also argue that, as such, sport can occupy a critical position in the process of knowledge production, as the latter is related to the process of learning, taking for granted, internalizing and proliferating dominant ideas about gender norms.

Donna Haraway’s *situated knowledges*

Situated knowledges is a term used by Donna Haraway for what she describes as the most objective and honest knowledge-production approach. In “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (1988) Haraway provides a critique on various approaches of knowledge production, and, without rejecting them altogether, she highlights some of their blind spots as well as the importance of being aware of those, while still engaging with them and benefiting from their advantages.

Haraway opens her essay with a critique of traditional Western science as the most dominant knowledge-production system. She points out that this system is based on a division between the subject and the object of knowledge, a “they” that produces knowledge by observing the “we” which is under study (575). This “imagined ‘they’” (ibid) stands for a vague image of powerful white male technocrats, scientists and philosophers that produce “Truth” from their highly equipped laboratories. She argues that this “they” appears to be transcending the world and producing value-free

knowledge. Disembodied, it can only be described as a mere eye and mind that is all-knowing and impartial. In juxtaposition, the “we” which is the object of knowledge, constitutes a mere case study, is “not allowed *not* to have a body” (ibid, my emphasis), and is reduced to this mindless, blind body. The “we” is merely the object of the gaze, and prevented from returning that gaze. It is banned from the process of knowledge production because its bodily experiences are considered to contaminate the process of the acquisition of objective knowledge. In other words, this “they”, presumably disembodied and unbiased, has the exclusive right of producing objective and absolute knowledge precisely because of its disembodiment, while the “we” should be prohibited from the whole process because its embodiment is considered a hinderance to objectivity.

Haraway argues that this western notion of an all-encompassing, absolute, unbiased truth is nothing more than a phantasy, precisely because this distinction between the subject and object of knowledge is only imaginary. As human subjects we are never outside of, so to speak, the case in study; on the contrary, we are part of it. We are always already situated and embedded in the knowledge production process, and every claim of revealing one side of a supposed “Truth” is nothing but merely our own understanding of an always-in-the-making, ever-changing reality, as we are constructed in it, and as it is constructed through our engagement with it (ibid).

Although our society still operates in a positivist mode where science, as a male-dominated patriarchal institution, is still presented as and considered to produce impartial, absolute and non-negotiable knowledge, there are many examples that prove that science is in fact biased⁹. This point is very important for this study. Science in this positivist, absolutist, patriarchal form, has functioned as the rhetoric that sustains non-equitable practices against women. As it will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, scientific findings related to gender difference have been presented to legitimize women’s inferiority. This supposedly ‘scientifically proven’ inferiority serves as a justification for men’s domination over women which takes a variety of forms, ranging from women’s limited decision-making, to their exclusion from leadership positions or being prohibited from appearing in the public sphere.

However, as Haraway states, the challenge is not to show that science is biased (578); the trap, on the contrary, is that revealing its bias could lead to a massive rejection of all scientific knowledge acquired altogether. As Haraway very smartly puts it “we

⁹ See for example: Harding, Sandra. “Voyages of Discovery: Imperial and Scientific” *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms and Epistemologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998: 39-54 and Martin, Emily, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1991: 485-501.

ended up with one more excuse for not learning any post-Newtonian physics and one more reason to drop the old feminist self-help practices of repairing our own cars. They're just texts anyway, so let the boys have them back" (ibid). Therefore the question is not whether this kind of knowledge is biased or not; knowledge is always biased and, hence, the objective is not to find a way to reach an imaginary unbiased universal truth, but rather to understand and be aware of the fact that this kind of truth does not actually exist. Haraway highlights the similarity between positivism and relativism. She describes the former as "the God-Trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (581) and the latter as "the way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally" (584). In this way she argues that relativism is not a counterpart to positivism but in fact very close to it, as it repeats a totalizing gesture, in the sense that both approaches fail to take into account the agent and the perspective of the subject of knowledge, which is always embedded in the process of knowledge production.

The relativist rejection of scientific knowledge acquired, stems from a positivist aspiration of an absolute knowledge, and the positivist fear in front of the realization that this kind of knowledge cannot be reached. As such, relativism nurtures a kind of nostalgia for the imaginary Truth because nihilistic reactions that reject all scientific knowledge reinforce the craving for an all-encompassing Truth. In other words, the subjects who have not been trained to think outside a positivist framework are threatened by the relativist rejection of knowledge. Hence, since they are not given an alternative system of knowledge production and acquisition, they essentially return to positivist ideas, eager to voluntarily forget their doubts and questioning of this system, because no knowledge at all seems as a greater menace than biased knowledge. In addition, rejecting all knowledge acquired, comes in sharp contrast to the subjects' daily observations and experiences, through which, as it is mentioned above, knowledge is always produced.

More specifically, in terms of perceptions about gender, realizing that gender difference has been presented in a biased way could lead, in a relativist gesture, to a rejection of gender difference as an identity marker altogether. However, pretending that gender difference does not exist can bring about results as negative as the ones caused by its biased misinterpretations. Gender difference does exist, and this is easily observed by the subjects on a daily basis. Therefore, it is easier to resort to positivist over-generalizations and patriarchal interpretations about what this difference means, than to be convinced that it does not exist. Thus, relativist oblivion to gender difference reinforces, rather than challenges, current gender norms that are related to women's inferior position.

The alternative system of knowledge production that Haraway proposes as an exit from this positivist/relativist loop is *situated knowledges*. Haraway emphasizes that the question that we should be asking instead of whether knowledge is biased or not, is rather how we can make this inevitable bias transparent. *Situated knowledges* is not an additive approach that promises that if we find all the pieces we can assemble them and recreate the whole picture –the Truth– because this picture never existed to begin with. The search for the Truth, as explained above, constitutes a positivist objective, and the whole of the puzzle of which *situated knowledges* provides us with only one piece at a time is a positivist totalizing phantasy. Haraway states:

We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not so perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. (Haraway 582-583).

Therefore, instead of mourning the lost phantasy of one singular and absolute Truth, the aim is rather to acknowledge this partiality that does not allow an all-encompassing knowledge, and to embrace it as a system of knowledge production, as long as we are aware and accountable for it. The result is the only honest and objective kind of knowledge that can exist, as this kind of objectivity is not based on an omniscient mind that possesses Truth, but rather on a partial, embodied subject that is aware of and accountable for its limitations.

Sport can serve as an alternative to such positivist approaches to knowledge and truth. Functioning as a type of *situated knowledge*, sport has the potential to offer partial, first-hand, practical knowledge about gender roles and gender difference, that can come in contrast to dominant patriarchal ideas on these matters. As it will be further explored in this chapter, sport offers the opportunity to its participants, both athletes and coaches, to acquire knowledge that is related to gender roles. This knowledge stems from mundane interaction through sport activities and is connected to *situated* experiences which function as examples of roles and behaviors, rather than to generalizations and dominant ideas about what it means to be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy.

Sandra Harding, in “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology” (1993), also criticizes both positivism and relativism and focuses on *strong objectivity* as the most honest way towards knowledge production. According to Harding, strong objectivity is what negates the chasm between the “they” and the “we” since, for her, “strong objectivity requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge” (69). Harding argues that it is not the experiences of women per se that provide feminist claims and preferable knowledge but the

observation and theory that follows (“Feminist Standpoint Epistemology” 124). Haraway seems to be taking this a step further by arguing that “identity, including self-identity, does not produce science; critical positioning does, that is, objectivity” (Haraway 578). This argument is twofold, as on the one hand it suggests that “being” does not equal knowledge until that being is critically reflected upon. On the other hand, identity has to come into contact and be reflected upon in relation to other identities. This is because no identity exists as separate from the social, political, economic and historical parameters that condition it, and the imaginary limits of one’s identity have to be pushed to reveal those connections.

