SEVEN FACES OF WOMEN'S SPORT

SEVEN FACES OF WOMEN'S SPORT

EDITED BY

IRENE A. REID
University of Stirling, UK

JANE DENNEHY
Gender Hub, UK

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2018

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78743-711-1 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-78743-710-4 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-78743-966-5 (EPub)

ISOQAR certified Management System, awarded to Emerald for adherence to Environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the girls and women who are in parks, halls and on playing fields made of concrete, dirt, sand and mud; it is you who have inspired us to write this book. We admire your tenacity and resilience and your passion to claim public spaces for your sport.

We appreciate the support of all those mums, dads, sisters, brothers and friends, without whom much of the sport for girls and women simply would not happen.

We thank our families, colleagues and friends who have encouraged us to complete this project. We also want to thank those individuals who shared their stories, insights and knowledge of sport. For those who are not specifically named, we want you to know that research and progress does not happen without you.

Contents

List of Contributors

Jane Dennehy	Gender Hub, UK, jane@genderhub.com
Irene A. Reid	University of Stirling, UK, i.a.reid@stir.ac.uk
C. D. Fisher	Gender Hub, Germany, cait.fisher@gmail.com
Marisa Schlenker	Gender Hub, Germany, marisaeschlenker@gmail.com

About the Authors

Jane Dennehy, a Strategist in gender for sport, media and legal organisations, combines her academic research in gender and the labour market with her special interest in employability and competition. She is a director at the Gender Hub, a research and consulting collective and at What Could I Be, a charity and publisher of career information for young people and parents.

Dr Dennehy earned her PhD in gender and management from the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics in 2010. Her re-entry to academia came after 15 years in marketing and advertising. She has recently contributed to a collection on Governance in Sport in Europe (with Irene A. Reid, forthcoming), has worked on research projects with EIGE on gender mainstreaming and has undertaken research on women's experiences of womb cancer and the 20th anniversary of the What Women Want, a UK-based campaign.

Jane is originally from New Zealand but is based in Scotland and has two teenage daughters, who are keen young sportswomen.

C. D. Fisher is a Futebol Activist, Scholar and Artist. She is involved in organising around the labour rights of female players and promoting gender justice in sport through movement. She played professional futebol (Brazil, Sweden, USA) and now uses muscle memory, movement and narratives from the pitch to explore the way elite sport perpetuates power relations and identity (con)forming mechanisms. She uses reflexive, experiential research to explore how the commodified version of futebol as we know it is shaping bodies and social relations – and what clues the game can offer us about possibilities for other ways of proposing, experiencing and enacting human relations. While critical of the sport, Fisher remains committed to the great potential of the world's most popular game to create community and collective action, produce subversive and free bodies, and offer us alternatives beyond our current order.

Fisher has published on the gender (re)presentation and embodied resistance of female futebol players in Brazil as a Fulbright Scholar (Journal of Sport & Society (2015)). She co-founded the Guerreiras Project, a project promoting gender justice and labour rights through futebol in Brazil. She curated/co-created the 2016 contesting/contexting SPORT Exhibition during the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. She holds a BA in Biological Anthropology from Harvard University (2004); and an MSc in Gender & Development, from the London School of Economics (2010).

Irene A. Reid's academic background is in the sociology of sport and leisure, which she has taught at the University of Stirling and at De Montfort University's Bedford campus (1992–1997). Prior to taking up her first lecturing

position in the University sector, she worked in sports development and administration in Perth and Kinross District Council and at the Scottish Sports Council. She has also taught physical education in the secondary school and further education sector.

Dr Reid's research interests cover a variety of issues associated with critical social and cultural studies of sport. This has included work on football, nationalism and the media in Scotland; shinty, nationalism and cultural identity; and the place of leisure practices in the context of changing nationalisms in Scotland and Ireland. She is currently working on research about women coaches in Scotland, and on women, sport and the iconography of nationhood and representations of nation and identity in the Scottish media.

Marisa Schlenker received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin- Madison in political science and Spanish literature, where she was also a member of the university's women's soccer team. Her passion for sport, combined with her interest in development studies, led her to the field of sport for development and subsequently involvement in various organisations. Since 2016, Marisa has been pursuing a master's degree in international administration and conflict management at Konstanz University.

Foreword

I was lucky; although on reflection, luck had very little to do with it. Fortunate might be a better word altogether. Fortunate, when growing up in the 1970s as a boy, to have access to a wide range of sports at school (and some excellent amateur coaches) and good public facilities: open spaces, organised pitches, tennis courts, changing rooms and a sports centre and swimming pool in town. At the time, public policy came under the guidance of The Sports Council whose tag line was 'Sport for All'. Looking back, the message was simple, credible and inclusive.