The sport programs that will be discussed in this thesis constitute useful examples of how a combination of self-identity, interaction of identities and critical reflection on identity is used in order to challenge dominant ideas of rigid gender roles and promote gender equitable perceptions and practices. The *situated* experiences that I mentioned above are taken to a broader level, during the discussion sessions that accompany the sport activities. In this way, more general knowledge is produced, but personal experience serves as a starting point, a fact that secures the engagement of the subject, as well as the acknowledgment of her/his engagement in the knowledge production process. Before presenting these programs, however, I first want to explore more in depth the importance of *situated knowledges* not only as a system of knowledge production in general, but more specifically in terms of the role that it can play in education.

Knowledge production and education: *Situated knowledge* in education

Education is very closely related to knowledge production and distribution, and is in fact its most popular and obvious form, as well as the first thing that comes to most people’s minds when thinking about processes of knowledge acquisition. Positivism, as the dominant traditional western conception of knowledge acquisition, has by extension influenced western education and educational curricula design. As a consequence, positivist ideas about the existence of an absolute Truth pervade western education, and schoolteachers and school-book writers are traditionally considered to possess this absolute knowledge and are supposed to deliver it to students, in a top-down linear, narrative way. Paulo Freire (qtd. in Colluci 342) calls this the “banking model” of education, meaning that knowledge is piled up and delivered to students as a finished narrative. Colluci argues that

When information is only narrated, it becomes lifeless and disconnected from reality. Memory rather than critical or independent thinking is what is most highly valued in the banking model of education. This achieves neither true knowledge nor true culture in an education system that, paradoxically, claims to value these two important aspects of our cognitive world (Colluci 343).

This is a crucial remark, because it highlights the fact that this type of a positivist approach to education fails to transmit any kind of knowledge, and this is exactly because this kind of positivist knowledge does not exist. Hence, what is transmitted is not knowledge –since real, objective, embodied knowledge is rejected– but a number of endless pieces of information to memorize, which are supposed to make up the whole puzzle – but only if a student is “smart” enough or studious enough to put the pieces together. This idea manages to serve this type of educational system by putting the blame on the students; in this manner, the real flaws in the roots of this system are meticulously and successfully hidden behind the guilt of the students for not accomplishing an indeed impossible task.

At this point it seems urgent to ask a different question: not if this system achieves true knowledge, which it clearly does not, but if it is really designed with this aim to begin with. Asking this question, it is also important to bear in mind that the knowledge that the educational system is producing and establishing is not restricted in supposedly value-free (technical) information; on the contrary, the way pieces of information are interpreted, presented and established in students’ minds shapes their sociopolitical identities and attitudes, urging them –often through processes of ‘othering’– to imitate, and therefore reproduce, dominant ideas about gender, race, class etc. It is a fact that education is always a political issue and this educational system seems to produce passive recipients, as students are trained as “receiving objects rather than active and conscious beings, or spectators rather than recreators of the world” (Freire qtd. in Colluci 343). If the school produces future citizens, then students who have only been expected to listen, obey, memorize and repeat will inevitably become citizens who imitate and unquestionably perceive as granted norms and dominant ideas in their sociopolitical environment, rather than challenge, question and deconstruct them, as they do not realize “their ability to impact upon and transform their realities” (Colluci 343). On the other hand, a kind of education that, as Freire (qtd. in Colluci 342) argues, aims at the development of students’ self-efficacy, is also connected with praxis, namely with the link between thinking and doing, a teaching that makes the students realize their positioning in their communities and the rest of the world, their accountability as well as the ways and the power they possess, to have an impact on their living realities. This observation is very important for this study, since disturbing stereotypes, which is entailed in the promotion of gender equity, requires citizens with the latter qualities. I will further explore on this point later on.

As discussed above, this combination of action and contemplation also agrees with Haraway’s argument that knowledge is produced through a combination of lived experiences and a critical reflection on those experiences. The importance of the

relationship between thinking and doing is even more apprehensible in Ackerman's essay "From De-contextualized to Situated Knowledge: Revisiting Piaget's Water-Level Experiment". Ackerman compares two approaches of knowledge acquisition, Piaget's stage theory¹⁰ and what she calls the *differential* approach, and concludes that a combination of the two views is what she thinks is the most successful one: "both 'diving in' and 'stepping back'" (Ackerman 3). She argues that taking account of differences in perception is important in the knowledge-production process, but also stepping back and reflecting upon a situation, as Piaget's approach suggests, is vital for producing general knowledge based on a particular situation. Ackerman believes that the optimal approach to knowledge acquisition is practical engagement, reflection and re-engagement. She underlines the fact that one can only reflect upon what s/he has experienced (ibid). Haraway's view is similar to that, as she does not accept mere experience as knowledge, but as discussed above, the critical contemplation on it. Therefore what Ackerman suggests is also a critical positioning of identity, as this process can only start by situating oneself and then reflecting on the experience taking into account the limitations of one's situatedness (ibid).

Furthermore, Ackerman makes a crucial comment on the image of the subject of the learning process in the two different approaches that she examines. Piaget's child (student) as she describes him, is "a young Robinson Crusoe" (Ackerman 5) –with all the cultural connotations that this entails: a white, middle class boy- an observant who takes more pleasure in observing and controlling rather than engaging with the object of knowledge. Additionally, Piaget's aim of the knowledge-acquisition process is the reaching of "equilibrium", a point of stability, where everything is connected and everything makes sense (ibid). This optimal point of perfect equilibrium resembles, or rather reflects, the positivist craving for a point zero, when all knowledge is gathered together and the whole picture is assembled in a process of divine, transcendental apocalypse.

In juxtaposition, Papert's idea of knowledge production (representing the differentiated approach to knowledge) as described by Ackerman is an always-in-the-making, ever-changing perception of reality, characterized by "fragility, contextuality and flexibility of knowledge under construction" (ibid). In addition, his "child" is a "reflective practitioner" who enjoys singular experiences rather than general conclusions (6). However, as Ackerman observes, as constructivists both Piaget and Papert do not see the world as "sitting out there waiting to be discovered", but as a

¹⁰ As Ackerman explains, the stage theory focuses on what is common in people's ways of thinking, pointing to the gradual de-contextualization of knowledge. On the contrary, the differentiated approach emphasizes the differences between individuals, and provides a "more situated perspective on knowledge construction" (Ackerman, 1991: 2)

living entity which is influenced and shaped by the learner's interaction with it (4). Nevertheless, the *differential* approach stresses more emphatically the fact that knowledge is by definition situated, in the sense that it is constructed and reconstructed in context, and as such should not be perceived as separate and detached from the situations which shape it (2). This idea is in accordance with Freire's participatory education, which will be further explored in the following section.

The cases of GRS and Gregoria Apaza

Colluci cites the example of Grassroot Soccer (GRS), an organization that uses soccer to provide information and support to young girls and boys in Africa in order to be aware of the risk of HIV infection and protect themselves against it. GRS equips local soccer coaches to apply the sport curriculum and through interactive soccer activities they provide information about HIV and AIDS prevention. Colluci gives the example of one game that participants in GRS programs play which is called "Risk Field". The game is divided into three playing rounds and a follow-up discussion. During the first round the participants are divided into teams and dribble a soccer ball through a line of cones. The team that first manages to go through all the cones without touching any of them wins. In the second round the coaches explain that the cones stand for risks such as unprotected sex, drug and alcohol abuse etc., that could expose them to HIV. The participants are asked to do one push-up for every cone that they hit. This represents the negative consequences of risky behavior on a personal level. During the third round for every cone that a student hits, his/her whole team has to do a push-up. This demonstrates that high-risk behavior that may transmit HIV does not only endanger people on an individual level, but has negative consequences for their family and the rest of the community, represented here by the team (Colluci 346).

The prevention of sexually transmitted infections and the promotion of practices and attitudes that contribute to the participants' and their communities' health are, as will be further discussed in the next chapter, closely connected to a challenging of dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity. For instance, patriarchal representations of dominant masculinity are interrelated with occurrence of high-risk sexual behaviors such as engaging with multiple sex partners and using limited protection. The GRS exercise described above is not only an example of how situatedness in the sense of practical engagement in fun, interactive tasks is a much more effective learning technique in comparison to sterile, passive listening to lectures; it is also an example of how such learning techniques are used in order to facilitate the participants to question dominant perceptions about gender roles, in this

case, for instance, by emphasizing how such perceptions have a negative influence on individuals as well as on their communities.

Beatriz Condori, Project Coordinator and Goal Facilitator, Gregoria Apaza, (personal interview) has given me one example of how Gregoria Apaza works with gender equity through sports activities. As Condori explains, Gregoria Apaza organizes a mixed soccer championship, with a set of unique rules. For example, the male players cannot hold the ball for more than thirty seconds, their goals do not count and the goalkeeper must be a female player. The aim of these rules is that they open the way for a follow-up analysis with regard to gender relations, as male players are forced to give way to their female co-players and at the same time, through their frustration about for instance not being able to score a goal they are in a position to practically understand the frustration of women who have been deprived of *their* right to participate in sport.

Freire emphasizes that it is vital to acknowledge that every perception of any aspect of reality is conditioned by the individual's background knowledge on issues relevant to it, and that, in this way, reality is always in the making (qtd. in Colluci 344). Hence, instead of teaching ready-made "facts" to students, authentic education ought to focus on posing problems and engaging the students in the process of solving them in a dialogical relationship. As Freire argues, only dialogical learning can produce true education, since every kind of real knowledge is produced through dialogical, reciprocal relationships, and boundary-blurring between who is the subject and who is the object of the knowledge production (ibid). Among the dialoguers there should be a horizontal, non-hierarchical relationship, and the conditions of people's realities have to be taken into account in the educational process in order for it to be effective (ibid).

In the examples cited above, the programs are culturally-specific, meaning that particularities of the participants' and their families' beliefs and habits as these are related to or dictated by religion, class or local traditions are taken under consideration. Additionally, the relationship between coaches and players is built on equal terms: even though there is a hierarchical relationship, as the coach is the person who sets the rules and is looked up to, coaches serve more as facilitators, helping the children produce knowledge by asking them questions, rather than teachers who provide ready-made answers (GRS qtd. in Colluci 347). Colluci comments that "education is presented as something to be worked through rather than simply fed to the students" (Colluci 347). In addition, as one coach stated while being interviewed by Colluci, the curriculum is tailored to the needs of the students. For example, if the students already know about HIV transmission and condoms, then there is no point in telling them what they already know; instead the facilitator will focus on the reasons why the use of condoms is limited (Personal Interview S4 qtd. in Colluci, 347). In this

way, by asking questions and non-judgmentally listening to the participants' stories, facilitators are able to reach what they call the "bottom stories" (ibid). These are the specific examples of the general issues discussed during the sport programs, which take place in the community and are more related to the personal, lived experiences of the participants, rather than to general knowledge and over-generalizing rules that might offer valuable pieces of information but are too detached from the particularities of the life of the community to convey their messages and have an impact on the community.

In the above examples sport is used as a form of practical engagement, or, in other words, participatory learning. Colluci comments that "GRS taps into the universal popularity of soccer and the innate interactive qualities of sport to deliver a highly dialogical education structure" (346). This type of learning emphasizes the positioning of the individuals in the knowledge-production process in two ways: on the one hand, the symbolic rules that are established in the games for educational purposes create a situatedness designed with the aim of making the individuals acquire the knowledge that they are expected to through their active engagement with it in context. Sport is used as a constructed situatedness, benefiting from the situation where the participants have chosen to be and enjoy being, and integrating the "lesson" into that situation. On the other hand, the follow-up discussions that accompany the sport activities take into consideration the individuals' situatedness in their living environments, as explained above. The most important and encompassing of the benefits of the acknowledgment of situatedness in the knowledge-production process through sport is that this kind of education is the one that takes the subjects into account, with their partiality and their particularities, and, hence, it is this type of education that can bring social change (345). In the following chapter I will explore how social transformation for gender equity is important to take gender difference into account and how this difference should be interpreted and translated so that it is prevented from further reproducing gender stereotypes.

Chapter 3: Bringing the boys in

3.1. Gender difference

When dealing with discrimination, and in fact trying to find solutions to problems that certain groups of people are facing because of its different types, it is important to start by examining the ideological backgrounds of such kinds of discrimination. Discrimination is not created in a vacuum; it is the result of power relations that only exist in interaction between different groups of people, out of which one is perceived as superior and the other as inferior. These supposedly opposite groups of people (be it women versus men, white versus non-white people, etc) generally share many common qualities; nevertheless, their similarities are usually silenced, while their differences are over-emphasized. In this way these groups are put in juxtaposition and perceived as diametrically different even if they are not. This process is known as “othering”, because it creates an imaginary boundary between “Self” and “Other”, attributing to the Other characteristics which are usually part of the Self (too), but which the Self is ashamed and/or fearful of¹¹.

The Other’s over-emphasized difference functions both as the boundary of the Self – since the Other is defined in negation, as that which the Self is not – and as justification for the Self’s acts of discrimination against the Other. Hence, the notion of difference, and more importantly the way difference is interpreted in society, is key to inequity and discrimination, since there is a causal relationship between them. At the same time, for the reasons stated above, it is evident that since discrimination only exists in interaction, it is rather pointless to try to address it and attack it by only engaging one part of the equation. Therefore, trying to put an end to gender discrimination by only engaging women in programs on gender equity is insufficient; it is not only women that have to be empowered to change the notions that they have internalized about themselves, and to claim their rights, but men as well have to undergo a process of transformation. The men’s transformation provides a fertile ground for women’s struggle for a new self-defined identity unrestricted by gender norms, turning men into allies in this process. If either one of the two sides of the equation is not changed, then there remains an imbalance which leads to an endless, non-constructive and futile fight. Instead, a process of mutual transformation benefits both parts; women, as well as men, as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

As I have already argued in the previous chapter, sport is a terrain where gender inequalities can be addressed in a more tangible way, since in sport the human body

¹¹ Julia Kristeva describes this process in psychological terms as “abjection” (See Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror*, 1982).

occupies a central position. As a result, difference as related to perceived identity is also very graphically portrayed in sport. The body serves as an arena where power relations are inscribed in various ways (Foucault qtd. in Braidotti “Bodies, texts and powers” 77). For example, in the name of health as it is perceived by Western medicine, and Western ideas about what being healthy entails, Western scientific knowledge, as a dominant discourse and institution, categorizes and controls bodies in a normative process. As Wray (2002) argues: “[t]his knowledge is a technique of power. It is deployed to discipline and regulate bodies according to the latest scientific findings and claims relating to healthy lifestyle” (Wray 135). In other words, scientific knowledge, as explained in the previous chapter, is perceived as absolute and non-negotiable knowledge, and as such it has the power to enforce specific modes of living on the subjects. These lifestyles are immediately and intentionally reflected on the body (externally and internally), and actually adopted for its sake. In addition, female bodies are more often than not the ones sought to be regulated and controlled, as they serve as borders of “collective ethnic, religious and cultural identities” (137). Therefore, if bodies are the ultimate resorts of identity (128), women’s bodies are used to secure not only their own identity, but also, and maybe rather, the identity that the dominant group of a society wishes to preserve and demonstrate. In other words, what men are (Muslim, rich, highly-educated, etc.) is expected to be depicted on –and proven by– the bodies of the women in their family and social circles.

This desire to regulate women’s bodies is very prominent in sport. In some societies women are not allowed to be outside of the house without a man accompanying them, they are not allowed to be in the field, to wear athletic outfits, or they are allowed to play some sports but not others.¹² Going against those social codes not only brings problems for the women themselves, but also shame for their families, and rage from the rest of the members of the community, as they feel that their ethnic or religious identity is threatened by a woman’s non-conforming behavior.