Decades later, I find myself managing a set of barristers' chambers whose success is mostly a team effort, so it's no surprise that sport metaphors are quite common. After all, both depend on individuals who are very ambitious, focused and able – and sometimes hard to manage. Both compete in environments where tiny margins make huge differences. Moreover, occasionally both put relationships at risk as 'rivals' compete for work, or individuals seek superior positions. However, from my observations, I would suggest that occasionally it makes sense to sacrifice 'winning big' in favour of 'winning right'.

As seasoned coaches and managers will know, there are two truths. First, the best individuals do not always make up the best teams. Second, the cost of achieving short-term aims can often be found in long-term, and perhaps initially unseen, problems. However, a socially cohesive and inclusive team can defuse, or at least constructively handle, future deficits and conflict.

In whatever capacity, you engage with sport in Britain, (or wherever you live today) ask yourself what you are seeing. Is it a continuation or reflection of some utopian idyll of free access for all, perhaps even where taking part really is more important that winning? Or is it eerily bereft of social benefit and rich diversity? Is it organised in the interests of the nation or just for a tiny, often privileged minority? I suspect that if we look beyond the high-profile glamour of 'media sports' to the grass roots, or if we witnessed sports in other countries, we might barely recognise them at all.

One of the main reasons for this is the pursuit of money or at least the perception of the opportunity of riches, at the expense of participation and access; a situation which has come about with the blessing of the agencies and funders supposed to protect grassroots sport and the collusion of sporting bodies and media.

On one level, the chronic underinvestment in school sports over the past 50 years has set a tone; PE now includes such well-known sports as 'dance' and Swedish Longball (who knew?), yet from experience, one wonders how many of our youngsters can even catch a ball by the age of 12. (Note to OFSTED and other educational evaluators, why not set 75% as a target of physical literacy?).

On another level, an executive home now occupies the penalty area of the public football pitch; you have to take out a membership of your local sports centre at the price of a private gym membership and all the classes are fully

booked; there's not a netball club within two hours of where you live ('Sorry Girls'); my daughters will be adults before a space becomes available on the regional athletics programme and; a decent cricket bat will set you back a week's work at the minimum wage.

At the other extreme, perhaps the richest sporting league in the world - the English Premier League – regularly features teams entirely bereft of 'home grown' talent. Is it a surprise that our 'National Sport' has failed to deliver any meaningful success at global or even European events for over 50 years? Can you imagine an Auckland accountant or a Dunedin delivery driver ever saying, 'OK, so we lost to Romania in the Rugby World Cup. No worries, the best players from Japan and France play in the NZ Provincial Cup'.

So, while I admire the driven athletes who push themselves day-in and day-out during winter training, I admire the child (and her parent) who rocks up in an unsponsored tracksuit and at often considerable family expense, one freezing evening in February to train or play sport.

Unfortunately, the economic model for the 'development of sport' in the UK depends on these extremes and while the nation's human sporting capital is invested in the hundreds of thousands of volunteers, clubs, amateur participants and officials, much of its financial sporting capital is devoted to a limited number of sports and a tiny number of athletes and coaches.

In addition, do not necessarily expect any help from the statutory agencies, funders or custodians of the game. Amateur or professional, the sporting individuals are at the whim of bodies whose governance is sometimes so out of touch with reality they could either be accused of being subsidiaries of media companies or be charged with directorial of trustee malfeasance.

At some stage, the whole nation might wake up to the fact that the extraordinary commitment of the families of the Liverpool 96 exposes the only act of collusion between agencies charged with organising, hosting and policing sporting events in the past 30 years. Layer on top of this type of behaviour, the influence of massive media organisations and betting companies, and we would be forgiven to assume that we cannot always believe our eyes in a sporting contest. These are not sports stories. These are crimes on a monumental scale.

This book reinforces my views that sport today is inherently gendered, can restrict access as much as it promotes it and has a dis-functional relationship with money. It is littered with incredible stories of discrimination, elitism, exploitation and mal-administration and yet offers the reader the hope that with improved governance the idea of 'sport for all' might have some credibility for men and women.

We must continue to remind one another of what we are here to do, why what we do is important and what is expected of everyone involved especially when it comes to progress. We may accept that what we do now is informed by our past and that we are merely custodians for those who might follow, but we ignore the present at our peril.

Tim Coulson,
Chambers Director, New Park Court Chambers