These restrictions that have to do with the way that women are prohibited to use their bodies the way they want, or rather that even this “way they want” is invaded by societal norms, is closely related to notions and interpretations of gender difference. Braidotti, building on Foucault’s argument about the way that the body is penetrated by power relations, argues that institutions such as family, school, etc, as well as discourses related to knowledge production, such as scientific knowledge, “shape the body, the situated, embodied structure of subjectivity” (“Bodies, texts and powers”

¹² Maria Bobenrieth (Personal interview) observes that, for example, in India women are allowed to play netball but not cricket, in Nicaragua they can play football but not baseball and till recently in the Netherlands women would play almost any kind of sports, but not football. It seems that there are certain sports reserved as exclusively male, and that women are only allowed a limited space within sport.

78). That is to say that identity is conditioned and constructed by such institutions, sport being one of them, and this identity is represented and closely connected to the body, and the embodied reality of the subject. This leads to the fact that “truth-effects” –meaning pieces of information that are considered absolute, non-negotiable and value-free– about the embodied subjects are produced by claims of scientific and absolute knowledge, controlling, correcting and regulating the body in a normative way (ibid). As a result, these “truth-effects” produce, in their turn, the knowledge which has been imposed on the bodies by reaffirming and reinforcing it. This is achieved as the imposed embodied reality in question functions as a rule for other bodies yet to come, and as the invasion of the body –in the sense of the regulating process which the body has undergone– is forgotten. Consequently, this constructed reality is eventually presented as natural; therefore, its normative effect is amplified.

One of such “truth effects” is the notion of the feminine as this is presented by phallogocentric culture. Braidotti describes this image of the “feminine” as a “male disease” and “a typically masculine attitude, which turns male disorders into female values” (“The ethics of sexual difference: the case of Foucault and Irigaray” 124) in the sense that it is much more closely related to the realities of men, their own fears and misinterpretations, than those of real-life women. The “feminine” is a phantasy of the woman in the way that the phallogocentric culture imagines her and constructs her. For Braidotti this image of the “feminine”, as well as the problematic reality of men which it brings to surface, stem from the crisis of phallogocentrism, and the uncovering of its inconsistencies and gaps (ibid). She goes on to argue that while men mourn the collapsing of phallogocentrism and vainly try to fill these gaps, women should take advantage of it, and use the empty space to reclaim their own realities, their own embodied experiences and to define themselves on their own (131). In order for that to happen Irigaray (qtd. in ibid 131) believes that the first step is to recognize and re-invent the bond among women, a bond that phallogocentrism and psychology as one of its main discourse, have denied women. Women have long been defined in relation to men, as men’s Other, and they have internalized this definition. Irigaray argues that, instead, they first have to understand themselves in relation to their sisters, as “the other of other”, (132) and establish a bond among them. Sport gives women the chance to create such communities and reinvent the denied bonds among them, not only because bonds are generally created among the players of a team, but also because in societies where women are not allowed in the public sphere and supposed to stay in the private one, when they start playing sport they are given a unique chance to have interaction with other women outside their family circle and develop relationships with them.

Establishing a community among them and strengthening the bonds between them, women approach a “woman-defined-feminine” (131). In this way women cannot only reclaim their misrepresented identity, but also be able to demonstrate it and set it in juxtaposition to phallogocentric illustrations of their subjectivity. Sport offers a chance for this to happen, as it will be shown in the following section. For example, powerful female coaches, unfolding in this position their high sport skills as well as their powerful, determined, goal-oriented and confident personalities, can function as inspiring role models for other women. In addition, they can demonstrate to the boys they train –as well as other men in the community who do not participate in the programs but are indirectly affected by them (such as the boys’ fathers)– a reality that contrasts to what they had so far perceived as feminine “nature”.

In the following section I will cite some examples of how difference is dealt with in sport programs for gender equity and to what extent sport can play a role in the challenging of gender norms in society.

3.2. Throwing like a girl: Dealing with difference

Irigaray sees difference in an ontological, essentialist way, in the sense that it always already exists, regardless of our acknowledgment or interpretation (qtd. in “The ethics of sexual difference: the case of Foucault and Irigaray” 131). Therefore, the answer is not to deny its existence, pretending that we do not see it, but to change the way it is interpreted and dealt with. Women need to redefine difference and approach it from a feminist perspective that provides an alternative to the dominant phallogocentric notion of difference as indicative of superiority and inferiority, and re-presents the so far misrepresented “feminine” (ibid).

As I have argued in the previous chapter, I believe that being oblivious to gender difference constitutes a relativist approach that only reinforces gender inequitable perceptions and practices. I find Irigaray’s emphasis on the ontological nature of difference particularly important for this study, since it provides a theoretical background on why it is crucial to pay attention to difference as well as the ways in which difference has been interpreted and used as a western, patriarchal strategy for the discrimination against women in particular and other “Others” in general. Like Irigaray, I believe that gender difference is always already there; the fact that it has been used against women does not mean that women should be intimidated to acknowledge its existence. Instead, women should embrace gender difference and redefine it in their own terms. One way to do that is through sport which offers a plethora of opportunities for women to reclaim femininity by demonstrating skills and

qualities that patriarchy has characterized as non-compatible with womanhood, such as leadership and physical strength.

My interviews provided me with valuable insights on how gender difference is addressed in sport programs for gender equity. Within such programs, the issue of gender difference comes to the surface in a much more obvious and tangible way. The interaction between boys and girls provides specific, everyday examples of the issues that are being addressed throughout the programs, since boys' and girls' behaviors reflect dominant gender norms and traditional ideas about gender roles that exist in their communities. This is exactly the reason why these programs provide a fertile ground for addressing those issues: examples of behaviors that need to be changed, and others that need to be encouraged arise naturally in the participants' interaction. Hence, an opportunity, and an imperative, to redefine difference is created. However, only under specific circumstances it is possible to do that successfully, as there is a fine line when addressing difference between re-interpreting it and reinforcing dominant ideas about it.

Sarah Murray (Personal interview) has cited the following anecdotes from programs implemented by program partners of Women Win. In the following sections I will use these anecdotes as a starting point of an analysis that explores which approaches to gender difference are more effective in challenging dominant gender norms and establishing gender equitable perceptions about gender roles and qualities.

MIFUMI

MIFUMI is an international, women-led aid and development agency that seeks to reduce poverty, secure basic human rights and put an end to domestic violence. Based in Uganda, MIFUMI is internationally recognized for its successful campaign and referendum against the practice of bride price (they have already managed to make bride price illegal in Tororo, one of Uganda's districts), a major contributing factor to violence and women's subordination. In 2007, MIFUMI decided to start using the power of sport for women's rights and they ran exploratory karate training for 30 girls in a MIFUMI primary school. Encouraged by the positive results, MIFUMI nowadays continues to use karate combined with its "Feel Free" gender training to empower adolescent girls in schools in rural Tororo.

When MIFUMI first started using karate for women's rights in rural Tororo they employed a female coach with high karate skills and the sessions were only for girls,

most of whom were living at a high level of poverty. The boys were very curious and would stand peeking at the windows and wanting to be part of what was happening. MIFUMI at first made it very clear that this program was exclusively for girls, since boys obtain plenty of opportunities to play in other programs.

However, one day, as one of the girls was returning home from practice, she was attacked by some boys who were basically bragging that they could show her their own karate skills. The boys assumed that the girls could fight and were jealous of them. Being accustomed to being the ones expected to be strong and take part in fighting (either for a joke among friends, or in serious fights) watching martial art sessions taking place in their village, was a difficult thing to accept. It was in sharp contrast to the gender norms that had been taken as natural in their society so far, and about the way gender difference had been interpreted, associating males with strength, aggressiveness and action, and females with passiveness and weakness. A girl who was learning how to fight was a menace for the boys' manhood as perceived according to gender norms. The interpretation of gender difference in such narrow and rigid terms as explained above, constituted an inadequate tool to accept this new role of girls in their community. Therefore, to resolve the confusion, the boys had to resort to what Sara Ahmed calls a "straightening device" (71)¹³. The fact that this girl could supposedly fight while girls are not supposed to, would make her more of a boy in their eyes. In addition, to satisfy their jealousy and their hurt ego, what they could do was invite her to fight as a boy with them to measure who was better at it. The separation between boys and girls was reinforcing the problem, since the boys were not offered an adequate approach to difference, so, unable to develop new tools to deal with it, they were stuck in using the same, inadequate ones, such as their aggression and their failing to understand the complexity of gender roles.

What MIFUMI did to resolve this problem was to bring boys in, let them see what was going on and have some follow-up discussions. In addition, for every four

¹³ Sara Ahmed uses this term to explain the mechanisms through which queer desire which escapes the line of heteronormativity is "brought back in line" (71). For instance a woman that is sexually attracted to another woman is considered to be practically a man in the body of a woman. As a man who supposedly just happened to be born in the wrong body, she is allowed, or tolerated, to have such feelings or/and desires for another woman. Taking Ahmed's argument a step further, I feel that the same mechanism is often used to put "back in line" other behaviors that also do not abide by rigid gender roles and patriarchal ideas on femininity and what is considered appropriate as a woman's attitude.

sessions that the girls got, the boys would get one. Thus, the boys were not getting all the resources but only a small percentage of them, which was still practically going back to the girls, as it was seen as an investment in the sense that the transformation that the girls were going through would not be well-received in their community, and in fact would even turn against them and put them in a precarious position, if the boys were not involved in it. According to Murray, the boys that took part in that program were transformed from enemies to allies for the empowerment of girls, they understood the respect that is entailed in martial arts, and this practice that MIFUMI implemented managed to take away the threat and actually create more support for the girls participating in the program. MIFUMI in this way offered a bridge to negotiate difference, and an opportunity to the boys to see that a woman can be a strong instructor, as well as that girls can actually learn how to fight and can be strong and active too. Perceptions of difference as rigid and of gender roles as inflexible are only further emphasized when there is no interaction between genders. Interaction paves the way for being exposed to instances that can open one's horizons in terms of understanding difference in more flexible ways.

Boxgirls Nairobi

Boxgirls Nairobi is a not-for-profit organization that was founded in 2007 by Alfred Analo, a women's rights activist and boxing coach, in order to facilitate women from the slums of Nairobi to fight against gender-based violence by building life and self-defense skills. As Murray explained, the case of Boxgirls Nairobi was different from that of MIFUMI, because for Boxgirls the inclusion of boys was not a matter of choice. Boxgirls have always had boys participating in the programs, because boxing is a male-dominated sport and because their sessions take place in a community gym, which they do not own themselves but which the community boxing club was allowing them to use, so it was not possible to exclude boys. However, they came up with an interesting way to work with the boys in order to convey messages of gender equity and a less rigid perception of gender roles: they had strong, highly skilled, professional female coaches train the younger boys that would come in. In this way, positioning highly skilled coaches –in terms of both boxing and coaching skills– in a leadership role relative to the younger boys, Boxgirls created a dynamic of respect for these female figures, a framework in which their skills and leading position was recognized and respected.

This was a successful practice in terms of challenging gender norms: on the one hand boys learned to look up to these women and to actually see them as role models, which managed to influence their perception of what a woman can do and the power of women and also to build a new sense of respect for women in more equitable terms. On the other hand, Boxgirls were able to get support for their program because they did not exclude boys from the activities, but in fact made use of and benefited from the boys' interest in participating. Hence, this is a good example of how dominant perceptions of gender difference are more effectively questioned and challenged through interaction between genders, and by offering opportunities to the females to demonstrate aspects of womanhood which have been silenced and regarded incompatible with what it means to be a woman,. These aspects can be both physical (physical strength, quick reflexes or the ability to fight) and in terms of women's roles in general (taking leading positions, making decisions or functioning as strong role models for both girls and boys).

Futbol Con Corazón

Futbol Con Corazón (FCC) is a not-for-profit organization which works with kids and adolescents who live below the poverty line in coastal Colombia. Since FCC was founded they have implemented the "Football for Peace" methodology, created by the Colombian Foundation Con-Texto Urbano which calls for mixed girl-boy teams in various age categories, a practice that is alien to the social context in which the children live. FCC intervened in the methodology by including the Peaceful Coexistence Agreements, the four fundamental values of FCC: honesty, solidarity, respect and tolerance. Participants engage with these core values on an experience-based level twice a week with workshops that emphasize and demonstrate these values in the field (Lavergne, Personal interview).

In FCC they believe that it is not enough that girls become empowered, boys have to take part in the same transformation process. Through the mixed boy-girl matches which are part of the "Football for Peace" methodology, they argue that they are enabled to include boys in the female empowerment activities. These activities are designed as a complement of the traditional pedagogical curriculum of FCC in which boys and girls are used to work together (ibid). Additionally not only the ration between the *participants* is 50-50, but also between the *coaches*, as they use both male and female coaches on an equal percentage. The idea behind this practice is that, as FCC states, if we want to live in a gender equitable society we have to recreate that in the sport programs, and it will be through this recreation that boys and girls will develop over time and think of each other as equals.

In reference to these mixed group activities, Murray observed during her visit in this organization that watching the young kids there was not much difference between boys and girls, since their bodies were not that different relative to shape and muscular development yet, therefore each game was on equal terms. However, when she moved on to watch the older participants playing, aged 16-17 years old, she witnessed an agility exercise, where participants had to jump over some bars, while the trainers would keep raising the bars. In the beginning all of the participants would get over the bar, but as it was raised higher and higher eventually all of the boys would manage to jump over it, while none of the girls would. Later on the same group moved to the pitch to play football. Murray states:

The girls were able to pass just as well as the boys, their touch on the ball was just as strong and they could dribble with the same technical precision, but the speed was totally different. The boys were able to take off and beat them down the field on a one-on-one, or if they were going up for a header the boys just had a physical advantage. I mean at times the boys were, you know, thirty pounds and one foot taller than the girls [...]. (Personal interview)

In this way girls and boys were participating supposedly on equal terms in activities that nevertheless did not take into account the difference of the participants' bodies as a result of their gender. This, I believe, is the result of a common confusion and identification of being *equitable* as being *identical*. Murray observes that the fact that girls were unable to get over the obstacles and to run as fast as the boys was not because they were not smart enough, or less able to play sport but because of a "physical disadvantage that was as raw and as plain as day" (ibid). This brings us back to Irigaray's argument that the right approach to difference is not to pretend that it does not exist but to acknowledge that it is always already there and work on the way we deal with it as well as with the constructed meanings that we attribute to ontological, biological gender difference. Being oblivious to gender difference can reinforce gender inequity while actually trying to challenge it. In this case, for example, the message that is conveyed through such practices is that girls are not as agile and fast or as physically strong as boys. This can be true in such cases as this one (although it should not be perceived as a general rule, since other factors like age or frequency of practice should be taken into account too). If, however, the reasons behind this inequity as well as what this merely biological difference signifies are not discussed, then the overgeneralization that the observation of these differences results in is that girls are generally less skillful and not as good players as boys. This message is internalized by the girls, lowering their self-esteem and sustaining dominant ideas about females as inferior to males, as well as by the boys who may learn that the girls can play with them, but can never be as good as them.

Furthermore, since programs for gender equity entail not only playing sport but also engaging in follow-up discussions on a variety of gender-sensitive issues, it is

important to contemplate on the extent to which these discussion sessions should also take place among mixed boys and girls groups. Murray, recognizing that adolescence is a critical period when boys' and girls' differences become a lot clearer as their bodies begin to change, claims that they should continue to have their discussions together if they want to, but should pay attention to the fact that there are biological, chemical and psychological changes that girls and boys experience differently. She believes that the girls should be allowed a space to play on their own, but still with the option to join the boys if they want, provided that girls and boys are conscious about the differences that their bodies are going through and how these differences are not indicative of superiority or inferiority.

She also points to a technical but very crucial aspect of girls' engagement with sport which also relates to difference: in adolescence, when girls start experiencing menstruation, they need bathrooms nearby, which are not always available. This lack of necessary facilities can be really discouraging to girls, most of which drop out of sport once they hit adolescence. In addition, Murray emphasizes that especially in the framework of sport for development and empowerment programs, adolescent boys and girls should be given opportunities to talk about issues related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights in separate single-sex base. For instance, some girls are experiencing gender-based violence, are being harassed or abused and this is a very sensitive issue to discuss in front of boys. On the other hand boys need to discuss the pressures of being a boy and the negative consequences and the expectations dictated by hyper-masculinity culture, openly without feeling they are being judged by the girls. At the same time, however, Murray argues that there is a great opportunity for learning by bringing girls and boys together and allowing a sharing of experiences and views at some points. Therefore, interaction should be encouraged, provided that gender difference is also taken under consideration. Program designers should bear in mind the fact that a transformation of gender norms entails both allowing space for single-sex base discussion sessions and bringing both genders together at some points.

Difference by definition exists only in interaction, as something/someone can be different only to relation to something/someone else. Thus, when a new interpretation of difference for one of the two parts that are considered as different to each other is enunciated, then the other part is also affected and changed. As a consequence, this alternative approach to difference can open the way for a re-definition not only of the feminine, but also of the masculine. In the next section I will explore some of the ways in which boys and men can benefit from programs that challenge gender norms and re-interpretations of manhood on a personal level.

3.3. The boys are game: Masculinities

As I have argued in the first chapter, traditionally it is femininity that is recognized as the visible gender. Masculinity is presented as gender zero, and men tend to not think of themselves and not be considered in the society as gendered beings (Barker et al. 10). Gender is seen as a problem by traditional patriarchal culture, as a source of vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Masculinity, as privileged by patriarchy, is considered to be free of such weaknesses. As Kimmel observes, there is a causal relationship between male privilege and the invisibility of the male gender (qtd. in “Men are changing” 15), since the ideology, mechanism and process -in this case patriarchy and its mechanisms- through which one group is viewed as superior in relation to the group that it is put in juxtaposition to, is invisible to the dominant group which enjoys the privileges of its superior position.

However, men’s bodies are also addressed, defined and disciplined through gender norms. Men are gendered beings too, and their masculinity is also constructed and performed through a process of othering and abjection, as described in the first section of this chapter. Patriarchal rhetoric is oblivious not only to masculinity as engendered reality, but also to the power relations and the othering that take place among men. In this way masculinity is considered a unified whole, although social research has proven that there are hierarchical relations among men (a fact that makes imperative the use of the plural form of the word -namely *masculinities*- to indicate the existence of different forms of masculinities), among which dominant and subordinate, marginalized ones are to be found (Connell 162).

As has been argued above, gender, in the sense of a set of rules and expectations of social behaviors that individuals should abide by according to their biological sex, functions as an identity marker. Gender is also closely related to notions about the body, and the accepted manners in which people carry and use their bodies according to their given sex. As Cornell puts it “bodies are arenas for the making of gender patterns” (164). This body, heavily charged with connotations and social expectations, has a very central and a very obvious part in sport, as was discussed in the previous sections. Therefore, all the above reasons contribute to the fact that sport, because of its double effect, both on participants’ social bonding and because of its close relation to the body, functions as an arena of identity construction. This is even more visible in terms of boys participating in popular, male-dominated, “masculine” contact sports such as baseball, football, basketball, rugby etc. As Connell observes, through sport boys do not go through an innocent “socialization” process, but rather, a process of “learning masculinities” which entails being urged to conform to the demands of the hypermasculine sport culture, which often results in non-healthy social relationships

(such as bullying) and/or health problems due to the imperative to play through pain (ibid).

Timothy Jon Curry studied men's locker room talk in an American Midwestern university that places high value and has a good reputation on men's contact sports, to explore the dynamics and the way the fraternal bonding that takes place in the locker room trains men towards a specific, socially expected and approved way of gender performativity. As he argues, "fraternal bond is threatened by inadequate role performance ... or not living up to the demands of masculinity" (178). In patriarchal, heteronormative culture men are defined and qualified as "real" men by what they are *not*: women or homosexuals (180). In other words, in order to survive in patriarchal society, and especially in the context of sport, which is characterized by a promotion of hypermasculinity and heteronormativity, a man has to perform in certain ways, verbally and practically reaffirming that he is not what the framework of this culture would not allow him to be.

Such actions that reaffirm a man's masculinity as defined and accepted in hypermasculine sport communities, entail not simply treating and talking about women as objects but also suppressing personal desires to talk about them as persons who play an important and respectful part in one's life (ibid). It is revealing in terms of the role of the coaches to observe that such behaviors that are degrading to women are very openly encouraged by them, while players who speak about women and demonstrate respect and feelings for them are teased and made fun of not only by their team-mates but by their coaches as well (179). Hence, since gender norms are constructed in society by encouraging expected behaviors, men who learn masculinities in such contexts of the subordination of women are more likely to mimic and adopt behaviors that sustain the patriarchal dividend (Cornell 166) in general. What is more, such attitudes towards women, their objectification, as well as a perception of them as inferior, encourage other dangerous behaviors against women, or even rape culture. Curry argues that even gang raping is an extension -and an extreme- of locker room talk about women as objects, preys and trophies (181-183).

However, it is not only women that the fraternal bonding in male-dominated sport is turning against. Men are suffering from trying to keep up with expectations of dominant masculinity in various ways. As mentioned above, constructing and performing a "real man's" identity through othering entails seeing not only *women* as the "Other" -any resemblance to which is to be avoided- but also *homosexual men*. This can be even more torturing for a man, no matter if he is indeed homosexual or if he is a heterosexual man whom his team-mates decided to tease for not performing his masculinity as expected. In this context men are forced to hide their real identities, likes and dislikes, no matter if these entail homosexual activity, treating women as

persons, playing the piano, or painting (170). Therefore, the kind of masculinity promoted by hypermasculine sport culture is not in accordance to all the male players' identities; on the contrary, men have to hide the different shades of masculinity which suit their personalities and beliefs more, and instead resort to demonstrations of dominant masculinity in order to be able to stay in the team.

However, despite these negative aspects of sport in relation to the construction of men, it is important to keep in mind the prominent position that sport has in men's lives. Therefore, sport can be used as a tool to find men where they already are and reach them in order to change them ("Men are changing" 5). Merely blaming this kind of sport culture and rejecting sport altogether is not a solution to this problem. Instead, it is much more constructive to use the power of sport and the extent to which it influences the athletes, in order to transform the messages that it conveys, educating boys and contributing to their socialization process through sport in more gender equitable ways. Through sport programs boys can, in a variety of ways, receive messages of the role of women as well as their own which contradict dominant patriarchal ideas in relation to gender roles. Coaches can play a very critical part in this transformation of the gender roles that are taught to children. As explained in the previous section, strong and skillful female coaches who are respected and serve as role models not only for girls but also for boys teach them that women can be strong, active, disciplined and as skillful as male coaches. Furthermore, these female coaches demonstrate that women can also have an important, leading role in the public sphere, which contrasts the idea of women as too emotional, passive, submissive, supposed to stay at home and not use their bodies in as powerful ways as men. Additionally, male coaches who already function as role models for young boys can have a very positive influence on their lives if their example is a gender equitable, tolerant and respectful behavior towards women and other men, instead of allowing and even encouraging misogynistic and homophobic attitudes.

Finally, sport programs that are designed in order to promote gender equity include discussion sessions as not an optional but an inseparable part of the program (Murray, Personal interview). During these discussions important issues that have to do with gender roles and intersexual relationships are addressed; in this way, boys and girls have a chance to talk and learn about such issues, which are treated as taboo subjects at school and/or in the family, or addressed in a biased, misleading way in church. Attention is paid so that facilitators who guide those discussions do not occupy an authoritative role as teachers usually do. On the contrary, they discuss issues in an open, understanding way and prefer to facilitate participants to question current ideas and practices, instead of dictating what they should or should not do. This questioning is based on a contemplation of their own experience (Promundo et al 16). Therefore,

as explained in Chapter 2, knowledge in regard to current gender norms and the way these can be restrictive, unfair and even absurd, is in this way produced through situatedness, by paying close attention to where one is and critically reflecting one's experiences.

Boys and men have a lot to earn from a more gender equitable society. Men's health, for example, is jeopardized because of expectations and ideas in terms of what it means to be a "real man". Dominant masculinity presents men as hypersexual, with uncontrollable sexual needs. These ideas have serious consequences on men's sex lives, such as polygamy, unprotected sex and infrequent or no tests for sexually transmitted diseases. Such a sexual lifestyle may appear as a privilege at first, but in fact it can be restrictive for men themselves. Men often fear that if they do not perform in this way their friends will make fun of them and women will not see them as "real men". As a result many of them are urged to adopt a lifestyle that can have very negative consequences on their health. For instance, refusal to use a condom because it is a "barrier to pleasure" is an acceptable excuse exactly because of men's portrayal as being ruled by uncontrollable sexual drives. In addition men tend to hesitate to go to the doctor and be tested for sexually transmitted diseases, assuming that these health services are designed merely for women who are physically weaker and more liable to get sick ("Men are changing" 19). This reluctance to make use of existing sexual health services is also associated with dominant patriarchal ideas about males as strong and resilient to physical discomfort. Men are more interested in fertility and reproduction rather than prevention of the transmission of infections. Fertility is cherished in dominant masculinity, which uses terms borrowed from the animal kingdom and the way animals' hierarchy is built in herds and associates the ability to reproduce with being a strong male. According to such logic, an infertile man is seen as less of a man, but there is no questioning of the masculinity of a sick man who infects women with sexually transmitted diseases affecting in the long run the health of his whole community (18).

Furthermore, dominant ideas about the necessity of men proving their identity as "real men" by engaging in fights with other men, as well as aggressiveness presented as a natural male characteristic, lead to violent acts of which not only women but also other men are victims (Promundo et. al 11). Promundo et al. also mention that violence can be viewed as an acceptable way to demonstrate masculinity, especially by men belonging to groups which are underprivileged in terms of class, social status and economic independence. In a culture where a man is portrayed as the one who is supposed to be respected in the community, to be in charge of his house, to be independent and provide for the rest of the members of his family, when all the above are impossible because of social, political and economic circumstances, the only

power to which a man can resort too in order to prove his manhood is his physical strength and therefore violence (Promundo et al 18-19).

Additionally, men are not supposed to show affection and express their emotions, as gender norms dictate that women are the ones that are emotional and a man that shows feelings is characterized as “soft”. This, in addition to the over-competitiveness which they are taught to develop in sport and carry in other aspects of their lives, affects men’s relationships with women, children and other men. Struggling to live up to dominant forms of masculinity alienates men from the people in their social circle and has a negative influence in the way they experience friendship, partnership and fatherhood, as it deprives them of the satisfaction of freely experiencing and sharing feelings with one’s intimates, (Curry 174). According to Promundo et al. this deprivation can induce serious consequences in the mental health of men; men are more likely to commit suicide than women, and, according to research¹⁴ this is related to feelings of loneliness and isolation that men are experiencing in a greater degree than women (11).

For all the above reasons, it becomes clear that dominant perceptions of gender roles as inscribed by patriarchy and phallogocentrism affect both genders negatively. In other words, always keeping in mind the extent to which men have benefitted from patriarchy, and without abandoning the context of critique of the male privilege, we can still acknowledge the ways in which patriarchy can also function as a trap for men, and can have very negative effects on their lives too, even if to a lesser extent than women. Therefore it is important to not stay at gender difference as merely difference, but to explore in depth the mutual influence, intersectionality, hierarchical power relations that stem from it. By understanding these aspects of difference and how biological difference is translated into gender difference and used as justification for rigid gender norms, we come a step closer to deconstructing these norms and opening the way for a redefinition of gender roles, a redefinition that will benefit both women and men in the complexity of their gender identities. Sport offers a framework in which difference can be observed, addressed and negotiated, thus opening the way for new interpretations and analyses of gender difference. Consequently, through sport, rigid perceptions about womanhood and manhood can be questioned and this questioning allows room for a redefinition of femininity and masculinity in more equitable and flexible terms.

¹⁴ See World Health Organisation (2008) Suicide Prevention and Special Programs

Chapter 4: Conclusions

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, sport is an effective tool in education, and by extension, a vehicle for social change, part of which is a move towards a gender equitable world. Societal norms are internalized through various processes of education, as well as in education's presence in and interrelation with other institutions, such as the school, the family and the church.

Sport makes for an effective tool for teaching as its inherent qualities make it a form of *situated knowledge*. As such, it offers practical, first-hand, tangible knowledge through active and experiential engagement. Due to these qualities of sport, it constitutes an efficient strategy for "teaching" gender equity in particular, in other words for promoting gender equitable practices and offering its participants the ground to question traditional oppressive and/or restrictive gender norms. In sport programs for youth, designed to facilitate women's empowerment and work against gender discrimination, the lessons learned on the field on a small, case-based scale, can be reflected upon during discussions sessions. Subsequently, this newly-acquired knowledge can be absorbed by the young athletes, recalled and applied to a wider range of experiences outside the field, in this way affecting their behavior and contributing to the formation of their social positioning in relevant issues. Sport, consequently, functions as a vehicle for change in dominant perceptions around gender and gender norms, since these athletes, in their turn, will, by interaction, have an impact in the ways their peers, family and other people in the society think about such issues.

Sport is an even more effective tool for achieving gender equity also because it constitutes a terrain where gender is performed in very rigid ways. Because the body occupies such a central role in sport, dominant, normative, non-flexible ideas about expectations and appropriateness according to one's gender which are inscribed on the body in a variety of ways are much easier to observe in its framework. This invasion and control over the body in sport occurs in terms of visibility and agency (i.e. the way people are –according to gender– expected to carry their bodies, whether these bodies are allowed to play sports –and which kind of sports– or not, what kind of spaces they are allowed to occupy in order to play, etc.); visibility and the body's potential (i.e. which parts of the body are allowed to be seen and which should remain hidden under outfits that can be restrictive to the body's free movement, therefore limiting its potentials); and decision-making, self-determination and agency (i.e. whether a woman can decide if she will use her body to participate in sport or if she needs a male member of their family to give his consent for this to happen). As a result, since gender norms are so prominent in sport, sport can be a fertile ground to

question, challenge and change them. Girls' and women's participation in sport, both as athletes and as coaches, as well as their interaction, from these positions, with men and boys, can open ways for a redefinition of the relations between gender and issues such as the private and the public sphere, independence, empowerment, agency, leadership, decision-making, skills, strength, capability, roles, professions as well as notions about body image and health.

However, as has already been mentioned in previous chapters, no matter how effective a tool sport can be, it still remains merely a tool. This means that, like every tool, it is the way that it is used that brings positive or negative results. Sport is capable of both challenging and reinforcing gender norms. Hence, it is important to note that sport is not an end in itself and it does not offer a ready-made solution. Whether sport can have a positive effect towards gender equity lies in the design and implementation of sport programs.

According to Promundo et al. sport programs can be divided into four categories in terms of the level to which they take gender difference and norms into account (14). They state that *gender exploitative* programs are the ones that have negative effects on gender equity, since they reinforce gender norms and promote discrimination. *Gender neutral* programs do not take gender difference into account and neither reinforce nor challenge gender inequitable attitudes. In practice, however, I would argue that there is no neutral approach to gender inequity, since there is no neutral living reality. Since the everyday reality of the participants is based on inequities, it hardly needs stating that every practice that does not challenge these inequities, in reality reinforces them. This reinforcement may not entail purposefully promoting inequitable behaviors in relation to gender roles; however, by failing to address them and to take steps towards a transformation of gender norms, these programs perpetuate them. In other words, since inequity is already present in society, programs that are not a part of the solution are automatically part of the problem, ("problem" meaning dominant ideas about gender roles, and "solution" meaning transformation of such ideas).

In that sense, *gender sensitive* programs are also perpetuating the dominant power relations between genders. This is because, according to Promundo et al., such programs do acknowledge that women and men have different needs and experiences which are partly due to biological reasons and partly due to the construction of gender roles; however, they do not aim at openly addressing and transforming dominant ideas on gender. Promundo et al. observe that the most effective programs are the *gender-transformative* ones, which "seek to transform gender relations through critical reflection and the questioning of individual attitudes, institutional practices and broader social norms that create and reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities" (ibid). These programs take gender roles into account, as well as the way these roles

are constructed, to what extent they are based on biological differences, and to what extent they are defined by the way biological differences are interpreted. With this knowledge and contemplation as a starting point, they manage to teach participants to question gender norms, and thus to transform their behaviors into a more respectful, mutually understanding, equitable way.

Therefore, key to attacking gender inequity through sport programs is taking gender difference into account. The fact that patriarchy has based its rhetoric that justifies gender discrimination on biological differences between the sexes does not mean that difference should be discarded in the process towards gender equity. As was discussed in the previous chapter, gender blindness fails to acknowledge women's specific needs, strengths and weaknesses according to their biological sex and, in doing so, it leaves such weaknesses pray to patriarchal interpretations. By pretending that difference does not exist we are forcing women to compete with men on supposedly equal terms, which in reality are anything but equal. This becomes clearer in sport, since imposing the same standards for women and men without paying attention to aspects in which men have a biological advantage condemns women to fail and further reinforces the image of women as inferior. Approaches –and in this case sport programs– that fail to take gender difference into account leave a physical disadvantage which is nothing but merely a physical disadvantage, pray to patriarchal inequitable interpretations. These interpretations overemphasize and give disproportionate dimensions to what such disadvantages signify, as they translate them into a supposedly 'proven', in this way, male superiority.

The other extreme of overemphasizing difference to the point that it prohibits us from using it as an indicator of identity is not the answer either. As Maynard suggests, the way to deal with difference is not to abandon categories –such as *female*– either, just because these categories are not unified enough and carry differences within them, such as race, class and education. Postmodern overemphasis on fragmentation and differences within the same gender –and in fact even within the same person– also induces a rejection of gender as an identity marker (Maynard 123). This rejection lurks a relativist danger¹⁵ of abandoning identity categories that are based on difference –such as gender and 'race'– because of being overwhelmed by the endless sub-differences within these categories.

Both of these approaches to difference fail to see difference as an empowering concept and a useful tool to address power relations. For instance, despite the different experiences among women –and the fact that, for example, a black, working class woman is undeniably more vulnerable than a white, upper-class woman in the

¹⁵ See Chapter 2

US— it is still true that what unites these women is that as *women* they have been victimized by patriarchy. Hence, designers and implementers of sport programs for gender equity should take gender difference into account because it is of primary concern in such programs. That does not mean that they should be oblivious to other differences within this framework; other differences should also be taken into consideration in order to adjust successful programs and practices with a culturally specific approach that secures that the program is meaningful to specific populations.

As discussed in the previous chapter, sport programs for gender equity benefit not only women but also men. However, because of the fact that, even though men are also suffering from the negative consequences of rigid gender norms and women have suffered and been victimized to a much greater extent than men by patriarchy, women and their empowerment are the central objectives of such programs. Therefore, the engagement of boys in the programs has so far been mostly implemented for the sake of girls. This is even more obvious when it comes to program resourcing. Bobenrieth (personal interview), mentions that when a sport program for the empowerment of women is designed and the organization providing it is asked to include boys on a fifty per cent basis, the number of girls that could benefit from the program is drastically reduced. Bobenrieth (ibid) states that girls are “getting 2% of the resources [for sport programs in their community]”, since sport is a male dominated domain; “if you cut 50% off that, then they are not getting 50% but 1%” (ibid). In addition, Murray (personal interviews), argues that boys should be included as long as it makes sense for the empowerment of girls, since it is inadequate to merely equip these girls to claim their rights and demand equitable treatment, as if empowerment is exclusively a matter of a personal decision. Educating boys on gender-related issues is seen as an investment for the girls’ well-being by preparing the ground for them to assume different roles in the community, challenge gender norms, and exercise their rights.

However, boys also benefit from such programs both in terms of their self-image and in terms of their relationship with the women in their lives. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)’s evaluation of their cricket program “Parivartan”, proves that the engagement of boys was crucial for a transformation of their ideas regarding masculinity and femininity, and their moving away from patriarchal perceptions around gender roles (Das et. al). ICRW states: “[r]esults from ICRW’s evaluation of Parivartan demonstrated that sensitizing boys to gender issues can potentially change stereotypes they hold as well as their attitudes about violence against women” (www.icrw.org). Participants are not the only ones changed by these programs; coaches are given an opportunity to reconsider and transform their attitudes as well. The wife of a mentor mentions that after the program her husband is sharing

his emotions with her, although he used to keep everything to himself before (ICRW, n.p.). She also mentions that his attitude regarding sexual intercourse has also changed towards her, since, before the program he would never ask her if she wanted to have sex, while after he participated in the program he has started asking for her consent. This is a useful example on how men's transformation is also an investment for women. This woman never used to think that her husband should care about her willingness or not to engage in sexual intercourse, as she believed it was normal for men to demand sex whenever they felt like it. Her transformation in terms of her own agency and right to make decisions about her own body came as a result of her husband's newly acquired knowledge and perception on gender-related issues, and his own questioning of the norms in gender relationships.

Gender difference and the long subordination and victimization of women by patriarchy (to a much larger degree than men have negatively been affected by it) demand that feminist reflections and analyses of gender relations always maintain this difference as their starting point: “[a] feminist study of men and masculinity, [...] aims at developing an analysis of men's problems and limitations compassionately yet within the context of a feminist critique of male privilege” (Sabo qtd. in Scraton & Flintoff 159). Therefore, the feminist interest in the way in which men are inspired, through sport programs for gender equity, to reconsider their perceptions on gender roles and adopt more equitable practices is twofold. Men have a lot to gain by questioning gender norms and transforming their lives in a more gender equitable way, but also women can benefit from the men's transformation in a double way. These emancipated men will on the one hand be more receiving and welcoming of the women's transformation when this occurs as a result of their participation in such sport programs. As a result, they will be able to build with them relationships on a more equitable basis. On the other hand, men's own participation in the programs will put them in a position to also facilitate and encourage other women's empowerment; in this manner such sport programs have the potential to make men not only *allies* in but also *agents* of women's emancipation.

In conclusion, I believe that it is important to make sure that such programs are run by people who have an adequate theoretical background on gender related issues and power relations as defined through gender. Stereotypes are so difficult to attack and deconstruct precisely because they are based on generalizations, superstitions and oversimplifications that are so hard to argue with, exactly because they are beyond reason. Hence, those who undertake to disturb and attack those deeply rooted stereotypes should be very well prepared in order to do it in a simple, reasonable way that takes gender difference into account. They should also bear in mind and efficiently explain to the ones they facilitate how biological difference does not equal

gender difference and how the latter is a result of how the former is interpreted. Consequently, they should be in a position to highlight the fact that gender and, by extension, gender difference are socio-politically constructed and therefore subject to questioning and redefinition.

When I asked Maria Bobenrieth if you can have sport programs for women without a theoretical background of gender relations she replied “of course you can! But it would be a waste” (personal interview). I think that this statement in a few words encompasses the most important aspects of sport programs for gender equity. Sport is a terrain full of opportunities; the boys are already there, the girls are either there under certain conditions or completely absent, because of the exact same issues that these programs seek to address and transform. The scenery is set. It is time to challenge the norms. It is time to make a difference. It is time to throw the ball.

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